

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

CARLYLE

JOHN NICHOL



F. A. N. Pessoa.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following record of the leading events of Carlyle's life and attempt to estimate his genius rely on frequently renewed study of his work, on slight personal impressions—"vidi tantum"—and on information supplied by previous narrators. Of these the great author's chosen literary legatee is the most eminent and, in the main, the most reliable. Every critic of Carlyle must admit as constant obligations to Mr. Froude as every critic of Byron to Moore or of Scott to Lockhart. The works of these masters in biography remain the ample storehouses from which every student will continue to draw. Each has, in a sense, made his subject his own, and each has been similarly arraigned.

I must here be allowed to express a feeling akin to indignation at the persistent, often virulent, attacks directed against a loyal friend, betrayed, it may be, by excess of faith and the defective reticence that often belongs to genius, to publish too much about his hero. But Mr. Froude's quotation, in defence, from the essay on *Sir Walter Scott* requires no supplement: it should be remembered that he acted with explicit authority; that the restrictions under which he was at first entrusted with the MSS. of the *Reminiscences* and the *Letters and Memorials* (annotated by Carlyle himself, as if for publication) were

withdrawn; and that the initial permission to select finally approached a practical injunction to communicate the whole. The worst that can be said is that, in the last years of Carlyle's career, his own judgment as to what should be made public of the details of his domestic life may have been somewhat obscured; but, if so, it was a weakness easily hidden from a devotee.

My acknowledgments are due to several of the Press comments which appeared shortly after Carlyle's death, more especially that of the *St. James's Gazette*, giving the most philosophical brief summary of his religious views which I have seen; and to the kindness of Dr. Eugene Oswald, President of the Carlyle Society, in supplying me with valuable hints on matters relating to German History and Literature. I have also to thank the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* for permitting me to reproduce the substance of my article in its columns of February 1881. That article was largely based on a contribution on the same subject, in 1859, to Mackenzie's *Imperial Dictionary of Biography*.

I may add that in the distribution of material over the comparatively short space at my command, I have endeavoured to give prominence to facts less generally known, and passed over slightly the details of events previously enlarged on, as the terrible accident to Mrs. Carlyle and the incidents of her death. To her inner history I have only referred in so far as it had a direct bearing on her husband's life. As regards the itinerary of Carlyle's foreign journeys, it has seemed to me that it might be of interest to those travelling in Germany to have a short record of the places where the author sought his "studies" for his greatest work.

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THOMAS CARLYLE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

FOUR SCOTCHMEN, born within the limits of the same hundred years, all in the first rank of writers, if not of thinkers, represent much of the spirit of four successive generations. They are leading links in an intellectual chain.

DAVID HUME (1711-1776) remains the most salient type in our island of the scepticism, half conservative, half destructive, but never revolutionary, which marked the third quarter of the eighteenth century. He had some points of intellectual contact with Voltaire, though substituting a staid temper and passionless logic for the incisive brilliancy of a mocking Mercury; he had no relation, save an unhappy personal one, to Rousseau.

ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796), last of great lyrists inspired by a local genius, keenest of popular satirists, narrative poet of the people, spokesman of their higher as of their lower natures, stood on the verge between two eras. Half

Jacobite, nursling of old minstrelsy, he was also half Jacobin, an early-born child of the upheaval that closed the century; as essentially a foe of Calvinism as Hume himself. Master musician of his race, he was, as Thomas Campbell notes, severed, for good and ill, from his fellow Scots, by an utter want of their protecting or paralysing caution.

WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832), broadest and most generous, if not loftiest of the group—"no sounder piece of British manhood," says Carlyle himself in his inadequate review, "was put together in that century"—the great revivalist of the mediæval past, lighting up its scenes with a magic glamour, the wizard of northern tradition, was also, like Burns, the humorist of contemporary life. Dealing with Feudal themes, but in the manner of the Romantic school, he was the heir of the Troubadours, the sympathetic peer of Byron, and in his translation of Goetz von Berlichingen he laid the first rafters of our bridge to Germany.

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881) is on the whole the strongest, though far from the finest spirit of the age succeeding—an age of criticism threatening to crowd creation out, of jostling interests and of surging streams, some of which he has striven to direct, more to stem. Even now what Mill twenty-five years ago wrote of Coleridge is still true of Carlyle: "The reading public is apt to be divided between those to whom his views are everything and those to whom they are nothing." But it is possible to extricate from a mass of often turbid eloquence the strands of his thought and to measure his influence by indicating its range.

Travellers in the Hartz, ascending the Brocken, are in certain atmospheres startled by the apparition of a shadowy figure,—a giant image of themselves, thrown on the horizon by the dawn. Similar is the relation of Carlyle to the common types of his countrymen. Burns, despite his perfervid

Character

patriotism, was in many ways "a starry stranger." Carlyle was Scotch to the core and to the close, in every respect a macrocosm of the higher peasant class of the Lowlanders. Saturated to the last with the spirit of a dismissed creed, he fretted in bonds from which he could never get wholly free. Intrepid, independent, steadfast, frugal, prudent, dauntless, he trampled on the pride of kings with the pride of Lucifer. He was clannish to excess, painfully jealous of proximate rivals, self-centred if not self-seeking, fired by zeal and inflamed by almost mean emulations, resenting benefits as debts, ungenerous—with one exception, that of Goethe,—to his intellectual creditors; and, with reference to men and manners around him at variance with himself, violently intolerant. He bore a strange relation to the great poet, in many ways his predecessor in influence, whom with persistent inconsistency he alternately eulogised and disparaged, the half Scot Lord Byron. One had by nature many affinities to the Latin races, the other was purely Teutonic: but the power of both was Titanic rather than Olympian; both were forces of revolution; both protested, in widely different fashion, against the tendency of the age to submerge Individualism; both were to a large extent egoists: the one whining, the other roaring, against the "Philistine" restraints of ordinary society. Both had hot hearts, big brains, and an exhaustless store of winged and fiery words; both were wrapt in a measureless discontent, and made constant appeal against what they deemed the shallows of Optimism; Carlylism is the prose rather than "the male of Byronism." The contrasts are no less obvious: the author of *Sartor Resartus*, however vaguely, defended the System of the Universe; the author of *Cain*, with an audacity that in its essence went beyond that of Shelley, arraigned it. In both we find vehemence and substantial honesty; but, in the one, there is a dominant faith,

tempered by pride, in the "caste of Vere de Vere," in Freedom for itself—a faith marred by shifting purposes, the garrulous incontinence of vanity, and a broken life; in the other unwavering belief in Law. The record of their fame is diverse. Byron leapt into the citadel, awoke and found himself the greatest inheritor of an ancient name. Carlyle, a peasant's son, laid slow siege to his eminence, and, only after outliving twice the years of the other, attained it. His career was a struggle, sterner than that of either Johnson or Wordsworth, from obscurity, almost from contempt, to a rarely challenged renown. Fifty years ago few "so poor to do him reverence": at his death, in a sunset storm of praise, the air was full of him, and deafening was the Babel of the reviews; for the progress of every original thinker is accompanied by a stream of commentary that swells as it runs till it ends in a dismal swamp of platitude. Carlyle's first recognition was from America, his last from his own countrymen. His teaching came home to their hearts "late in the gloamin'." In Scotland, where, for good or ill, passions are in extremes, he was long howled down, lampooned, preached at, prayed for: till, after his Edinburgh Inaugural Address, he of a sudden became the object of an equally blind devotion; and was, often by the very men who had tried and condemned him for blasphemy, as senselessly credited with essential orthodoxy. "The stone which the builders rejected became the headstone of the corner," the terror of the pulpit its text. Carlyle's decease was marked by a dirge of rhapsodists whose measureless acclamations stifled the voice of sober criticism. In the realm of contemporary English prose he has left no adequate successor;¹ the throne that does not pass by primogeniture is vacant, and the bleak northern skies seem colder and grayer since

¹ The nearest being the now foremost prose writers of our time, Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Froude.

that venerable head was laid to rest by the village churchyard, far from the smoke and din of the great city on whose streets his figure was long familiar and his name was at last so honoured.

Carlyle first saw the world tempest-tossed by the events he celebrates in his earliest History. In its opening pages, we are made to listen to the feet and chariots of "Dubarrydom" hurrying from the "Armida Palace," where Louis XV. and the *ancien régime* lay dying; later to the ticking of the clocks in Launay's doomed Bastile; again to the tocsin of the steeples that roused the singers of the *Marseillaise* to march from "their bright Phocæan city" and grapple with the Swiss guard, last bulwark of the Bourbons. "The Swiss would have won," the historian characteristically quotes from Napoleon, "if they had had a commander." Already, over little more than the space of the author's life—for he was a contemporary of Keats, born seven months before the death of Burns, Shelley's junior by three, Scott's by twenty-four, Byron's by seven years—three years after Goethe went to feel the pulse of the "cannon-fever" at Argonne—already these sounds are across a sea. Two whole generations have passed with the memory of half their storms. "Another race hath been, and other palms are won." Old policies, governments, councils, creeds, modes and hopes of life have been sifted in strange fires. Assaye, Trafalgar, Austerlitz, Jena, Leipzig, Inkermann, Sadowa,—Waterloo when he was twenty and Sedan when he was seventy-five,—have been fought and won. Born under the French Directory and the Presidency of Washington, Carlyle survived two French empires, two kingdoms, and two republics; elsewhere partitions, abolitions, revivals and deaths of States innumerable. During his life our sway in the East doubled its area, two peoples (the German with, the Italian without, his sympathy) were consolidated

on the Continent, while another across the Atlantic developed to a magnitude that amazes and sometimes alarms the rest. Aggressions were made and repelled, patriots perorated and fought, diplomatists finessed with a zeal worthy of the world's most restless, if not its wisest, age. In the internal affairs of the leading nations the transformation scenes were often as rapid as those of a pantomime. The Art and Literature of those eighty-six years—stirred to new thought and form at their commencement by the so-called Romantic movement, more recently influenced by the Classic reaction, the Pre-Raphaelite protest, the *Æsthetic mode*,—followed various, even contradictory, standards. But, in one line of progress, there was no shadow of turning. Over the road which Bacon laid roughly down and Newton made safe for transit, Physical Science, during the whole period, advanced without let and beyond the cavil of ignorance. If the dreams of the *New Atlantis* have not even in our days been wholly realised, Science has been brought from heaven to earth, and the elements made ministers of Prospero's wand. This apparent, and partially real, conquest of matter has doubtless done much to "relieve our estate," to make life in some directions run more smoothly, and to multiply resources to meet the demands of rapidly-increasing multitudes: but it is in danger of becoming a conquest of matter over us; for the agencies we have called into almost fearful activity threaten, like Frankenstein's miscreated goblin, to beat us down to the same level. Sanguine spirits who

throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring, With, at every mile run faster, O the wondrous, wondrous age, are apt to forget that the electric light can do nothing to dispel the darkness of the mind; that there are strict

limits to the power of prosperity to supply man's wants or satisfy his aspirations. This is a great part of Carlyle's teaching. It is impossible, were it desirable, accurately to define his religious, social, or political creed. He swallows formulæ with the voracity of Mirabeau, and like Proteus escapes analysis. No printed labels will stick to him: when we seek to corner him by argument he thunders and lightens. Emerson complains that he failed to extract from him a definite answer about Immortality. Neither by syllogism nor by crucible could Bacon himself have made the "Form" of Carlyle to confess itself. But call him what we will—essential Calvinist or recalcitrant Neologist, Mystic, Idealist, Deist or Pantheist, practical Absolutist, or "the strayed reveller" of Radicalism—he is consistent in his even bigoted antagonism to all Utilitarian solutions of the problems of the world. One of the foremost physicists of our time was among his truest and most loyal friends; they were bound together by the link of genius and kindred political views; and Carlyle was himself an expert in mathematics, the mental science that most obviously subserves physical research: but of Physics themselves (astronomy being scarcely a physical science) his ignorance was profound, and his abusive criticisms of such men as Darwin are infantile. This intellectual defect, or rather vacuum, left him free to denounce material views of life with unconditioned vehemence. "Will the whole upholsterers," he exclaims in his half comic, sometimes nonsensical, vein, "and confectioners of modern Europe undertake to make one single shoeblack happy!" And more seriously of the railways, without whose noisy aid he had never been able to visit the battle-fields of Friedrich II.—

