

inspect 64 pages (four sheets) of proofs before leaving Sheffield again, this time for Leeds, where he performed on 11 February. Dibdin later wrote that "it was utterly impracticable I should myself superintend more than the first sixty-four pages" (435). A comparison of the Winchester manuscript with the published *MT* shows that he made several corrections at this stage. He must also have approved Gales' typography and generous page layout: there is no doubt that the intention was to produce a large, impressive volume. From this time on, he would send Gales regular instalments of the work through the post: "more than three-fourths of the copy has gone, letter after letter by the post," Dibdin noted as he approached the end of his book (436). Although he seems to imply here that the letters were sent individually to Gales, it is hard to believe that he would not have sometimes bundled several together. The Winchester manuscript supports this, a certain number of pages containing Gales' address and post stamps but the number of these far less than the number of letters.

Dibdin's position in late January 1788 was almost comically desperate. He had written less than a quarter of the final *MT* and brought his story up to around the end of August 1787. When he commenced serious work on the *MT* in October, he had around six months with which to catch up. Now, in January, he was still nearly five months behind himself. Yet his stated intention was to sail for India in April, by which time the *MT* needed to be completed, published, and delivered to subscribers. The only realistic solution was to accept that the *MT* would not be able to cover the entirety of the still ongoing tour. Dibdin did so, and on 17 February wrote to Gales from Newcastle, asking him to advertise that "The subscription will finally close by the fifteenth of March and the publication be out by the twenty fifth."¹⁷ The same day he wrote a second letter to himself from the imaginary "Rev. Mr. —", this time commencing with the dramatic injunction:

Go to INDIA—dig in mines—tempt any danger—do any thing to better your fortune—to place yourself beyond the power of such humiliation! I declare to heaven I could not *sustain* the mortifications that you have *smiled* at, let what might be the consideration. (132)

Two days later Dibdin replied to this in a manner that suggests he believed he was concluding the *MT*. This letter of 19 February is entitled "The Duty of a Public Man" and it sets out a general account of Dibdin's "public conduct" before swelling to a magniloquent conclusion unlike anything he had written before:

I believe the best command and obedience within the exercise of the human mind, is a peremptory subduction of all feelings but those which tend to the expansion of the heart, and promote the wide and benevolent circulation of universal liberality, and an implicit submission to all those moral duties which soften the manners, humanize the soul, and impel us to beneficent acts of general fraternal kindness that can alone *dignify reason*, and lift us into MANLY PREEMINENCE. (138)

Had the book concluded here, it would have been less than a third of its eventual length and detailed the tour up to the beginning of November 1787.

17. This letter is preserved in the Winchester manuscript of the *MT*, between letters 31 and 32.