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978-1-108-07391-2 - A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House, 1768–1843: Volume 1

Samuel Smiles

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This two-volume account of the life and friendships of the publisher John Murray (1778–1843), told largely through his voluminous correspondence, was published in 1891 by Samuel Smiles (1812–1904), whose *Lives of the Engineers*, *Self-Help*, and other works are also reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection. Murray was only fifteen when his father, the founder of the famous firm, died, but after a period of apprenticeship he took sole control of the business, becoming the friend as well as the publisher of a range of the most important writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, in both literature and science. Perhaps his most famous author was Lord Byron, whose memoir of his own life, considered unpublishable, was burned in the fireplace at Murray's office in Albemarle Street, London. Volume 1 commences with the beginnings of the firm in Scotland, and takes the story up to 1818.

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# A Publisher and His Friends

*Memoir and Correspondence  
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VOLUME 1

SAMUEL SMILES



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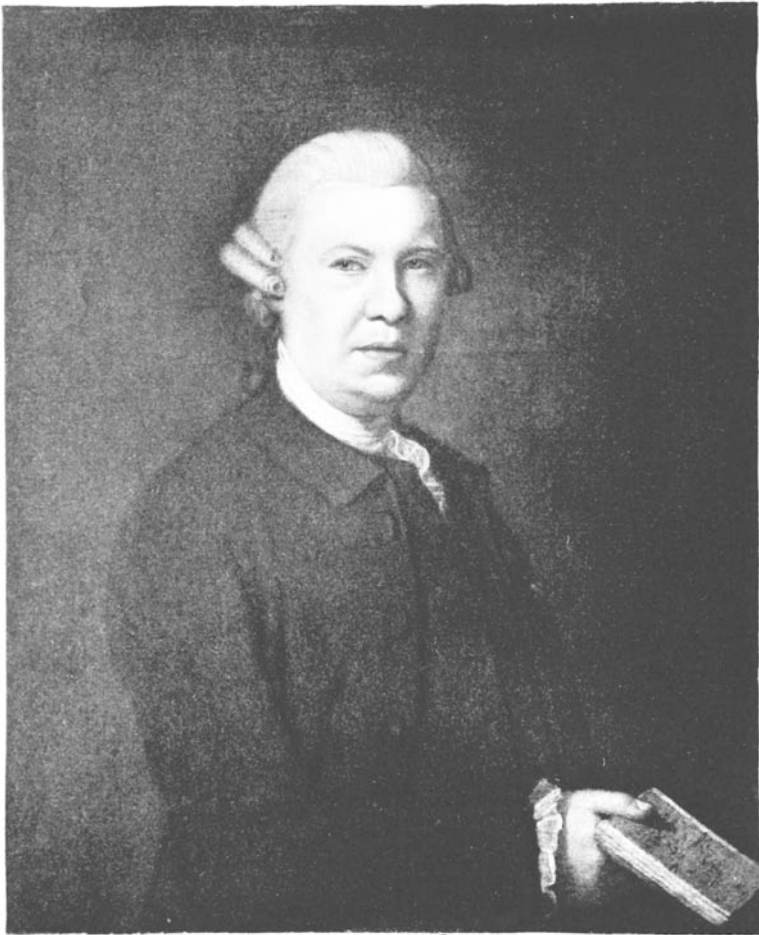
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*affectly yrs  
J Murray*

BORN 1745 — DIED 1793.

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OF THE LATE

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WITH

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF  
THE HOUSE, 1768–1843.

SAMUEL SMILES, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF 'LIVES OF THE ENGINEERS,' 'SELF-HELP,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.

*WITH PORTRAITS.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is not necessary to give in any detail an introduction to the Memoir and Correspondence of the late John Murray. The Memoir, and especially the Correspondence of the Publisher and his friends, will speak for themselves. They are of value as giving a full picture of the literature and principal men of letters of the first half of the present century. Indeed, going still farther back—to the life and correspondence of the late Mr. Murray's father—they include, to a certain extent, the literature of the times of Dr. Johnson, Dr. Langhorne, Dr. Cartwright, and others.

The late Mr. Murray was the intimate friend and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Canning, Southey, the Disraelis, Campbell, Crabbe, Hallam, Croker, Milman, Washington Irving, Madame de Staël; as well as of the early editors of the *Quarterly*, Gifford, Coleridge, and Lockhart; and many original letters from these authors are given in the following pages.

It was observed by Southey that a man's character may be judged of even more surely by the letters which his friends addressed to him, than by those which he himself penned. The same observation was made by Sir Henry Taylor; and, guided by this standard, the readers

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of these volumes will have little difficulty in forming an opinion as to the estimation in which Mr. Murray was held by his friends and contemporaries.

Lord Byron's letters to Mr. Murray, published in Moore's *Life*, have long been regarded not only as the best letters the poet ever wrote, but as masterpieces of English prose; but hitherto Mr. Murray's letters, which called them forth, and form the complement of the correspondence, have never been made public. These, having been preserved by Lord Byron, and found amongst his papers, were bequeathed to Lord Broughton, and have been presented by his daughter, Lady Dorchester, to the present Mr. Murray. Many of these are incorporated in the following pages.

No attempt has been made, nor would it have been possible within the reasonable limits of such a work as this, to give a detailed account of the men and women whose names appear in its pages, and, for the most part, those names are already familiar to every student of literature.

The correspondence, which it is believed will, as a whole, cast fresh light on many an obscure spot in the history of modern English literature, is left, as far as possible, to tell its own tale, aided only by such elucidations and notes as seemed necessary for the use of the general reader. In carrying out this intention, it has occasionally been found necessary to print the whole or a portion of letters which have already appeared elsewhere, but for the most part, the materials included in these volumes are now published for the first time.

The letters which passed between the Publisher and his friends, extending over more than fifty years, were of course exceedingly numerous, and the necessary labour of

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searching, sifting, and collating, has been very great ; but only the most important correspondence has been introduced in the Memoir.

I cannot conclude this brief Preface without acknowledging the great assistance I have received from Mr. John Murray, jun., who has with great assiduity and skill collected and annotated the correspondence which forms the principal portion of these volumes ; and I also beg to offer my thanks to Mr. W. J. Courthope, who has read the proofs as the work was passing through the press, and in the concluding chapter has so ably summarized the characteristic traits of the late Mr. Murray as a Publisher.

S. S.

LONDON, *February* 1891.

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