

VII

1855—1866

Financial crisis (1857)—Visit to Normandy—Journey to Europe
cure at Vichy and tour through England (1860)—Outbreak
of Civil War—Journey to Paris and Vichy—Delegate to
Chicago Convention for construction of Ship Canal—Last
illness and death (1866).

FROM this period forward my time was partly occupied in visits to the West, looking after my interests there, and to Washington City, where I took some pains, fruitless in their result, to press the passage of the Bill to indemnify the sufferers by French spoliation prior to 1800, in which my most cordial and efficient fellow-labourer was that excellent man, John T. Sullivan.

In 1857 came the financial crisis which overthrew many well-established firms and produced a suspension of specie payments and a general embarrassment, especially in the Western States, which, for a time, were prevented from sending their produce to the seaboard. Like all other

similar events, it had its day, and calm was again restored in the commercial world.

In July, 1858, I sailed in the steamer *Fulton* (Captain Wooton) for Havre, principally with the view of seeing my daughter Anna, her husband, and child, who were then at Etretat, in Normandy. I was met by them at Havre, and passed a pleasant time at their cottage on the Channel. Anna accompanied me to Paris to execute some commissions for her sisters, and remained several days with me at the Hôtel Canterbury, Rue de la Paix, whence she returned to Etretat.

It was arranged between us that her little family were to accompany Mr. Stephen Dana, her husband's brother (who had been my fellow-traveller), back to the United States to make a visit to her family. Accordingly we embarked in September in the steamer *Arago* (Captain Lines) from Havre, having many agreeable fellow-travellers, and among them Mr. and Mrs. John Munroe, to whom my daughter was greatly attached. After a pleasant passage of twelve days we arrived at New York, and forthwith departed for Greenfield Hill, where we remained until the last of October.

Early in October, 1859, our visitors embarked in the ship *Vanderbilt* for Havre, and thence to their residence in Paris.

This year was passed without any remarkable incident. As usual, I spent some time in Washing-

ton, whither a hope of stimulating Congress to some sense of justice in regard to the French Spoliation Claims had so frequently and so uselessly led me.

On April 28, 1860, I left with my daughter Agnes in the steamer *Arago* (Captain Lines) for Havre, where, after a passage of twelve days, we arrived, and thence went to Paris, where my object was to consult Dr. Trousseau on account of my daughter's health. He advised her to go either to Carlsbad or Vichy, as either was suited to her case ; but he thought the latter would be more agreeable on account of the society being principally French and the language and customs more familiar to her than the German.

We accordingly proceeded, on June 11th, by rail to St. Germain des Fosses, where a carriage was in waiting for us and conveyed us to the Hôtel Guillemain, an excellent house near the park and baths. The Emperor and suite were there during our whole residence.

After passing the prescribed period for bathing, we took our departure on July 21st by rail to Geneva, where we visited Deodata, the former residence of Lord Byron and the seat of the late Mons. de Sellon, the distinguished philanthropist, to whose widow we had an introduction from her daughter, Mme. de Sella, a most estimable person, whom we had met at Vichy. Mme. de Sellon was absent on

a journey, but we were admitted and conducted through the grounds.

M. de Sellon had erected a temple dedicated to Peace, and also a column in memory of the opponents of capital punishment, on which were inscribed the names of states and statesmen who had signalised themselves in abolishing the death penalty, among whom we saw the names of the State of New Hampshire and of Edward Livingston.

We returned to Paris, and on the 11th of August left there and crossed the Channel from Dieppe to England, stopping at Fleming's Hotel in Half Moon Street, and, having visited our own family, went to Ryde in the Island of Wight, where we joined James A. Murray and his wife, and made a tour of several days through the island. After this we all left for Oxford, and then with Agnes I visited Worcester and Great Malvern, when we rejoined our cousins; thence with Agnes to Hereford, and Shrewsbury into Wales and the Lakes of Cumberland, and thence by Carlisle to Edinburgh, where we passed a few days and left for Philiphaugh. Here we were kindly entertained by John Nesbit Murray, and thence returned to London.

On the 25th of September we crossed to Havre in a violent storm and went to Etretat, to visit Anna, and on the 29th reached Paris. On October 17th we took our departure from Havre in the

steamer *Fulton* (Captain Wooton), having as a companion our cousin Anna Willett, who had passed the summer with my daughter Anna. We arrived in New York on October 31st, after a pleasant visit of nearly six months; and, passing a few days at Greenfield, took up our quarters for the winter at 13, Washington Place.

