

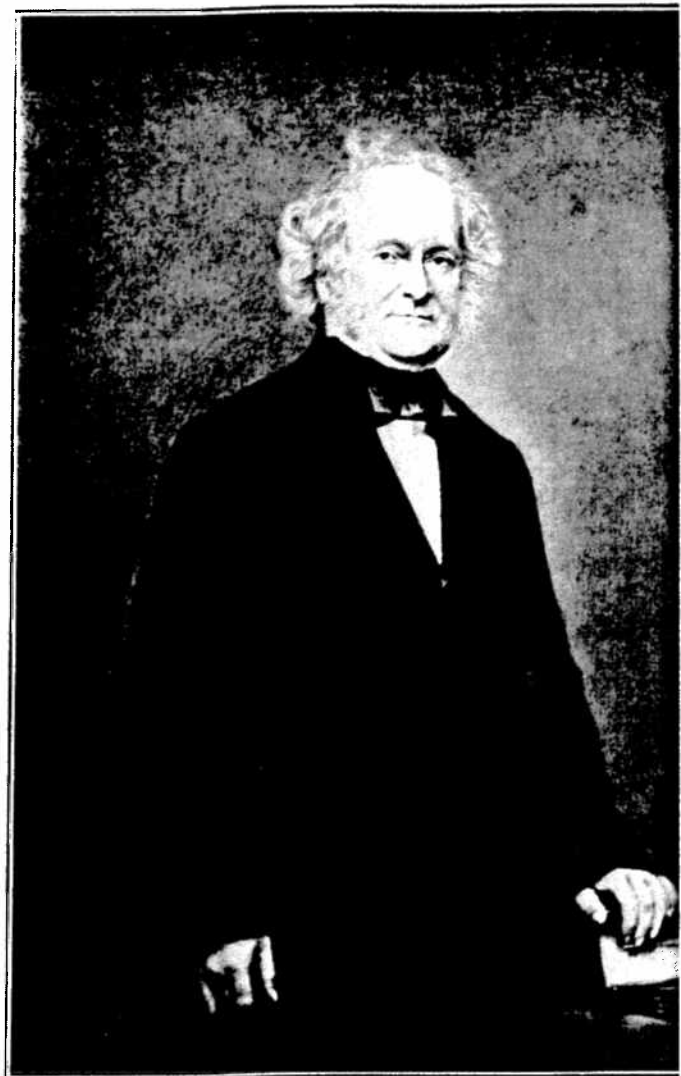
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF THE LATE
COL. JAMES B. MURRAY
OF NEW YORK
(1789-1866)

EDITED BY
ROBERT W. DANA, M.A.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

LONDON

1908



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FOREWORD

THERE has been one omission in the preparation of this little volume, and that an intentional one: there is no Preface. It seemed hardly necessary to introduce the reader to so simple and straightforward a narrative. Of the numberless works that rise to the distinction of publication nowadays it may fairly be said that a goodly proportion might well have been left to the decent obscurity of their own MS. Yet, by reason of its very simplicity and directness, this brief autobiography—published, as it is, for private circulation among the members of the late Col. Murray's family and their friends—may prove acceptable. If so, it will have justified the rescue from oblivion of the record of a useful and happy life, lived through certain periods of stress and turmoil which called forth those high qualities of patience, courage, and resourcefulness which underlie many passages in the narrative.

THE EDITOR.

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FAMILY TREE OF COL. JAMES B. MURRAY

I

1789—1804

Birth and parentage—First trip to England—School days at Norwich—Lord Nelson's return—Return to America (1799)
—Outbreak of yellow fever—School days at Middletown and Stamford.

MY father, John B. Murray, who was born in the year 1756, in the county of Norfolk, in England, and died in 1828, was the first of my immediate family who emigrated to the Continent of America. He left England for Boston in the spring of 1770, and reached there in July, 1770, under the protection of his aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, who later married Ralph Inman, of Boston, where she owned a large property, and died childless. On her death she left her property to her immediate relatives and made my father one of her executors.

Immediately after his arrival, my father entered the counting-house of Clark & Nightingale, in Providence, Rhode Island, the senior partner of which firm was my father's first cousin, and had

been brought up in my grandfather's family in Norwich, where my grandfather was the leading physician and the founder of the Norwich Hospital.

At the outbreak of the Revolutionary struggle my father took the part of the colonies and became a member of the Providence Cadets, commanded by his master, Colonel Nightingale. This corps was summoned to march to Lexington when the news reached Providence of the intended seizure of that place by the British troops, but they heard of its capture and the return of the royal troops to Boston before they arrived. He subsequently served on the Quartermaster-General's staff under his friend Colonel Ephraim Bowen, and was attached to the Marquis de La Fayette's command when he invaded Newport. My father then received the appointment of Agent of Prizes, and remained in Providence until the close of the Revolutionary War.

In 1783 he formed a co-partnership with two of his fellow-clerks, John P. Mumford and Oliver Bowen, brother of the colonel, and established two commercial houses, one in the city of New York—then containing a population of little more than 20,000 inhabitants—and the other in the city of Alexandria, in Virginia, which at that time excelled New York in the export of bread-stuffs and tobacco.

In 1786 my father was united in marriage to Martha McClenachan, who was born at Raphoe,

in the county of Londonderry, in Ireland, and had emigrated with her brothers and sisters to Alexandria. From this union sprang a numerous family, of whom I was the third. My elder brother died in infancy, my sister Mary at the age of ten years. My own birth took place in the month of November, 1789.

In the course of an extensive business which he conducted in Alexandria my father had occasional charge of exporting the crops from the estate of General Washington, whose residence at Mount Vernon was a few miles distant from that city, and whose agent in Liverpool was James Maury, for nearly half a century consul of the United States at that place. General Washington was in the habit of making occasional visits at my father's house, which were returned at Mount Vernon, and he not infrequently stopped to take a cup of tea before his evening ride homeward. My mother has told me that he often took her babe (myself) on his lap, knowing how sure a way to a mother's heart is kindness to her child; and having, in more mature years, seen all his successors in office, I have beheld every President since the adoption of the Constitution, and I much fear I have seen the *last* President of the Federal Union.¹

¹ These words were written while the Civil War was still in progress.