Our stupendous railway miracles I have stopped short in admiring. . . . The distances of London to Aberdeen, to Ostend, to Vienna, are still infinitely inadequate to me. Will you teach

me the winged flight through immensity, up to the throne dark with excess of bright? You unfortunate, you grin as an ape would at such a question: you do not know that unless you can reach thither in some effectual most veritable sense, you are lost, doomed to Hela's death-realm and the abyss where mere brutes are buried. I do not want cheaper cotton, swifter railways; I want what Novalis calls "God, Freedom, and Immortality." Will swift railways and sacrifices to Hudson help me towards that?

The ECONOMIC AND MECHANICAL SPIRIT of the age, faith in mere steel or stone, was one of Carlyle's red rags. The others were INSINCERITY in Politics and in Life, DEMOCRACY without Reverence, and PHILANTHROPY without Sense. In our time these two last powers have made such strides as to threaten the Reign of Law. The Democrat without a ruler, who protests that one man is by nature as good as another, according to Carlyle is "shooting Niagara." In deference to the mandate of the philanthropist the last shred of brutality, with much of decision, has vanished from our code. Sentiment is in office and Mercy not only tempers, but threatens to gag Justice. When Sir Samuel Romilly began his beneficent agitation, and Carlyle was at school, talkers of treason were liable to be disembowelled before execution; now the crime of treason is practically erased, and the free use of dynamite brings so-called reforms "within the range of practical politics." Individualism was still a mark of the early years of the century. The spirit of "L'Etat c'est moi" survived in Mirabeau's "never name to me that *bête* of a word 'impossible';" in the first Napoleon's threat to the Austrian ambassador, "I will break your empire like this vase"; in Nelson turning his blind eye to the signal of retreat at Copenhagen, and Wellington fencing Torres Vedras against the world: it lingered in Nicholas the Czar, and has found perhaps its latest political representative in Prince Bismarck.

Individualism

This is the spirit to which Carlyle has always given his undivided sympathy. He has held out hands to Knox, Francia, Friedrich, to the men who have made manners, not to the manners which have made men, to the rulers of people, not to their representatives: and the not inconsiderable following he has obtained is the most conspicuous tribute to a power resolute to pull against the stream. How strong its currents may be illustrated by a few lines from our leading literary journal, the *Athenæum*, of the Saturday after his death:—

“The future historian of the century will have to record the marvellous fact that while in the reign of Queen Victoria there was initiated, formulated, and methodised an entirely new cosmogony, its most powerful and highly-gifted man of letters was preaching a polity and a philosophy of history that would have better harmonised with the time of Queen Semiramis. . . . Long before he launched his sarcasms at human progress, there had been a conviction among thinkers that it was not the hero that developed the race, but a deep mysterious energy in the race that produced the hero; that the wave produced the bubble, and not the bubble the wave. But the moment a theory of evolution saw the light it was a fact. The old cosmogony, on which were built *Sartor Resartus* and the Calvinism of Ecclefechan, were gone. Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move; but it moved nevertheless. The great stream of modern thought has advanced; the theory of evolution has been universally accepted; nations, it is acknowledged, produce kings, and kings are denied the faculty of producing nations.”

Taliter, qualiter; but one or two remarks on the incisive summary of this adroit and able theorist are obvious. First, the implied assertion,—“Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move,”—that Carlyle was in essential

sympathy with the Inquisitors who confronted Galileo with the rack, is perhaps the strangest piece of recent criticism extant: for what is his *French Revolution* but a cannonade in three volumes, reverberating, as no other book has done, a hurricane of revolutionary thought and deed, a final storming of old fortresses, an assertion of the necessity of movement, progress, and upheaval? Secondly, every new discovery is apt to be discredited by new shibboleths, and one-sided exaggerations of its range. It were platitude to say that Mr. Darwin was not only an almost unrivalled student of nature, as careful and conscientious in his methods, as fearless in stating his results, but—pace Mr. Carlyle—a man of genius, who has thrown floods of light on the inter-relations of the organic world. But there are whole troops of serfs, “*addicti jurare in verba magistri*,” who, accepting, without attempt or capacity to verify the conclusions of the master mind, think to solve all the mysteries of the universe by ejaculating the word “*Evolution*.” If I ask what was the secret of Dante’s or of Shakespeare’s divining rod, and you answer “*Evolution*,” ’tis as if, when sick in heart and sick in head, I were referred, as medicine for “*a mind diseased*,” to Grimm’s Law or to the Magnetic Belt.

Let us grant that Cæsar was evolved from the currents in the air about the Roman Capitol, that Marcus Aurelius was a blend of Plato and Cleanthes, Charlemagne a graft of Frankish blood on Gallic soil, William I. a rill from Rollo filtered in Neustrian fields, Hildebrand a flame from the altar of the mediæval church, Barbarossa a plant grown to masterdom in German woods, or later—not to heap up figures whose memories still possess the world—that Columbus was a Genoan breeze, Bacon a *réchauffé* of Elizabethan thought, Orange the Silent a Dutch dyke, Chatham the frontispiece of eighteenth-century England, or

Corsican Buonaparte the "armed soldier of Democracy." These men, at all events, were no bubbles on the froth of the waves which they defied and dominated.

N. | So much, and more, is to be said for Carlyle's insistence that great men are creators as well as creatures of their age. Doubtless, as we advance in history, direct personal influence, happily or unhappily, declines. In an era of overwrought activity, of superficial, however free, education, when we run the risk of being associated into nothingness and criticised to death, it remains a question whether, in the interests of the highest civilisation (which means opportunity for every capable citizen to lead the highest life), the subordination of the one to the many ought to be accelerated or retarded. It is said that the triumph of Democracy is a mere "matter of time." But time is in this case of the essence of the matter, and the party of resistance will all the more earnestly maintain that the defenders should hold the forts till the invaders have become civilised. "The individual withers and the world is more and more," precludes, though over a long interval, the cynic comment of the second "Locksley Hall" on the "increasing purpose" of the age. At an earlier date "Luria" had protested against the arrogance of mere majorities.

A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models to the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.

Carlyle set these notes to Tennyson and to Browning in his *Hero-Worship*—a creed, though in thought, and more in action, older than Buddha or than Achilles, which he first launched as a dogma on our times, clenching it with the asseveration that on two men, Mirabeau and Napoleon,

mainly hung the fates of the most nominally levelling of Revolutions. The stamp his teaching made remains marked on the minds of the men of light who *lead*, and cannot be wholly effaced by the clamour of the men of words who *orate*. If he leans unduly to the exaltation of personal power, Carlyle is on the side of those whose defeat can be beneficent only if it be slow. Further to account for his attitude, we must refer to his life and to its surroundings, *i.e.* to the circumstances amid which he was "evolved."

CHAPTER II

ECCLEFECHAN AND EDINBURGH

[1795-1826]

IN the introduction to one of his essays, Carlyle has warned us against giving too much weight to genealogy: but all his biographies, from the sketch of the Riquetti kindred to his full-length *Friedrich*, prefaced by two volumes of ancestry, recognise, if they do not overrate, inherited influences; and similarly his fragments of autobiography abound in suggestive reference. His family portraits are to be accepted with the deductions due to the family fever that was the earliest form of his hero-worship. Carlyle, says the *Athenæum* critic before quoted, divides contemporary mankind into the fools and the wise: the wise are the Carlyles, the Welshes, the Aitkens, and Edward Irving; the fools all the rest of unfortunate mortals: a Fuseli stroke of the critic¹ rivalling any of the author criticised; yet the comment has a grain of truth.

The Carlyles are said to have come, from the English town somewhat differently spelt, to Annandale, with David II.; and, according to a legend which the great author did not disdain to accept, among them was a certain Lord of Torthorwald, so created for defences of the Border. The

¹ Even the most adverse critics of Carlyle are often his imitators, their hands taking a dye from what they work in.

churchyard of Ecclefechan is profusely strewn with the graves of the family, all with coats of arms—two griffins with adders' stings. More definitely we find Thomas, the author's grandfather, settled in that dullest of county villages as a carpenter. In 1745 he saw the rebel Highlanders on their southward march: he was notable for his study of *Anson's Voyages* and of the *Arabian Nights*: "a fiery man, his stroke as ready as his word; of the toughness and springiness of steel; an honest but not an industrious man"; subsequently tenant of a small farm, in which capacity he does not seem to have managed his affairs with much effect; the family were subjected to severe privations, the mother having, on occasion, to heat the meal into cakes by straw taken from the sacks on which the children slept. In such an atmosphere there grew and throve the five sons known as the five fighting masons—"a curious sample of folks," said an old apprentice of one of them, "pithy, bitter speaking bodies, and awfu' fighters." The second of the group, James, born 1757, married—first, a full cousin, Janet Carlyle (the sole issue of which marriage was John, who lived at Cockermouth); second, Margaret Aitken, by whom he had four sons—THOMAS, 1795-1881; Alexander, 1797-1876; John (Dr. Carlyle, translator of Dante), 1801-1879; and James, 1805-1890; also five daughters, one of whom, Jane, became the wife of her cousin James Aitken of Dumfries, and the mother of Mary, the niece who tended her famous uncle so faithfully during the last years of his life. Nowhere is Carlyle's loyalty to his race shown in a fairer light than in the first of the papers published under the name of *Reminiscences*. It differs from the others in being of an early date and free from all offence. From this pathetic sketch, written when on a visit to London in 1832 he had sudden news of his father's death, we may, even in our brief space,

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extract a few passages which throw light on the characters, *i.e.* the points of contact and contrast of the writer and his theme:—

In several respects I consider my father as one of the most interesting men I have known, . . . of perhaps the very largest natural endowment of any it has been my lot to converse with. None of you will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from his untutored soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was), with all manner of potent words. . . . Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible which did not become almost ocularly so. Emphatic I have heard him beyond all men. In anger he had no need of oaths: his words were like sharp arrows that smote into the very heart. The fault was that he exaggerated (which tendency I also inherit), yet in description, and for the sake chiefly of humorous effect. He was a man of rigid, even scrupulous veracity. . . . He was never visited with doubt. The old Theorem of the Universe was sufficient for him . . . he stood a true man, while his son stands here on the verge of the new. . . . A virtue he had which I should learn to imitate: he never spoke of what was disagreeable and past. His was a healthy mind. He had the most open contempt for all "clatter." . . . He was irascible, choleric, and we all dreaded his wrath, but passion never mastered him. . . . Man's face he did not fear: God he always feared. His reverence was, I think, considerably mixed with fear—rather awe, as of unutterable depths of silence through which flickered a trembling hope. . . . Let me learn of him. Let me write my books as he built his houses, and walk as blamelessly through this shadow world. . . . Though genuine and coherent, living and life-giving, he was nevertheless but half developed. We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him. His heart seemed as if walled in: he had not the free means to unbosom himself. . . . It seemed as if an atmosphere of fear repelled us from him. To me it was especially so. Till late years I was ever more or less awed and chilled by him.