During the winter I made two journeys to Washington, and while there used my best endeavours to pacify the leaders on both sides, but soon after received intelligence of the first overt act of secession in the South by the nullification ordinance of South Carolina, a suicidal act, the effect of which clothed her and her associates in crime in sackcloth and ashes. In April following (1861) I visited Illinois on business, and was in Chicago when news reached us of the dastardly attack on Fort Sumter, the first open attack on the sovereignty of the nation.

I immediately returned to New York, and offered my gratuitous services to Governor Morgan in any military capacity where I might aid in crushing treason in its bud. My offer was not accepted, as it was left to the several military corps to select their officers. I had done what I conceived to be my duty in making the offer, and perhaps my life was prolonged by its non-acceptance. I served, however, as a vice-president of the immense meeting called at Union Square to support the President, and otherwise rendered all the aid required of me.

My daughter Agnes's health still being delicate, I decided to make another visit to Vichy, and on June 22nd left New York in the steamer *Fulton* for Havre, where we arrived on July 4th, and proceeded immediately to Paris, where we found Anna and her husband and child at 38, Rue des Ecuries d'Artois, her permanent residence. We went to our old quarters at the Hôtel Windsor, and after a few days proceeded to Vichy.

Among those whom we met there, and who added to the pleasure of our residence, was Lieutenant-General Charles M. Hay, of the British Army, a soldier of sixty years' service; Madame de Sellon and daughter; Sir John and Lady Wilson; Marquis St. Maurice, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Brooks, and others. My daughter took the waters under the direction of Doctor Durand Fardel, with great benefit to her health.

While at Vichy we heard of the disastrous battle of Bull Run, where the rout of the boasting army of the North was put to flight by the rebels, and thus gave them courage to persevere in their insane career, while a different result would in all probability have been followed by immediate submission. But the contest between the political fanatics at both ends of the Union as to who should monopolise "the flesh-pots of Israel" was bound to arrive at some period of our history, and it would seem that Providence had decreed this to be the proper time.

As soon as Dr. Fardel decided that it was proper we left Vichy, and arrived in New York on September 1, 1861. History will relate the wonderful events that followed in the ensuing four years, during which, having given up all active interest in political matters, except in opposing those invasions of civil rights which most frequently grow out of the exercise of despotic power under the pretext of military necessity, I remained in quietude with my family. My daughter Anna had come home from Paris with her husband and children, and our summers were passed at Greenfield Hill, and our winters at Washington Place.

In the month of May, 1863, I went as a delegate from the city to the convention held at Chicago to promote the construction of a ship canal from the lakes to the Atlantic. Among my colleagues were Governor John A. King, Samuel B. Ruggles, and others. While at Chicago we were invited by the authorities of St. Louis to visit that city, where we were most kindly received by Governor Gamble, the Mayor, and other officials. During the summer I made several visits to my daughter Maria at her residence at Rhinebeck, and an excursion to Lebanon Springs with my two other daughters.

In the summer of 1864 I made an extended journey with my daughter Agnes through Connecticut and Massachusetts to Burlington in Vermont, where we crossed Lake Champlian to Port

Kent and thence through Keeseville to the Lower Saranac Lake. Here we took a bateau and guide and proceeded up the lake to the Upper Saranac Lake, and thence by the Racquette River to Tupper Lake, making a most romantic and agreeable excursion of several weeks' duration.

