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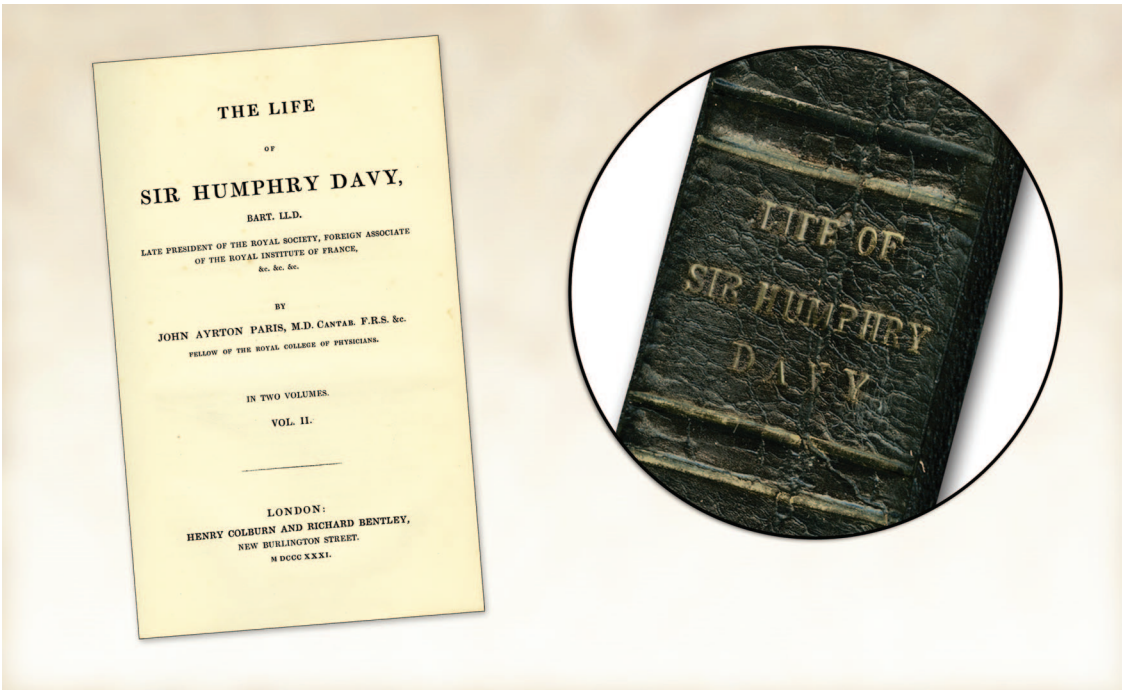
ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

The "Reckless" Humphry Davy of J. A. Paris



In 1831 in his two-volume biography, *The Life of Sir Humphry Davy*, physician John Ayrton Paris, P.R.C.P., F.R.S. (1785–1856) portrayed Davy as not only the discoverer of nitrous oxide analgesia but also as a hypomanic genius who stormed through chemical laboratories conducting five or more laboratory experiments simultaneously. Snapping off glassware from one experiment to start the next, Davy was "perfectly reckless of his apparatus; breaking apart to meet some want of the minute." Paris observed, "With Davy, rapidity was power." Even a past-president of the Royal Society, Sir Joseph Banks, openly questioned whether Davy was "too lively to fill the Chair of the Royal Society with that degree of gravity which it is most becoming to assume." (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator, ASA's Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Park Ridge, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.

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