James Carlyle has been compared to the father of Burns. The failings of both leant to virtue's side, in different ways. They were at one in their integrity, independence, fighting

force at stress, and their command of winged words; but the elder had a softer heart, more love of letters, a broader spirit; the younger more power to stem adverse tides, he was a better man of business, made of tougher clay, and a grimmer Calvinist. "Mr. Lawson," he writes in 1817, "is doing very well, and has given us no more paraphrases." He seems to have grown more rigid as he aged, under the narrowing influences of the Covenanting land; but he remained stable and compact as the Auldgarth Bridge, built with his own hands. James Carlyle hammered on at Ecclefechan, making in his best year £100, till, after the first decade of the century, the family migrated to Mainhill, a bleak farm two miles from Lockerbie, where he so throve by work and thrift that he left on his death in 1832 about £1000. Strong, rough, and eminently *straight*, intolerant of contradiction and ready with words like blows, his unsympathetic side recalls rather the father of the Brontës on the wild Yorkshire moor than William Burness by the ingle of Mount Oliphant. Margaret Carlyle was in theological theory as strict as her husband, and for a time made more moan over the aberrations of her favourite son. Like most Scotch mothers of her rank, she had set her heart on seeing him in a pulpit, from which any other eminence seemed a fall; but she became, though comparatively illiterate, having only late in life learnt to write a letter, a student of his books. Over these they talked, smoking together in old country fashion by the hearth; and she was to the last proud of the genius which grew in large measure under the unfailing sunshine of her anxious love.

Book II. of *Sartor* is an acknowledged fragment of autobiography, mainly a record of the author's inner life, but with numerous references to his environment. There is not much to identify the foster parents of Teufelsdröckh, and the dramatic drollery of the child's advent takes the

place of ancestry: Entepfuhl is obviously Ecclefechan, where the ducks are paddling in the ditch that has to pass muster for a stream, to-day as a century gone: the severe frugality which (as in the case of Wordsworth and Carlyle himself) survived the need for it, is clearly recalled; also the discipline of the Roman-like domestic law, "In an orderly house, where the litter of children's sports is hateful, your training is rather to bear than to do. I was forbid much, wishes in any measure bold I had to renounce; everywhere a strait bond of obedience inflexibly held me down. It was not a joyful life, yet . . . a wholesome one." The following oft-quoted passage is characteristic of his early love of nature and the humorous touches by which he was wont to relieve his fits of sentiment:—

On fine evenings I was wont to carry forth my supper (bread crumb boiled in milk) and eat it out of doors. On the coping of the wall, which I could reach by climbing, my porringer was placed: there many a sunset have I, looking at the distant mountains, consumed, not without relish, my evening meal. Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of world's expectation as day died, were still a Hebrew speech for me: nevertheless I was looking at the fair illumined letters, and had an eye for the gilding.

In all that relates to the writer's own education, the *Dichtung* of *Sartor* and the *Wahrheit* of the *Reminiscences* are in accord. By Carlyle's own account, an "insignificant portion" of it "depended on schools." Like Burns, he was for some years trained in his own parish, where home influences counted for more than the teaching of not very competent masters. He soon read eagerly and variously. At the age of seven he was, by an Inspector of the old order, reported to be "complete in English." In his tenth year (1805) he was sent to the Grammar School of Annan, the "Hinterschlag Gymnasium," where

his "evil days" began. Every oversensitive child finds the life of a public school one long misery. Ordinary boys—those of the Scotch borderland being of the most savage type—are more brutal than ordinary men; they hate singularity as the world at first hates originality, and have none of the restraints which the later semi-civilisation of life imposes. "They obey the impulse of rude Nature which bids the deer herd fall upon any stricken hart, the duck flock put to death any broken-winged brother or sister, and on all hands the strong tyrannise over the weak." Young Carlyle was mocked for his moody ways, laughed at for his love of solitude, and called "Tom the Tearful" because of his habit of crying. To add much to his discomfort, he had made a rash promise to his pious mother, who seems, in contrast to her husband's race, to have adopted non-resistance principles—a promise to abstain from fighting, provocative of many cuffs till it was well broken by a *hinter-schlag*, applied to some blustering bully. Nor had he refuge in the sympathy of his teachers, "hide-bound pedants, who knew Syntax enough, and of the human soul thus much: that it had a faculty called Memory, which could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch rods." At Annan, however, he acquired a fair knowledge of Latin and French, the rudiments of algebra, the Greek alphabet, began to study history, and had his first glimpse of Edward Irving, the bright prize-taker from Edinburgh, later his Mentor and then life-long friend. On Thomas's return home it was decided to send him to the University, despite the cynical warning of one of the village cronies, "Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents." "Thou hast not done so," said old James in after years, "God be thanked for it;" and the son pays due tribute to the tolerant patience and substantial generosity of the father: "With a noble faith he launched me forth into a

world which he himself had never been permitted to visit." Carlyle walked through Moffat all the way to Edinburgh with a senior student, Tom Smail (who owes to this fact the preservation of his name), with eyes open to every shade on the moors, as is attested in two passages of the *Reminiscences*. The boys, as is the fashion still, clubbed together in cheap lodgings, and Carlyle attended the curriculum from 1809 to 1814. Comparatively little is known of his college life, which seems to have been for the majority of Scotch students much as it is now, a compulsorily frugal life, with too little variety, relaxation, or society outside Class rooms; and, within them, a constant tug at Science, mental or physical, at the gateway to dissecting souls or bodies. We infer, from hints in later conversations and memorials, that Carlyle lived much with his own fancies, and owed little to any system. He is clearly thinking of his own youth in his account of Dr. Francia: "Josè must have been a loose-made tawny creature, much given to taciturn reflection, probably to crying humours, with fits of vehement ill nature—subject to the terriblest fits of hypochondria." His explosion in *Sartor*, "It is my painful duty to say that out of England and Spain, ours was the worst of all hitherto discovered Universities," is the first of a long series of libels on things and persons he did not like. The Scotch capital was still a literary centre of some original brilliancy, in the light of the circle of Scott, which followed that of Burns, in the early fame of Cockburn and of Clerk (Lord Eldin), of the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, and of the elder Alison. The Chairs of the University were conspicuously well filled by men of the sedate sort of ability required from Professors, some of them—conspicuously Brown (the more original if less "sound" successor of Dugald Stewart), Playfair, and Leslie—rising to a higher rank. But great Educational Institutions must adapt themselves to the

training of average minds by requirements and restrictions against which genius always rebels. Biography more than History repeats itself, and the murmurs of Carlyle are, like those of Milton, Gibbon, Locke, and Wordsworth, the protests or growls of irrepressible individuality kicking against the pricks. He was never in any sense a classic; read Greek with difficulty—Æschylus and Sophocles mainly in translations—and while appreciating Tacitus disparaged Horace. For Scotch Metaphysics, or any logical system, he never cared, and in his days there was written over the Academic entrances "No Mysticism." He distinguished himself in Mathematics, and soon found, by his own vaunt,¹ the *Principia* of Newton prostrate at his feet: he was a favourite pupil of Leslie, who escaped the frequent penalty of befriending him, but he took no prizes: the noise in the class room hindered his answers, and he said later to Mr. Froude that thoughts only came to him properly when alone. The social leader of a select set of young men in his own rank, by choice and necessity *integer vitæ*, he divided his time between the seclusion of study and writing letters, in which kind of literature he was perhaps the most prolific writer of his time. In 1814 Carlyle completed his course without taking a degree, did some tutorial work, and, in the same year, accepted the post of Mathematical Usher at Annan as successor to Irving, who had been translated to Haddington. Still in formal pursuit of the ministry, though beginning to fight shy of its fences, he went up twice a year to deliver addresses at the Divinity Hall, one of which, "on the uses of affliction," was afterwards by himself condemned as flowery; another was a Latin thesis on the theme, "num detur religio naturalis." The

¹ He went so far as to say in 1847 that "the man who had mastered the first forty-seven propositions of Euclid stood nearer to God than he had done before."

posthumous publication of some of his writings, *e.g.* of the fragment of the novel *Wotton Reinfred*, reconciles us to the loss of those which have not been recovered.

In the vacations, spent at Mainhill, he began to study German, and corresponded with his College friends. Many of Carlyle's early letters, reproduced in the volumes edited by Mr. Charles E. Norton, are written in that which, according to Voltaire, is the only unpermissible style, "the tiresome"; and the thought, far from being precocious, is distinctly commonplace, *e.g.* the letter to Robert Mitchell on the fall of Napoleon; or the following to his parents: "There are few things in this world more valuable than knowledge, and youth is the season for acquiring it"; or to James Johnstone the trite quotation, "Truly pale death overturns with impartial foot the hut of the poor man and the palace of the king." Several are marred by the egotism which in most Scotch peasants of aspiring talent takes the form of perpetual comparison of themselves with others; refrains of the ambition against which the writer elsewhere inveighs as the "kettle tied to the dog's tail." In a note to Thomas Murray he writes:—

Ever since I have been able to form a wish, the wish of being known has been the foremost. Oh, Fortune! bestow coronets and crowns and principalities and purses, and pudding and power, upon the great and noble and fat ones of the earth. Grant me that, with a heart unyielding to thy favours and unbending to thy frowns, I may attain to literary fame.

That his critical and literary instincts were yet undeveloped there is ample proof. Take his comment, at the age of nineteen, on the verses of Leyden:—

Shout, Britons, for the battle of Assaye,
For that was a day
When we stood in our array
Like the lion's might at bay.