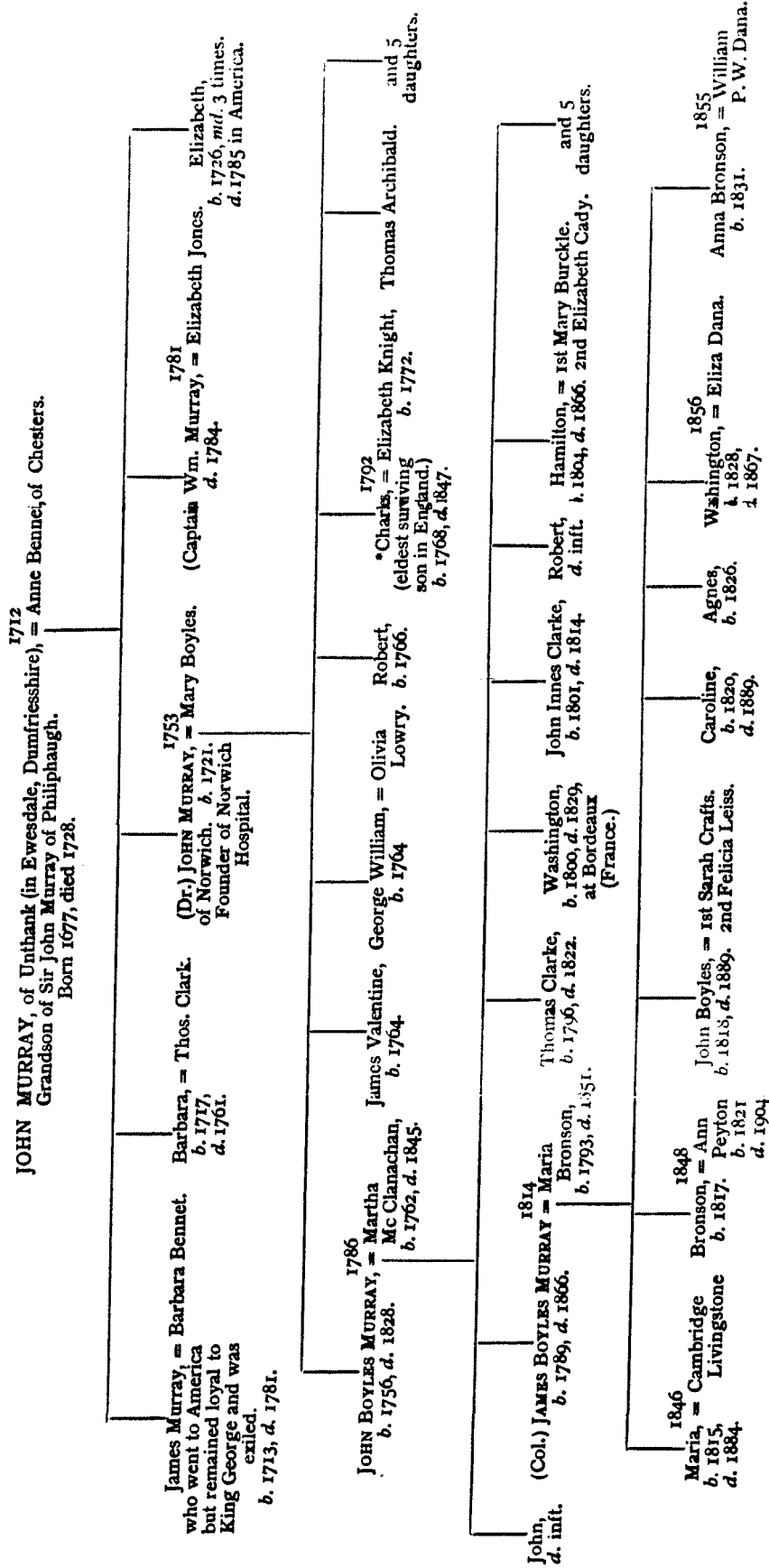
Up to this point this record of my father's life was written by himself. He passed his remaining years at his city home, 13, Washington Place, and at his country residence, Greenfield Hill, Fairfield County, Connecticut, with his two daughters, Caroline and Agnes.

The occasion of his death was a cold, taken while attending the burial of James Boorman, an old New York merchant and a long-time friend. His illness was of about ten days' duration. Three days before his death, he asked that the Christian Sacrament should be administered to him by his pastor, R. R. Booth, of the Mercer Street Presbyterian Church, at Tenth Street and University Place, saying he had never united with any Church, though he had sometimes felt it his duty to do so.

From about this time his voice so far failed him, that until the very moment of his decease he was unable to speak above a very feeble whisper.

Around his bedside were six of his children—Maria, Caroline, Agnes, Washington, Anna, and myself. A deep silence pervaded the room. His spirit passed from its mortal frame, and all present felt that he was at peace. So, on the 14th of February, 1866, died James B. Murray, my father, at his residence, 13, Washington Place, New York. His remains were taken to Greenfield Hill, where he was buried by the side of his late wife, in the family vault of her father, the late Isaac Bronson.

FAMILY TREE OF COL. JAMES B. MURRAY



*Grandfather of Col. Sir Charles Wyndham Murray, C.B., of Douglas Murray, Skolto Murray, Keith Murray, &c., &c.

