

Mr. Murray then gives a list of bills of his own (including some of Constable's) amounting to £1073, which he has to pay in the following week. From a cash account made out by Mr. Murray on the 3rd of October, it appears that the bill transactions with Constable had become enormous; they amounted to not less than £10,000. Murray asks for bills to keep himself right with Messrs. Dixon, his banker. "You will see," he concludes, "what an immense sum I am to provide for, and what a difference your own bills would make to me." More communications of the same kind followed. Constable sent Murray bills at forty days; but the latter said, "these are of no use to me at present; and I am therefore obliged to solicit the favour of you to get me a remittance at sight." £2000 of Mrs. Murray's marriage portion had been paid to Mr. Constable, of which he only remitted one half; and there was much correspondence about the remainder. Both continued very hard pressed for money.

John Murray to Mr. Archd. Constable.

March 12th, 1808.

"I will not, I cannot, doubt the sincerity of your friendship for me, after so much mutual intimacy; and yet your conduct towards me lately is so very different from what I felt myself accustomed to receive, that I neither know how to act, nor how to think, upon the serious affairs which are pending between us. Twelve months ago I confided to your honour and friendship the receipt of two bonds of a thousand pounds each [part of his wife's marriage portion] with the interest upon them. The first of them that was paid you remitted to me immediately; the second, being long overdue, I repeatedly urged you to obtain, assuring you as often that I very much wanted the money. Notwithstanding which, you never wrote to me as you did in the former case; but in consequence of a new request from me, you at length told me that it had been paid, and, as if you did not know that I had expressly informed you that I wanted the money, you asked me how it should be remitted? My answer was, soliciting the favour of you to remit the

sum in bills, as you did the amount of my former bond. In consequence of this, I have been expecting the money every day, until the receipt of your last letter, a month after the money had been paid to you, whereas, without any notice of the time that it had been already detained, you tell me that it will be convenient for you to retain it for a month, unless I wish you to remit it to me. This behaviour, Mr. Constable, after a week's consideration, does not appear to me to be reconcilable either with friendship or business. . . . In consequence of not receiving the amount of the bond and interest, as I expected, I was obliged to sell stock to make up a large sum that I wanted, and this day I am unexpectedly obliged to provide £250 in consequence of your failure to remit this sum, for a bill of yours now due, and inserted in your cash account amongst those to be remitted to me ; and I have also the inconvenience of adding a similar sum, under the apprehension that you may again fail in sending me a second £250 of yours, due on Monday next."

It soon became evident that this state of things could not be allowed to continue. Reconciliations took place from time to time, but interruptions again occurred, mostly arising from the same source—a perpetual flood of bills and promissory notes, from one side and the other—until Murray found it peremptorily necessary to put an end to it. Towards the end of 1808 Messrs. Constable established at No. 10 Ludgate Street a London house for the sale of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the other works in which they were concerned, under the title of Constable, Hunter, Park and Hunter. This, doubtless, tended to widen the breach between Constable and Murray, though it left the latter free to enter into arrangements for establishing a Review of his own, an object which he had already contemplated.

There were many books in which the two houses had a joint interest, and, therefore, their relations could not be altogether discontinued. 'Marmion' was coming out in successive editions ; but the correspondence between the

publishers grew cooler and cooler. Failures were occurring in Edinburgh. Money in the city was at 9 per cent. In these circumstances, letters such as the following could not have been very satisfactory to the London publisher.

Messrs. Constable & Co. to John Murray.

December 8th, 1810.

"It is the most unpleasant thing to be obliged to delay sending you a remittance so completely promised; but as the want of it till Monday will not, I trust, put you to inconvenience at all amounting to the vexation I feel at this moment from a dependence on the promises of others—to put it out of my power to send you the cash as I most firmly expected. Do me the kindness to forgive this till you hear from me."

This was followed up thirteen days later by the following letter from Constable to Murray:—

"I have been again under the necessity of drawing upon you for £350 at two months, which I of course trust to your friendship to accept."

The correspondence went on some time longer, until at length it came to a sudden termination, as will be hereafter related.

Mr. Murray had also considerable bill transactions with Ballantyne & Co. of Edinburgh. James and John Ballantyne had been schoolfellows of Walter Scott at Kelso, and the acquaintance there formed was afterwards renewed. James Ballantyne established the *Kelso Mail* in 1796, but at the recommendation of Scott, for whom he had printed a collection of ballads, he removed to Edinburgh in 1802. There he printed the 'Border Minstrelsy,' for Scott, who assisted him with money. Ballantyne was in frequent and intimate correspondence with Murray from the year 1806, and had printed for him Hogg's 'Ettrick Shepherd,' and

other works. Moreover, they contemplated jointly the issue of a series of translations of the principal Classics, a scheme in which, writes James Ballantyne, "I expect much useful aid from Mr. Scott in selecting and arranging the proper classics. He seems to be much pleased with the plan."

'Pliny's Letters,' always a great favourite of Mr. Murray, was to have been the pioneer of the series, but the scheme was never carried out. The activity of Scott, however, provided the printer's chief supply of copy; the publication of his works, 'Sir Tristram' and the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' followed in due time; and a gigantic scheme then presented itself to Scott, no less than a complete edition of the 'British Poets,' ancient and modern.

Scott now committed the great error of his life. His income was about £1000 a year, and with the profits of his works he might have built Abbotsford and lived in comfort and luxury. But in 1805 he sacrificed everything by entering into partnership with James Ballantyne, and embarking in his printing concern almost the whole of the capital which he possessed. He was bound to the firm for twenty years, and during that time he produced his greatest works. It is true that but for the difficulties in which he was latterly immersed, we might never have known the noble courage with which he encountered his trials and endeavoured to rise above his fate.

The scheme of the 'British Poets' fell through. It was afterwards taken up in a limited form by Mr. Thomas Campbell in his 'Specimens of English Poetry.' Meanwhile Scott proceeded with the 'Life and Works of Dryden;' wrote articles for the *Edinburgh Review*, and lived the life of a hard-working literary man. Ballantyne was enlarging his premises in the Canongate. "We had

a grand shine yesterday," wrote Alexander Hunter (Constable's partner) to John Murray, 14th July, 1807 ; " at Messrs. Ballantyne's printing office in his new rooms there, and a very nice thing it was. There were sixteen of us present ; Walter Scott, William Erskine, Parson Thomson [Thomson of Duddingstone, the painter], Creech, and others. Everything good and abundant. White Hermitage the order of the day. What would your London printers say to this ? " In the following year James Ballantyne took his brother John into partnership ; and the concern seemed to go on very prosperously with Scott as Commander-in-chief.

In 1808 a scheme of great magnitude was under contemplation by Murray and the Ballantynes. It was a uniform edition of the 'British Novelists,' beginning with De Foe, and ending with the novelists at the close of last century ; with biographical prefaces and illustrative notes by Walter Scott. A list of the novels, written in the hand of John Murray, includes thirty-six British, besides eighteen foreign authors. The collection could not have been completed in less than two hundred volumes. The scheme, if it did not originate with Walter Scott, had at least his cordial support, as will be seen from his letters to Mr. Murray, now for the first time made public.

*Mr. Walter Scott to John Murray.**

Ashestiel, Oct. 30th, 1808.

I have also been turning over in my mind the plan of the Novels and Romances. In my opinion they should be set about without loss of time, beginning with the Novels. Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett will lead the van with a very short memoir of each of those lives, and a prefatory essay on the peculiarities of their style. These will be followed by a good selection of novels of less name.

* The first part of this letter, which refers to the *Quarterly Review*, is printed in the next chapter.