"Can anything be grander?" To Johnstone (who with Mitchell consumes almost a volume) he writes: "Read Shakespeare. If you have not, then I desire you read it (*sic*) and tell me what you think of *him*," etc. Elsewhere the dogmatic summary of Hume's "Essays" illustrates the lingering eighteenth-century Latinism that had been previously travestied in the more stilted passages of the letters of Burns. "Many of his opinions are not to be adopted. How odd does it look to refer all the modifications of national character to the influence of moral causes. Might it not be asserted with some plausibility that even those which he denominates moral causes originate from physical circumstances?" The whole first volume of this somewhat over-expanded collection overflows with ebullitions of bile, in comparison with which the misanthropy of Byron's early romances seems philanthropy, *e.g.*—

P.N. | How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world. For what are its inhabitants? Its great men and its little, its fat ones and its lean . . . pitiful automata, despicable Yahoos, yea, they are altogether an insufferable thing. "O for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade, where the scowl of the purse-proud nabob, the sneer and strut of the coxcomb, the bray of the ninny and the clodpole might never reach me more!"

On the other hand, there are frequent evidences of the imperial intrepidity, the matchless industry, and the splendid independence of the writer. In his twenty-first year Carlyle again succeeded his Annan predecessor (who seems to have given dissatisfaction by some vagaries of severity) as mathematical teacher in the main school of Kirkcaldy. The *Reminiscences* of Irving's generous reception of his protégé present one of the pleasantest pictures in the records of their friendship. The same chapter is illustrated by a series of sketches of the scenery of the

east coast rarely rivalled in descriptive literature. It is elsewhere enlivened, if also defaced, by the earliest examples of the cynical criticisms of character that make most readers rejoice in having escaped the author's observation.

During the two years of his residence in Fifeshire, Carlyle encountered his first romance, in making acquaintance with a well-born young lady, "by far the brightest and cleverest" of Irving's pupils—Margaret Gordon—"an acquaintance which might easily have been more" had not relatives and circumstances intervened. Doubtless Mr. Froude is right in asserting this lady to have been the original of *Sartor's* "Blumine"; and in leaving him to marry "Herr Towgood," ultimately governor of Nova Scotia, she bequeathed, though in antithetical style, advice that attests her discrimination of character. "Cultivate the milder dispositions of the heart, subdue the mere extravagant visions of the brain. Genius will render you great. May virtue render you beloved. Remove the awful distance between you and other men by kind and gentle manners. Deal gently with their inferiority, and be convinced that they will respect you as much and like you more." To this advice, which he never even tried to take, she adds, happily perhaps for herself, "I give you not my address, because I dare not promise to see you." In 1818 Carlyle, always intolerant of work imposed, came to the conclusion that "it were better to perish than to continue schoolmastering," and left Kirkcaldy, with £90 saved, for Edinburgh, where he lived over three years, taking private pupils, and trying to enter on his real mission through the gates of literature—gates constantly barred; for, even in those older days of laxer competition, obstinate eccentricity unredeemed by any social advantages led to failure and rebuff. Men with the literary form of genius highly developed have rarely much endurance of defeat.

Carlyle, even in his best moods, resented real or fancied injuries, and at this stage of his career complained that he got nothing but vinegar from his fellows, comparing himself to a worm that trodden on would "turn into a torpedo." He had begun to be tormented by the dyspepsia, which "gnawed like a rat" at its life-long tenement, his stomach, and by sleeplessness, due in part to internal causes, but also to the "Bedlam" noises of men, machines, and animals, which pestered him in town and country from first to last. He kept hesitating about his career, tried law, mathematical teaching, contributions to magazines and dictionaries, everything but journalism, to which he had a rooted repugnance, and the Church, which he had definitely abandoned. How far the change in his views may have been due to his reading of Gibbon,¹ Rousseau, Voltaire, etc., how far to self-reflection, is uncertain; but he already found himself unable, in any plain sense, to subscribe to the Westminster Confession or to any "orthodox" Articles, and equally unable by any philosophical reconciliation of contraries to write black with white on a ground of neutral gray. Mentally and physically adrift he was midway in the valley of the shadow, which he represents as "The Everlasting No," and beset by "temptations in the wilderness." At this crisis he writes, "The biographies of men of letters are the wretchedest chapters in our history, except perhaps the Newgate Calendar," a remark that recalls the similar cry of Burns, "There is not among the martyr-ologies so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets." Carlyle, reverting to this crisis, refers with constant bitterness to the absence of a popularity which he yet professes to scorn.

¹ He refers to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* as "of all books the most impressive on me in my then stage of investigation and state of mind. His winged sarcasms, so quiet and yet so conclusively transpiercing, were often admirably potent and illustrative to me."

I was entirely unknown in Edinburgh circles ; solitary eating my own heart, misgivings as to whether there shall be presently anything else to eat, fast losing health, a prey to numerous struggles and miseries . . . three weeks without any kind of sleep, from impossibility to be free of noise, . . . wanderings through mazes of doubt, perpetual questions unanswered, etc.

What is this but Byron's cry, "I am not happy," which his afterwards stern critic compares to the screaming of a meat-jack ?

Carlyle carried with him from town to country the same dismal mood. "Mainhill," says his biographer, "was never a less happy home to him than it was this summer (1819). He could not conceal the condition of his mind ; and to his family, to whom the truth of their creed was no more a matter of doubt than the presence of the sun in the sky, he must have seemed as if possessed."

Returning to Edinburgh in the early winter, he for a time wrote hopefully about his studies. "The law I find to be a most complicated subject, yet I like it pretty well. Its great charm in my eyes is that no mean compliances are requisite for prospering in it." But this strain soon gave way to a fresh fit of perversity, and we have a record of his throwing up the cards in one of his most ill-natured notes.

I did read some law books, attend Hume's lectures on Scotch law, and converse with and question various dull people of the practical sort. But it and they and the admired lecturing Hume himself appeared to me mere denizens of the kingdom of dulness, pointing towards nothing but money as wages for all that bogpool of disgust.

The same year (that of Peterloo) was that of the Radical rising in Glasgow against the poverty which was the natural aftermath of the great war, oppressions, half real, half imaginary, of the military force, and the yeomanry in particular. Carlyle's contribution to the reminiscences of

the time is doubly interesting because written (in the article on Irving, 1836) from memory, when he had long ceased to be a Radical. A few sentences suffice to illustrate this phase or stage of his political progress :—

A time of great rages and absurd terrors and expectations, a very fierce Radical and anti-Radical time. Edinburgh, endlessly agitated by it all around me . . . gentry people full of zeal and foolish terror and fury, and looking *disgustingly busy and important*. . . . One bleared Sunday morning I had gone out for my walk. At the Riding-house in Nicolson Street was a kind of straggly group, with red-coats interspersed. They took their way, not very dangerous-looking men of war; but there rose from the little crowd the strangest shout I have heard human throats utter, not very loud, but it said as plain as words, and with infinitely more emphasis of sincerity, "May the devil go with you, ye peculiarly contemptible, and dead to the distresses of your fellow-creatures!" Another morning . . . I met an advocate slightly of my acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, towards the Links, there to be drilled as item of the "gentlemen" volunteers now afoot. "You should have the like of this," said he, cheerily patting his musket. "Hm, yes; but I haven't yet quite settled on which side"—which probably he hoped was quiz, though it really expressed my feeling . . . mutiny and revolt being a light matter to the young.

This period is illustrated by numerous letters from Irving, who had migrated to Glasgow as an assistant to Dr. Chalmers, abounding in sound counsels to persevere in some profession and make the best of practical opportunities. Carlyle's answers have in no instance been preserved, but the sole trace of his having been influenced by his friend's advice is his contribution (1820-1823) of sixteen¹

¹ The subjects of these were—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Montfaucon, Dr. Moore, Sir John Moore, Necker, Nelson, Netherlands, Newfoundland, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Mungo Park, Lord Chatham, William Pitt. These articles, on the whole judiciously omitted from the author's collected works, are characterised by marks of great industry, commonplace, and general fairness, with a style singularly formal, like that of the less im-

articles to the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia* under the editorship of Sir David Brewster. The scant remuneration obtained from these was well timed, but they contain no original matter, and did nothing for his fame. Meanwhile it appears from one of Irving's letters that Carlyle's thoughts had been, as later in his early London life, turning towards emigration. He says, writes his friend, "I have the ends of my thoughts to bring together . . . my views of life to reform, my health to recover, and then once more I shall venture my bark on the waters of this wide realm, and if she cannot weather it I shall steer west and try the waters of another world."

The resolves, sometimes the efforts, of celebrated Englishmen,—“*nos manet oceanus*,”—as Cromwell, Burns, Coleridge, and Southey (allured, some critic suggests, by the poetical sound of *Susquehanna*), Arthur Clough, Richard Hengist Horne, and Browning's “*Waring*,”¹ to elude

pressive pages of Johnson. The following, among numerous passages, are curious as illustrating the comparative orthodoxy of the writer's early judgments: “The brilliant hints which Montesquieu scatters round him with a liberal hand have excited or assisted the speculations of others in almost every department of political economy, and he is deservedly mentioned as a principal founder of that important science.” “Mirabeau confronted him (Necker) like his evil genius; and being totally without scruple in the employment of any expedient, was but too successful in overthrowing all reasonable proposals, and conducting the people to that state of anarchy out of which his own ambition was to be rewarded,” etc. Similarly the verdicts on Pitt, Chatham, Nelson, Park, Lady Montagu, etc., are those of an ordinary intelligent Englishman of conscientious research, fed on the “*Lives of the Poets*” and Trafalgar memories. The morality, as in the *Essay on Montaigne*, is unexceptionable; the following would commend itself to any boarding school: “Melancholy experience has never ceased to show that great warlike talents, like great talents of any kind, may be united with a coarse and ignoble heart.”

¹ Cf. the American Bryant himself, in his longing to leave his New York Press and “plant him where the red deer feed, in the green forest,” to lead the life of Robin Hood and Shakespeare's banished Duke.

“the fever and the fret” of an old civilisation, and take refuge in the fancied freedom of wild lands—when more than dreams—have been failures. Puritan patriots, it is true, made New England, and the scions of the Cavaliers Virginia; but no poet or imaginative writer has ever been successfully transplanted, with the dubious exception of Heinrich Heine. It is certain that, despite his first warm recognition coming from across the Atlantic, the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* would have found the “States” more fruitful in food for cursing than either Edinburgh or London.