On the border line

a true story connected with my father's death on February 14th, 1866 by Bronson Murray (son of Col. Jas. B. Murray). An early Greek historian assigned as a reason for writing his history, that "The things both great and wonderful not only of the inhabitants of his country but also of those beyond its border should not become extinct and unknown among men." Quite a worthy of record and remembrance to my mind are the occurrences that take place on the border-line between earth life and the country beyond, and this is my reason for recording what follows. In 1908 there was printed in London a booklet entitled "The Autobiography of the late Colonel James B. Murray of New York (1789-1866)". Attached to this was printed a note entitled "A Note added by Mr. Bronson Murray". The note purported to give all that I had written connected with the remarkable events surrounding the death and where my father's spirit took passage for the land beyond this earthly planet.

As much as what I did write on that subject had been, in part, added to and in part omitted, I have thought it proper, in this little leaflet to give in full a just and true account of what did occur on that, to me, memorial event.

The cause of my father's death was a cold, taken while attending the burial of James Boorman, an old New York merchant - a long time friend. His illness was of about ten days duration. During his last illness, his attending physician, Dr. George T. Elliot, made him daily visits and Dr. Barron, his next door neighbor spent the nights with him. Three days before his death, he asked that the Christian

Sacrament should be administered to him by his pastor, Rev. R. R. Booth, of New Mercer Street Presbyterian Church, now at Tenth Street and University Place, saying he had never united with any church, though he had sometimes felt his duty to do so.

On the day before his death, as Dr. Elliot entered his room, the patient looking him steadily in the face, said: "Elliot I am in the hands of the GREAT Physician. From about this time, his voice so far failed him that until the moment of his decease, he was unable to speak above a very feeble whisper.

The ending of his life on earth was accompanied by a remarkable circumstance.

It was the morning of February 14th, 1866.

He had just uttered in a low whisper the word "All." I asked him "Do you mean you want all your children?" He bowed his head in the affirmative. There were five besides myself in the house; one, John, being absent, when the six of us were arranged around the sides of his bed, a deep silence prevailed; he looked first at the one standing at his left and then successively passing at each till his eyes rested on the one at his right. In his feeble voice he then said, "Let us pray: Our Father - er, - er, - er" (Then in a deep tone, almost unearthly and sepulchral, as one might say, with a voice that filled the room with vibration, there came from his lips these words): "I am transmuted; mortals, mortals, open the windows, open the windows and let me go."

Around his bedside still stood the six children, Mary, Caroline, Agnes, Anna, Washington and myself. Deep

science still pervaded the room. I slipped to the window and raised the sash. His spirit passed from his mortal frame and all present felt that he was at peace. So, on the 14th day of February, 1866, died Thomas B. Murray, my father, at his residence, 13 Washington Place, New York. His remains were taken to Greenfield Hill, Connecticut, where they were buried by the side of his late wife in the family vault of her father.

I related this singular occurrence to my father's spiritual adviser on the occasion of his next visit and there after for more than forty years in private and in public have repeated these remarkable utterances, never doubting that they had been heard by all present at his death, as they had been by myself. I do not think I ever referred to them in the presence of my brothers ^{or} sisters. But now I am told that one of these sisters, still living, declares she did not hear them and is very sure they were not uttered. The only other witness still living is confined to her room by old age and is reported as saying: "I remember something being said about opening the window."

Here is presented to my mind a curious question - was I really the only ~~hearer~~ ^{hearer}? If so, why? Were they for any cause audible to me, while inaudible to others? Were some of those present so absorbed in the circumstances that their father was dying, that he mind failed to take in the words which their ears received? Again, if the words were uttered - and I solemnly assure they were - did they proceed from the mind and mouth of my father, or were they uttered by some unseen messenger sent to attend the arrival of a new comer into that abiding place to which we are all destined?

It seems singular to me that a father, in speaking

to his children, should address them as "nephews"
and not as "my children". It is this expression
- its peculiarity - which suggests to me, and
may suggest to others the possibility of the
presence of an invisible speaker, or one
able to use the vocal powers of a dying
mortal.

BRONSON MURRAY

October 1st, 1909

Note. - This leaflet is intended to be
of such size that it can be fastened
before or after the 91st page of the London
booklet, should any of the possessors of
that book desire to so attach it.

[Copied from the leaflet by Janet
Murray, granddaughter]