

### Clip 3: Sampson Low and Charles Dickens

**Peter Evans:** [00:00:00] Finally, before the Sampson Low collection was put away, Simon Eliot showed me a letter from one of the nineteenth century's busiest men.

**Simon Eliot:** This is a letter, 1860, from 'The Office of All the Year Round', which was the second of the major magazines that Dickens edited. Of course he edited these magazines week after week, year after year, while still producing substantial novels. Doing lots of amateur theatricals and of course going on his public reading *[unknown]*.

**Peter Evans:** Well he had a forty hour day obviously?

**Simon Eliot:** That's right, and one reason of course why he died so young.

**Peter Evans:** Was Low his publisher then?

**Simon Eliot:** No, he wasn't. He was published mostly by Bradbury & Evans and by Chapman & Hall. It looks, from the contents of this letter as though Sampson Low was wanting to reprint something of Dickens, possibly in America. Dickens begins by saying he was very grateful for Sampson Low contacting him, because clearly Sampson could probably have acted, had he been publishing something in America, as a pirate. Low hadn't, he'd behaved like a gentleman, he'd written to ask Dickens' permission and Dickens replies in the second paragraph, "While I would not on principal sanction any American edition of my books in which I their author had no right conceded..." etc. etc. [00:01:14] It's very important because Dickens was at the forefront of campaigning for proper international copyright, and his first American tour in the 1840s had turned sour because he had insisted on making speech after speech about the need for proper copyright arrangements for British authors in America. So here's Dickens, nearly twenty years later, plugging the same line. He wasn't to see it because he died in 1870, it was only in the 1890s that proper arrangements began to be made, but clearly he's campaigning even in private letters for this aim.

**Peter Evans:** And clearly Sampson Low was a publisher whom he respected and that's not unusual, but one often gets quite a lot of, sort of bile and vituperation between publisher and author.

**Simon Eliot:** That's right, and Dickens was particularly famed, or perhaps notorious for having severe battles, particularly with his early publishers. He was by this time, in such a position of power that he could dictate virtually any terms he wanted. But you're quite right, the relationship between author and publisher was frequently pretty stormy. But there were honourable exceptions and Sampson Low was clearly one of those.

**Peter Evans:** The honourable publisher Mr Sampson Low getting the OU's book history archive off to a flying start. [00:02:23]