The spring of 1820 was marked by a memorable visit to Irving, on Carlyle’s way to spend as was his wont the summer months at home. His few days in Glasgow are recorded in a graphic sketch of the bald-headed merchants at the Tontine, and an account of his introduction to Dr. Chalmers, to whom he refers always with admiration and a respect but slightly modified. The critic’s praise of British contemporaries, other than relatives, is so rare that the following sentences are worth transcribing:—

He (Chalmers) was a man of much natural dignity, ingenuity, honesty, and kind affection, as well as sound intellect and imagination. . . . He had a burst of genuine fun too. . . . His laugh was ever a hearty, low guffaw, and his tones in preaching would reach to the piercingly pathetic. No preacher ever went so into one’s heart. He was a man essentially of little culture, of narrow sphere all his life. Such an intellect, professing to be educated, and yet . . . ignorant in all that lies beyond the horizon in place or time I have almost nowhere met with—a man capable of so much soaking indolence, lazy brooding . . . as the first stage of his life well indicated, . . . yet capable of impetuous activity and braying audacity, as his later years showed. I suppose there will never again be such a preacher in any Christian church. “The truth of Christianity,” he said, “was all written in us already in sympathetic ink. Bible awakens it, and you can read”

—a sympathetic image but of no great weight as an argu-

ment addressed to doubting Thomas. Chalmers, whose originality lay rather in his quick insight and fire than in his mainly commonplace thought, had the credit of recognising the religious side of Carlyle's genius, when to the mass of his countrymen he was a rock of offence. One of the great preacher's criticisms of the great writer is notably just: "He is a lover of earnestness more than a lover of truth."

There follows in some of the early pages of the *Reminiscences* an account of a long walk with Irving, who had arranged to accompany Carlyle for the first stage, *i.e.* fifteen miles of the road, of his for the most part pedestrian march from Glasgow to Ecclefechan, a record among many of similar excursions over dales and hills, and "by the beached margent," revived for us in sun and shade by a pen almost as magical as Turner's brush. We must refer to the pages of Mr. Froude for the picture of Drumclog moss,—"a good place for Cameronian preaching, and dangerously difficult for Claverse (*sic*) and horse soldiery if the suffering remnant had a few old muskets among them,"—for the graphic glimpse of Ailsa Craig, and the talk by the dry stone fence, in the twilight. "It was just here, as the sun was sinking, Irving drew from me by degrees, in the softest manner, that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, and that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or should. This, if this was so, he had pre-engaged to take well of me, like an elder brother, if I would be frank with him. And right loyally he did so." They parted here: Carlyle trudged on to the then "utterly quiet little inn" at Muirkirk, left next morning at 4 A.M., and reached Dumfries, a distance of fifty-four miles, at 8 P.M., "the longest walk I ever made." He spent the summer at Mainhill, studying modern languages, "living riotously with Schiller and Goethe," at work on the *Encyclopædia*

articles, and visiting his friend at Annan, when he was offered the post of tutor to the son of a Yorkshire farmer, an offer which Irving urged him to accept, saying, "You live too much in an ideal world," and wisely adding, "try your hand with the respectable illiterate men of middle life. You may be taught to forget . . . the splendours and envies . . . of men of literature."

This exhortation led to a result recorded with much humour, egotism, and arrogance in a letter to his intimate friend Dr. John Fergusson, of Kelso Grammar School, which, despite the mark "private and confidential," was yet published, several years after the death of the recipient and shortly after that of the writer, in a gossiping memoir. We are therefore at liberty to select from the letter the following paragraphs:—

I delayed sending an answer till I might have it in my power to communicate what seemed then likely to produce a considerable change in my stile (*sic*) of life, a proposal to become a "travelling tutor," as they call it, to a young person in the North Riding, for whom that exercise was recommended on account of bodily and mental weakness. They offered me £150 per annum, and withal invited me to come and examine things on the spot before engaging. I went accordingly, and happy was it I went; from description I was ready to accept the place; from inspection all Earndale would not have hired me to accept it. This boy was a dotard, a semi-vegetable, the elder brother, head of the family, a two-legged animal without feathers, intellect, or virtue, and all the connections seemed to have the power of eating pudding but no higher power. So I left the barbarous people. . . . York is but a heap of bricks. Jonathan Dryasdust (see *Ivanhoe*) is justly named. York is the Bœotia of Britain. . . . Upon the whole, however, I derived great amusement from my journey, . . . I conversed with all kinds of men, from graziers up to knights of the shire, argued with them all, and broke specimens from their souls (if any), which I retain within the museum of my cranium. I have no prospects that are worth the name. I am like a being thrown from another planet on this dark terrestrial ball, an alien, a

pilgrim . . . and life is to me like a pathless, a waste, and a howling wilderness. Do not leave your situation if you can possibly avoid it. Experience shows it to be a fearful thing to be swept in by the roaring surge of life, and then to float alone undirected on its restless, monstrous bosom. Keep ashore while yet you may, or if you must to sea, sail under convoy ; trust not the waves without a guide. You and I are but pinnaces or cock-boats, yet hold fast by the Manilla ship, *and do not let go the painter.*

Towards the close of this year Irving, alarmed by his friend's despondency, sent him a most generous and delicately-worded invitation to spend some months under his roof ; but Carlyle declined, and in a letter of March 1821 he writes to his brother John : " Edinburgh, with all its drawbacks, is the only scene for me," on which follows one of his finest descriptions, that of the view from Arthur Seat.

According to the most probable chronology, for many of Carlyle's dates are hard to fix, the next important event of his life, his being introduced, on occasion of a visit to Haddington, to Miss Jane Welsh by her old tutor, Edward Irving—an event which marks the beginning of a new era in his career—took place towards the close of May or in the first week of June. To June is assigned the incident, described in *Sartor* as the transition from the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yea, a sort of revelation that came upon him as he was in Leith Walk—Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer in the Romance—on the way to cool his distempers by a plunge in the sea. The passage proclaiming this has been everywhere quoted ; and it is only essential to note that it resembled the " illuminations " of St. Paul and of Constantine merely by its being a sudden spiritual impulse. It was in no sense a conversion to any belief in person or creed, it was but the assertion of a strong manhood against an almost suicidal mood of despair ;

a condition set forth with superabundant paraphernalia of eloquence easily condensed. Doubt in the mind of Teufelsdröckh had darkened into disbelief in divine or human justice, freedom, or himself. If there be a God, He sits on the hills "since the first Sabbath," careless of mankind. Duty seems to be but a "phantasm made up of desire and fear"; virtue "some bubble of the blood," absence of vitality perhaps.

What in these days are terrors of conscience to diseases of the liver? Not on morality but on cookery let us build our stronghold. . . . Thus has the bewildered wanderer to stand, shouting question after question into the Sibyl cave, and receiving for answer an echo.

From this scepticism, deeper than that of *Queen Mab*, fiercer than that of *Candide*, Carlyle was dramatically rescued by the sense that he was a servant of God, even when doubting His existence.

After all the nameless woe that inquiry had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance. . . . Truth I cried, though the heavens crush me for following her; no falsehood! though a whole celestial lubberland were the price of apostacy.

With a grasp on this rock, Carlyle springs from the slough of despond and asserts himself:—

Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen
Und das heisst ein Kämpfer seyn.

He finds in persistent action, energy, and courage a present strength, and a lamp of at least such partial victory as he lived to achieve.

He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind,—

but he never "laid them," or came near the serenity of his master, Goethe; and his teaching, public and private, remained half a wail. He threw the gage rather in the

attitude of a man turning at bay than that of one making a leap.

Death? Well, Death . . . let it come then, and I will meet it and defy it. And as so I thought there rushed a stream of fire over my soul, and I shook base fear away. Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed; not . . . whining sorrow . . . but grim defiance.

Yet the misery remained, for two years later we find him writing:—

I could read the curse of Ernulphus, or something twenty times as fierce, upon myself and all things earthly. . . . The year is closing. This time eight and twenty years I was a child of three weeks ago. . . .

Oh! little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
The lands that I should travel in,
The death I was to dee.

My curse seems deeper and blacker than that of any man: to be immured in a rotten carcase, every avenue of which is changed into an inlet of pain. How have I deserved this? . . . I know not. Then why don't you kill yourself, sir? Is there not arsenic? is there not ratsbane of various kinds? and hemp, and steel? Most true, Sathanas . . . but it will be time enough to use them when I have *lost* the game I am but *losing*, . . . and while my friends, my mother, father, brothers, sisters live, the duty of not breaking their hearts would still remain. . . . I want health, health, health! On this subject I am becoming quite furious: my torments are greater than I am able to bear.

Nowhere in Carlyle's writing, save on the surface, is there any excess of Optimism; but after the Leith Walk inspiration he had resolved on "no surrender"; and that, henceforth, he had better heart in his work we have proof in its more regular, if not more rapid progress. His last hack service was the series of articles for Brewster, unless we add a translation, under the same auspices, of Legendre's

Geometry, begun, according to some reports, in the Kirkcaldy period, finished in 1822, and published in 1824. For this task, prefixed by an original *Essay on Proportion*, much commended by De Morgan, he obtained the respectable sum of £50. Two subsequent candidatures for Chairs of Astronomy showed that Carlyle had not lost his taste for Mathematics; but this work was his practical farewell to that science. His first sustained efforts as an author were those of an interpreter. His complete mastery of German has been said to have endowed him with "his sword of sharpness and shoes of swiftness"; it may be added, in some instances also, with the "fog-cap." But in his earliest substantial volume, the *Life of Schiller*, there is nothing either obscure in style or mystic in thought. This work began to appear in the *London Magazine* in 1823, was finished in 1824, and in 1825 published in a separate form. Approved during its progress by an encouraging article in the *Times*, it was, in 1830, translated into German on the instigation of Goethe, who introduced the work by an important commendatory preface, and so first brought the author's name conspicuously before a continental public. Carlyle himself, partly perhaps from the spirit of contradiction, was inclined to speak slightly of this high-toned and sympathetic biography: "It is," said he, "in the wrong vein, laborious, partly affected, meagre, bombastic." But these are sentences of a morbid time, when, for want of other victims, he turned and rent himself. *Pari passu*, he was toiling at his translation of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. This was published in Edinburgh in 1824. Heartily commended in *Blackwood*, it was generally recognised as one of the best English renderings of any foreign author; and Jeffrey, in his absurd review of Goethe's great prose drama, speaks in high terms of the skill displayed by the translator. The virulent attack of De Quincey—a writer as

unreliable as brilliant—in the *London Magazine* does not seem to have carried much weight even then, and has none now. The *Wanderjahre*, constituting the third volume of the English edition, first appeared as the last of four on German Romance—a series of admirably selected and executed translations from Musæus, Fouqué, Tieck, Hoffmann, Richter, and Goethe, prefaced by short biographical and critical notices of each—published in Edinburgh in 1827. This date is also that of the first of the more elaborate and extensive criticisms which, appearing in the Edinburgh and Foreign reviews, established Carlyle as the English pioneer of German literature. The result of these works would have been enough to drive the wolf from the door and to render their author independent of the oatmeal from home; while another source of revenue enabled him not only to keep himself, but to settle his brother Alick in a farm, and to support John through his University course as a medical student. This and similar services to the family circle were rendered with gracious disclaimers of obligation. “What any brethren of our father’s house possess, I look on as a common stock from which all are entitled to draw.”

For this good fortune he was again indebted to his friend of friends. Irving had begun to feel his position at Glasgow unsatisfactory, and at the close of 1821 he was induced to accept an appointment to the Caledonian Chapel at Hatton Garden. On migrating to London, to make a greater, if not a safer, name in the central city, and finally, be lost in its vortex, he had invited Carlyle to follow him, saying, “Scotland breeds men, but England rears them.” Shortly after, introduced by Mrs. Strachey, one of his worshipping audience, to her sister Mrs. Buller, he found the latter in trouble about the education of her sons. Charles, the elder, was a youth of

bright but restive intelligence, and it was desired to find some transitional training for him on his way from Harrow to Cambridge. Irving urged his being placed, in the interim, under Carlyle's charge. The proposal, with an offer of £200 a year, was accepted, and the brothers were soon duly installed in George Square, while their tutor remained in Moray Place, Edinburgh. The early stages of this relationship were eminently satisfactory; Carlyle wrote that the teaching of the Bullers was a pleasure rather than a task; they seemed to him "quite another set of boys than I have been used to, and treat me in another sort of manner than tutors are used. The eldest is one of the cleverest boys I have ever seen." There was never any jar between the teacher and the taught. Carlyle speaks with unflinching regard of the favourite pupil, whose brilliant University and Parliamentary career bore testimony to the good practical guidance he had received. His premature death at the entrance on a sphere¹ of wider influence made a serious blank in his old master's life.

But as regards the relation of the employer and employed, we are wearied by the constantly recurring record of kindness lavishly bestowed, ungraciously received, and soon ungratefully forgotten. The elder Bullers—the mother a former beauty and woman of some brilliancy, the father a solid and courteous gentleman retired from the Anglo-Indian service—came to Edinburgh in the spring of the tutorship, and recognising Carlyle's abilities, welcomed him to the family circle, and treated him, by his own confession, with a "degree of respect" he "did not deserve"; adapting their arrangements, as far as possible, to his hours and habits; consulting his convenience and humouring his whims. Early in 1823 they went to live together at Kinnaird

¹ Charles Buller became Carlyle's pupil at the age of fifteen. He died as Commissioner of the Poor in 1848 (*æt.* forty-two).

House, near Dunkeld, when he continued to write letters to his kin still praising his patrons; but the first note of discord is soon struck in satirical references to their aristocratic friends and querulous complaints of the servants. During the winter, for greater quiet, a room was assigned to him in another house near Kinnaird; a consideration which met with the award: "My bower is the most polite of bowers, refusing admittance to no wind that blows." And about this same time he wrote, growling at his fare: "It is clear to me that I shall never recover my health under the economy of Mrs. Buller."

In 1824 the family returned to London, and Carlyle followed in June by a sailing yacht from Leith. On arrival he sent to Miss Welsh a letter, sneering at his fellow passengers, but ending with a striking picture of his first impressions of the capital:—

We were winding slowly through the forest of masts in the Thames up to our station at Tower Wharf. The giant bustle, the coal heavers, the bargemen, the black buildings, the ten thousand times ten thousand sounds and movements of that monstrous harbour formed the grandest object I had ever witnessed. One man seems a drop in the ocean; you feel annihilated in the immensity of that heart of all the world.

On reaching London he first stayed for two or three weeks under Irving's roof and was introduced to his friends. Of Mrs. Strachey and her young cousin Kitty, who seems to have run the risk of admiring him to excess, he always spoke well: but the Basil Montagues, to whose hospitality and friendship he was made welcome, he has maligned in such a manner as to justify the retaliatory pamphlet of the sharp-tongued eldest daughter of the house, then about to become Mrs. Anne Procter. By letter and "reminiscence" he is equally reckless in invective against almost all the eminent men of letters with whom he

then came in contact, and also, in most cases, in ridicule of their wives. His accounts of Hazlitt, Campbell, and Coleridge have just enough truth to give edge to libels, in some cases perhaps whetted by the consciousness of their being addressed to a sympathetic listener: but it is his frequent travesty of well-wishers and creditors for kindness that has left the deepest stain on his memory. Settled with his pupil Charles in Kew Green lodgings he writes: "The Bullers are essentially a cold race of people. They live in the midst of fashion and external show. They love no living creature." And a fortnight later, from Irving's house at Pentonville, he sends to his mother an account of his self-dismissal. Mrs. Buller had offered him two alternatives—to go with the family to France or to remain in the country preparing the eldest boy for Cambridge. He declined both, and they parted, shaking hands with dry eyes. "I feel glad," he adds in a sentence that recalls the worst egotism of Coleridge,¹ "that I have done with them . . . I was selling the very quintessence of my spirit for £200 a year."

There followed eight weeks of residence in or about Birmingham, with a friend called Badams, who undertook to cure dyspepsia by a new method and failed without being reviled. Together, and in company with others, as the astronomer Airy, they saw the black country and the toiling squads, in whom Carlyle, through all his shifts from radical democracy to Platonic autocracy, continued to take a deep interest; on other days they had pleasant excursions to the green fields and old towers of Warwickshire. On occasion of this visit he came in contact with De Quincey's review of *Meister*, and in recounting the event credits himself with the philosophic thought, "This man is perhaps right on some points; if so let him be admonitory."

¹ *Vide* Carlyle's *Life of Sterling* (1st ed. 1851), chap. viii. p. 79.

But the description that follows of "the child that has been in hell," however just, is less magnanimous. Then came a trip, in company with Mr. Strachey and Kitty and maid, by Dover and Calais along Sterne's route to Paris, "The Vanity Fair of the Universe," where Louis XVIII. was then lying dead in state. Carlyle's comments are mainly acid remarks on the Palais Royal, with the refrain, "God bless the narrow seas." But he met Legendre and Laplace, heard Cuvier lecture and saw Talma act, and, what was of more moment, had his first glimpse of the Continent and the city of one phase of whose history he was to be the most brilliant recorder. Back in London for the winter, where his time was divided between Irving's house and his own neighbouring room in Southampton Street, he was cheered by Goethe's own acknowledgment of the translation of *Meister*, characteristically and generously cordial.

In March 1825 Carlyle again set his face northward, and travelling by coach through Birmingham, Manchester, Bolton, and Carlisle, established himself, in May, at Hoddam Hill; a farm near the Solway, three miles from Mainhill, which his father had leased for him. His brother Alexander farmed, while Thomas toiled on at German translations and rode about on horseback. For a space, one of the few contented periods of his life, there is a truce to complaining. Here free from the noises which are the pests of literary life, he was building up his character and forming the opinions which, with few material changes, he long continued to hold. Thus he writes from over a distance of forty years:—

With all its manifold petty troubles, this year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me, and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life. . . . I found that I had conquered all my scepti-

cisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether. I had in effect gained an immense victory. . . . Once more, thank Heaven for its highest gift, I then felt and still feel endlessly indebted to Goethe in the business. He, in his fashion, I perceived, had travelled the steep road before me, the first of the moderns. Bodily health itself seemed improving. . . . Nowhere can I recollect of myself such pious musings, communings silent and spontaneous with Fact and Nature as in these poor Annandale localities. The sound of the Kirk bell once or twice on Sunday mornings from Hoddam Kirk, about a mile off on the plain below me, was strangely touching, like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years.

Elsewhere, during one of the rare gleams of sunshine in a life of lurid storms, we have the expression of his passionate independence, his tyrannous love of liberty:—

It is inexpressible what an increase of happiness and of consciousness—of inward dignity—I have gained since I came within the walls of this poor cottage—my own four walls. They simply admit that I am *Herr im Hause*, and act on this conviction. There is no grumbling about my habitudes and whims. If I choose to dine on fire and brimstone, they will cook it for me to their best skill, thinking only that I am an unintelligible mortal, *fâcheux* to deal with, but not to be dealt with in any other way. My own four walls.

The last words form the refrain of a set of verses, the most characteristic, as Mr. Froude justly observes, of the writer, the actual composition of which seems, however, to belong to the next chapter of his career, beginning—

The storm and night is on the waste,
Wild through the wind the huntsman calls,
As fast on willing nag I haste
Home to my own four walls.

The feeling that inspires them is clenched in the defiance—

King George has palaces of pride,
And armed grooms must ward those halls;
With one stout bolt I safe abide
Within my own four walls.

Not all his men may sever this;
It yields to friends', not monarchs' calls;
My whinstone house my castle is—
I have my own four walls.

When fools or knaves do make a rout,
With gighmen, dinners, balls, cabals,
I turn my back and shut them out;
These are my own four walls.

CHAPTER III

CRAIGENPUTTOCK

[1826-1834]

"Ah, when she was young, she was a fleein', dancin', light-heartit thing, Jeannie Welsh, that naething would hae dauntit. But she grew grave a' at ance. There was Maister Irving, ye ken, that had been her teacher; and he cam' aboot her. Then there was Maister ——. Then there was Maister Carlyle himsel', and *he* cam' to finish her off like."—HADDINGTON NURSE.

"My broom, as I sweep up the withered leaves, might be heard at a furlong's distance."—T. CARLYLE, from Craigenputtock, Oct. 1830.

DURING the last days at Hoddam Hill, Carlyle was on the verge of a crisis of his career, *i.e.* his making a marriage, for the chequered fortune of which he was greatly himself to blame.

No biography can ignore the strange conditions of a domestic life, already made familiar in so many records that they are past evasion. Various opinions have been held regarding the lady whom he selected to share his lot. Any adequate estimate of this remarkable woman belongs to an account of her own career, such as that given by Mrs. Ireland in her judicious and interesting abridgment of the material amply supplied. Jane Baillie Welsh (*b.* 1801, *d.* 1866)—descended on the paternal side from Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of John Knox; on the maternal owing to an

inheritance of gipsy blood—belonged to a family long esteemed in the borders. Her father, a distinguished Edinburgh student, and afterwards eminent surgeon at Haddington, noted alike for his humanity and skill, made a small fortune, and purchased in advance from his father his inheritance of Craigenputtock, a remnant of the once larger family estate. He died in 1819, when his daughter was in her eighteenth year. To her he left the now world-famous farm and the bulk of his property. Jane, of precocious talents, seems to have been, almost from infancy, the tyrant of the house at Haddington, where her people took a place of precedence in the small county town. Her grandfathers, John of Penfillan and Walter of Templand, also a Welsh, though of another—the gipsy—stock, vied for her baby favours, while her mother's quick and shifty tempers seem at that date to have combined in the process of "spoiling" her. The records of the schooldays of the juvenile Jane all point to a somewhat masculine strength of character. Through life, it must be acknowledged, this brilliant creature was essentially "a mocking-bird," and made game of every one till she met her mate. The little lady was learned, reading Virgil at nine, ambitious enough to venture a tragedy at fourteen, and cynical; writing to her life-long friend, Miss Eliza Stodart, of Haddington as a "bottomless pit of dulness," where "all my little world lay glittering in tinsel at my feet." She was ruthless to the suitors—as numerous, says Mr. Froude, "as those of Penelope"—who flocked about the young beauty, wit, and heiress. Of the discarded rivals there was only one of note—George Rennie, long afterwards referred to by Carlyle as a "clever, decisive, very ambitious, but quite unmelodious young fellow whom we knew here (in Chelsea) as sculptor and M.P." She dismissed him in 1821 for some cause of displeasure, "due to pride,

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reserve, and his soured temper about the world"; but when he came to take leave, she confesses, "I scarcely heard a word he said, my own heart beat so loud." Years after, in London, she went by request of his wife to Rennie's death-bed.

Meanwhile she had fallen under the spell of her tutor, Edward Irving, and, as she, after much *finesse* and evasion, admitted, came to love him in earnest. Irving saw her weak points, saying she was apt to turn her powers to "arts of cruelty which satire and scorn are," and "to contemplate the inferiority of others rather from the point of view of ridicule and contempt than of commiseration and relief." Later she retaliated, "There would have been no 'tongues' had Irving married me." But he was fettered by a previous engagement, to which, after some struggle for release, he held, leaving in charge of his pupil, as guide, philosopher, and friend, his old ally and successor, Thomas Carlyle. Between this exceptional pair there began in 1821 a relationship of constant growth in intimacy, marked by frequent visits, conversations, confidences, and a correspondence, long, full, and varied, starting with interchange of literary sympathies, and sliding by degrees into the dangerous friendship called Platonic. At the outset it was plain that Carlyle was not the St. Preux or Wolmar whose ideas of elegance Jane Welsh—a hasty student of Rousseau—had set in unhappy contrast to the honest young swains of Haddington. Uncouth, ungainly in manner and attire, he first excited her ridicule even more than he attracted her esteem, and her written descriptions of him recall that of Johnson by Lord Chesterfield. "He scrapes the fender, . . . only his tongue should be left at liberty, his other members are most fantastically awkward"; but the poor mocking-bird had met her fate. The correspondence falls under two sections, the critical and the personal. The

critical consists of remarks, good, bad, and indifferent, on books and their writers. Carlyle began his siege by talking German to her, now extolling Schiller and Goethe to the skies, now, with a rare stretch of deference, half coniving at her sneers. Much also passed between them about English authors, among them comments on Byron, notably inconsistent. Of him Carlyle writes (April 15th 1824) as "a pampered lord," who would care nothing for the £500 a year that would make an honest man happy; but later, on hearing of the death at Mesolonghi, more in the vein of his master Goethe, he exclaims:—

Alas, poor Byron! the news of his death came upon me like a mass of lead; and yet the thought of it sends a painful twinge through all my being, as if I had lost a brother. O God! that so many souls of mud and clay should fill up their base existence to the utmost bound; and this, the noblest spirit in Europe, should sink before half his course was run. . . . Late so full of fire and generous passion and proud purposes, and now for ever dumb and cold. . . . Had he been spared to the age of three-score and ten what might he not have been! what might he not have been! . . . I dreamed of seeing him and knowing him; but . . . we shall go to him, he shall not return to us.

This in answer to her account of the same intelligence: "I was told it all alone in a room full of people. If they had said the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens, it could not have struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words 'Byron is dead.'" Other letters of the same period, from London, are studded or disfigured by the incisive ill-natured sarcasms above referred to, or they relate to the work and prospects of the writer. Those that bear on the progress of his suit mark it as the strangest and, when we look before and after, one of the saddest courtships in literary history. As early as 1822 Carlyle entertained the idea of making Jane Welsh his wife; she

had begun to yield to the fascinations of his speech—a fascination akin to that of Burns—when she wrote, “I will be happier contemplating my beau-ideal than a real, substantial, eating, drinking, sleeping, honest husband.” In 1823 they were half-declared lovers, but there were recalcitrant fits on both sides. On occasion of a meeting at Edinburgh there was a quarrel, followed by a note of repentance, in which she confessed, “Nothing short of a devil could have tempted me to torment you and myself as I did on that unblessed day.” Somewhat earlier she had written in answer to his first distinct avowal, “My friend, I love you. But were you my brother I should love you the same. No. Your friend I will be . . . while I breathe the breath of life; but your wife never, though you were as rich as Croesus, as honoured and renowned as you yet shall be.” To which Carlyle answered with characteristic pride, “I have no idea of dying in the Arcadian shepherd’s style for the disappointment of hopes which I never seriously entertained, and had no right to entertain seriously.” There was indeed nothing of Corydon and Phillis in this struggle of two strong wills, the weaker giving way to the stronger, the gradual but inexorable closing of an iron ring. Backed by the natural repugnance of her mother to the match, Miss Welsh still rebelled, bracing herself with the reflection, “Men and women may be very charming without having any genius;” and to his renewed appeal (1825), “It lies with you whether I shall be a right man or only a hard and bitter Stoic,” retorting, “I am not in love with you . . . my affections are in a state of perfect tranquillity.” But she admitted he was her “only fellowship and support,” and confiding at length the truth about Irving, surrendered in the words, “Decide, and woe to me if your reason be your judge and not your love.” In this duel of Puck and Theseus, the latter felt he had won and pressed his advan-

tage, offering to let her free and adding warnings to the blind, "Without great sacrifices on both sides, the possibility of our union is an empty dream." At the eleventh hour, when, in her own words, she was "married past redemption," he wrote, "If you judge fit, I will take you to my heart this very week. If you judge fit, I will this very week forswear you for ever;" and replied to her request that her widowed mother might live under their wedded roof in terms that might have become Petruchio: "It may be stated in a word. The man should bear rule in the house, not the woman. This is an eternal axiom, the law of nature which no mortal departs from unpunished. . . . Will your mother consent to make me her guardian and director, and be a second wife to her daughter's husband!"

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd,
Was ever woman in this humour won?

Miss Welsh at length reluctantly agreed to come to start life at Scotsbrig, where his family had migrated; but Carlyle pushed another counter: "Your mother must not visit mine: the mere idea of such a visit argued too plainly that you *knew nothing* of the family circle in which for my sake you were willing to take a place." It being agreed that Mrs. Welsh was to leave Haddington, where the alliance was palpably unpopular, Carlyle proposed to begin married life in his mother-in-law's vacant house, saying in effect to his fiancée that as for intrusive visitors he had "nerve enough" to kick her old friends out of doors. At this point, however, her complaisance had reached its limit. The bridegroom-elect had to soothe his sense of partial retreat by a scolding letter. As regards difficulties of finance he pointed out that he had £200 to start with, and that a labourer and his wife had been known to live on £14 a year.

On the edge of the great change in her life, Jane Welsh

writes, "I am resolved in spirit, in the face of every horrible fate," and says she has decided to put off mourning for her father, having found a second father. Carlyle proposed that after the "dreaded ceremony" he and his bride and his brother John should travel together by the stage-coach from Dumfries to Edinburgh. In "the last dying speech and marrying words" she objects to this arrangement, and after the event (October 17th 1826) they drove in a post-chaise to 21 Comely Bank, where Mrs. Welsh, now herself settled at Templand, had furnished a house for them. Meanwhile the Carlyle family migrated to Scotsbrig. There followed eighteen comparatively tranquil months, an oasis in the wilderness, where the anomalous pair lived in some respects like other people. They had seats in church, and social gatherings—Wednesday "At Homes," to which the celebrity of their brilliant conversational powers attracted the brightest spirits of the northern capital, among them Sir William Hamilton, Sir David Brewster, John Wilson, De Quincey, forgiven for his review, and above all Jeffrey, a friend, though of opposite character, nearly as true as Irving himself. Procter had introduced Carlyle to the famous editor, who, as a Scotch cousin of the Welshes, took from the first a keen interest in the still struggling author, and opened to him the door of the *Edinburgh Review*. The appearance of the article on *Richter*, 1827, and that, in the course of the same year, on *The State of German Literature*, marks the beginning of a long series of splendid historical and critical essays—closing in 1855 with the *Prinzenraub*—which set Carlyle in the front of the reviewers of the century. The success in the *Edinburgh* was an "open sesame;" and the conductors of the *Foreign and Foreign Quarterly Reviews*, later, those of *Fraser* and the *Westminster*, were ready to receive whatever the new writer might choose to send.

To the *Foreign Review* he contributed from Comely Bank the *Life and Writings of Werner*, a paper on *Helena*, the leading episode of the second part of "Faust," and the first of the two great Essays on *Goethe*, which fixed his place as the interpreter of Germany to England. In midsummer 1827 Carlyle received a letter from Goethe cordially acknowledging the *Life of Schiller*, and enclosing presents of books for himself and his wife. This, followed by a later inquiry as to the author of the article on *German Literature*, was the opening of a correspondence of sage advice on the one side and of lively gratitude on the other, that lasted till the death of the veteran in 1832. Goethe assisted, or tried to assist, his admirer by giving him a testimonial in a candidature for the Chair (vacant by the promotion of Dr. Chalmers) of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. Jeffrey, a frequent visitor and host of the Carlyles, still regarded as "a jewel of advocates . . . the most lovable of little men," urged and aided the canvass, but in vain. The testimonials were too strong to be judicious, and "it was enough that" the candidate "was described as a man of original and extraordinary gifts to make college patrons shrink from contact with him." Another failure, about the same date and with the same backing, was an application for a Professorship in London University, practically under the patronage of Brougham; yet another, of a different kind, was Carlyle's attempt to write a novel, which having been found—better before than after publication—to be a failure, was for the most part burnt. "He could not," says Froude, "write a novel any more than he could write poetry. He had no *invention*."¹

¹ Carlyle's verses also demonstrate that he had no metrical ear. The only really good lines he ever wrote, save in translations where the rhythm was set to him, are those constantly quoted about the dawn of "another blue day." Those sent to his mother on

His genius was for fact; to lay hold on truth, with all his intellect and all his imagination. He could no more invent than he could lie."

The remaining incidents of Carlyle's Edinburgh life are few: a visit from his mother; a message from Goethe transmitting a medal for Sir Walter Scott; sums generously sent for his brother John's medical education in Germany; loans to Alexander, and a frustrate scheme for starting a new Annual Register, designed to be a literary *résumé* of the year, make up the record. The "rift in the lute," Carlyle's incapacity for domestic life, was already showing itself. Within the course of an orthodox honeymoon he had begun to shut himself up in interior solitude, seldom saw his wife from breakfast till 4 P.M., when they dined together and read *Don Quixote* in Spanish. The husband was half forgotten in the author beginning to prophesy: he wrote alone, walked alone, thought alone, and for the most part talked alone, *i.e.* in monologue that did not wait or care for answer. There was respect, there was affection, but there was little companionship. Meanwhile, despite the *Review* articles, Carlyle's other works, especially the volumes on German romance, were not succeeding, and the mill had to grind without grist. It seemed doubtful whether he could afford to live in Edinburgh; he craved after greater quiet, and when the farm, which was the main Welsh inheritance, fell vacant, resolved on migrating thither. His wife yielding, though with a natural repugnance to the extreme seclusion in store for her, and the Jeffreys kindly assisting, they went together in May 1828 to the Hill of the Hawks.

Craigenputtock is by no means "the dreariest spot

"Proud Hapsburg," and to Jane Welsh before marriage are unworthy of Macaulay's school-boy, "Non di non homines;" but it took much hammering to persuade Carlyle of the fact, and when persuaded he concluded that verse-writing was a mere tinkling of cymbals!

in all the British dominions." On a sunny day it is an inland home, with wide billowy straths of grass around, inestimable silence broken only by the placid bleating of sheep, and the long rolling ridges of the Solway hills in front. But in the "winter wind," girt by drifts of snow, no post or apothecary within fifteen miles, it may be dreary enough. Here Carlyle allowed his wife to serve him through six years of household drudgery; an offence for which he was never quite forgiven, and to estimate its magnitude here seems the proper place. He was a model son and brother, and his conjugal fidelity has been much appraised, but he was as unfit, and for some of the same reasons, to make "a happy fireside clime" as was Jonathan Swift; and less even than Byron had he a share of the mutual forbearance which is essential to the closest of all relations.

"Napoleon," says Emerson, "to achieve his ends risked everything and spared nothing, neither ammunition, nor money, nor troops, nor generals, nor himself." With a slight change of phrase the same may be said of Carlyle's devotion to his work. There is no more prevailing refrain in his writing, public and private, than his denunciation of literature as a profession, nor are there wiser words than those in which the veteran warns the young men, whose questions he answers with touching solicitude, against its adoption. "It should be," he declares, "the wine not the food of life, the ardent spirits of thought and fancy without the bread of action parches up nature and makes strong souls like Byron dangerous, the weak despicable." But it was nevertheless the profession of his deliberate choice, and he soon found himself bound to it as Ixion to his wheel. The most thorough worker on record, he found nothing easy that was great, and he would do nothing little. In his determination to pluck out the heart of the mystery, be it of

himself, as in *Sartor*; of Germany, as in his Goethes and Richters; the state of England, as in *Chartism* and *Past and Present*; of *Cromwell* or of *Friedrich*, he faced all obstacles and overthrew them. Dauntless and ruthless, he allowed nothing to divert or to mar his designs, least of all domestic cares or even duties. "Selfish he was,"—I again quote from his biographer,—“if it be selfish to be ready to sacrifice every person dependent on him as completely as he sacrificed himself.” What such a man wanted was a housekeeper and a nurse, not a wife, and when we consider that he had chosen for the latter companionship a woman almost as ambitious as himself, whose conversation was only less brilliant than his own, of delicate health and dainty ways, loyal to death, but, according to Mr. Froude, in some respects “as hard as flint,” with “dangerous sparks of fire,” whose quick temper found vent in sarcasms that blistered and words like swords, who could declare during the time of the engagement, to which in spite of warnings manifold she clung, “I will not marry to live on less than my natural and artificial wants”; who, ridiculing his accent to his face and before his friends, could write, “apply your talents to gild over the inequality of our births”; and who found herself obliged to live sixteen miles from the nearest neighbour, to milk a cow, scour floors and mend shoes—when we consider all this we are constrained to admit that the 17th October 1826 was a *dies nefastus*, nor wonder that thirty years later Mrs. Carlyle wrote, “I married for ambition, Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him, and I am miserable,”—and to a young friend, “My dear, whatever you do, never marry a man of genius.”

Carlyle's own references to the life at Craigenputtock are marked by all his aggravating inconsistency. “How happy we shall be in this Craig o' Putta,” he writes to his

wife from Scotsbrig, April 17th 1827; and later to Goethe:—

Here Rousseau would have been as happy as on his island of Saint Pierre. My town friends indeed ascribe my sojourn here to a similar disposition, and forebode me no good results. But I came here solely with the design to simplify my way of life, and to secure the independence through which I could be enabled to be true to myself. This bit of earth is our own; here we can live, write, and think as best pleases ourselves, even though Zoilus himself were to be crowned the monarch of literature. From some of our heights I can descry, about a day's journey to the west, the hill where Agricola and the Romans left a camp behind them. At the foot of it I was born, and there both father and mother still live to love me. . . . The only piece of any importance that I have written since I came here is an Essay on Burns.

This Essay,—modified at first, then let alone, by Jeffrey,—appeared in the *Edinburgh* in the autumn of 1828. We turn to Carlyle's journal and find the entry, "Finished a paper on Burns at this Devil's Den," elsewhere referred to as a "gaunt and hungry Siberia." Later still he confesses, when preparing for his final move south, "Of solitude I have really had enough."

Romæ Tibur amem ventosus, Tibure Romam.

P.N. | Carlyle in the moor was always sighing for the town, and in the town for the moor. During the first twenty years of his London life, in what he called "the Devil's oven," he is constantly clamouring to return to the den. His wife, more and more forlorn though ever loyal, consistently disliked it; little wonder, between sluttish maid-servants and owl-like solitude: and she expressed her dislike in the pathetic verses, "To a Swallow Building under our Eaves," sent to Jeffrey in 1832, and ending—

God speed thee, pretty bird ; may thy small nest
 With little ones all in good time be blest ;

I love thee much

For well thou managest that life of thine,
 While I ! Oh, ask not what I do with mine,

Would I were such !

The Desert.

The monotony of the moorland life was relieved by visits of relations and others made and repaid, an excursion to Edinburgh, a residence in London, and the production of work, the best of which has a chance of living with the language. One of the most interesting of the correspondences of this period is a series of letters, addressed to an anonymous Edinburgh friend who seems to have had some idea of abandoning his profession of the Law for Literature, a course against which Carlyle strenuously protests. From these letters, which have only appeared in the columns of the *Glasgow Herald*, we may extract a few sentences :—

Don't disparage the work that gains your bread. What is all work but a drudgery ? no labour for the present joyous, but grievous. A man who has nothing to admire except himself is in the minimum state. The question is, Does a man really love Truth, or only the market price of it ? Even literary men should have something else to do. Kames was a lawyer, Roscoe a merchant, Hans Sachs a cobbler, Burns a gauger, etc.

The following singular passage, the style of which suggests an imitation of Sterne, is the acme of unconscious self-satire :—

You are infinitely unjust to Blockheads, as they are called. Ask yourself seriously within your own heart—what right have you to live wisely in God's world, and they not to live a little less wisely ? Is there a man more to be condoled with, nay, I will say to be cherished and tenderly treated, than a man that has no brain ? My Purse is empty, it can be filled again ; the Jew Rothschild could fill it ; or I can even live with it very far from full. But, gracious heavens ! what is to be done with my *empty Head* ?

Three of the visits of this period are memorable. Two from the Jeffreys (in 1828 and 1830) leave us with the same uncomfortable impression of kindness ungrudgingly bestowed and grudgingly received. Jeffrey had a double interest in the household at Craigenputtock—an almost brotherly regard for the wife, and a belief, restrained by the range of a keen though limited appreciation, in the powers of the husband, to whom he wrote: "Take care of the fair creature who has entrusted herself so entirely to you," and with a half truth, "You have no mission upon earth, whatever you may fancy, half so important as to be innocently happy." And again: "Bring your blooming Eve out of your blasted Paradise, and seek shelter in the lower world." But Carlyle held to the "banner with a strange device," and was either deaf or indignant. The visits passed, with satirical references from both host and hostess; for Mrs. Carlyle, who could herself abundantly scoff and scold, would allow the liberty to no one else. Jeffrey meanwhile was never weary of well-doing. Previous to his promotion as Lord Advocate and consequent transference to London, he tried to negotiate for Carlyle's appointment as his successor in the editorship of the *Review*, but failed to make him accept the necessary conditions. The paper entitled *Signs of the Times* was the last production that he had to revise for his eccentric friend. Those following on Taylor's *German Literature* and the *Characteristics* were brought out in 1831 under the auspices of Macvey Napier. The other visit was from the most illustrious of Carlyle's English-speaking friends, in many respects a fellow-worker, yet "a spirit of another sort," and destined, though a transcendental mystic, to be the most practical of his benefactors. Twenty-four hours of Ralph Waldo Emerson (often referred to in the course of a long and intimate correspondence) are spoken of by Mrs. Carlyle as a visit from the clouds,

brightening the prevailing gray. He came to the remote inland home with "the pure intellectual gleam" of which Hawthorne speaks, and "the quiet night of clear fine talk" remained one of the memories which led Carlyle afterwards to say, "Perhaps our happiest days were spent at the Craig." Goethe's letters, especially that in which he acknowledges a lock of Mrs. Carlyle's hair, "eine unvergleichliche schwarze Haar locke," were also among the gleams of 1829. The great German died three years later, after receiving the birthday tribute, in his 82nd year, from English friends; and it is pleasant to remember that in this instance the disciple was to the end loyal to his master. To this period belong many other correspondences. "I am scribble scribbling," he says in a letter of 1832, and mere scribbling may fill many pages with few headaches; but Carlyle wrestled as he wrote, and not a page of those marvellous *Miscellanies* but is red with his life's blood. Under all his reviewing, he was set on a work whose fortunes were to be the strangest, whose result was, in some respects, the widest of his efforts. The plan of *Sartor Resartus* is far from original. Swift's *Tale of a Tub* distinctly anticipates the Clothes Philosophy; there are besides manifest obligations to Reinecke Fuchs, Jean Paul Richter, and other German authors: but in our days originality is only possible in the handling; Carlyle has made an imaginary German professor the mere mouthpiece of his own higher aspirations and those of the Scotland of his day, and it remains the most popular as surely as his *Friedrich* is the greatest of his works. The author was abundantly conscious of the value of the book, and superabundantly angry at the unconsciousness of the literary patrons of the time. In 1831 he resolved if possible to go up to London to push the prospects of this first-born male child. The *res angusta* stood in the way. Jeffrey, after asking his friend "what situation he could get him that he

would detest the least," pressed on him "in the coolest, lightest manner the use of his purse." This Carlyle, to the extent of £50 as a loan (carefully returned), was induced ultimately to accept. It has been said that "proud men never wholly forgive those to whom they feel themselves obliged," but their resenting benefits is the worst feature of their pride. Carlyle made his second visit to London to seek types for *Sartor*, in vain. Always preaching reticence with the sound of artillery, he vents in many pages the rage of his chagrin at the "Arimaspian" publishers, who would not print his book, and the public which, "dosed with froth," would not buy it. The following is little softened by the chiaroscuro of five-and-thirty years:—

Done, I think, at Craigenputtock between January and August 1830, *Teufelsdröckh* was ready, and I decided to make for London; night before going, how I remember it. . . . The beggarly history of poor *Sartor* among the blockheadisms is not worth recording or remembering, least of all here! In short, finding that I had got £100 (if memory serve) for *Schiller* six or seven years before, and for *Sartor*, at least twice as good, I could not only not get £200, but even get no Murray or the like to publish it on half profits. Murray, a most stupendous object to me, tumbling about eyeless, with the evidently strong wish to say "Yes" and "No,"—my first signal experience of that sad human predicament. I said, We will make it "No," then; wrap up our MS., and carry it about for some two years from one terrified owl to another; published at last experimentally in *Fraser*, and even then mostly laughed at, nothing coming of the volume except what was sent by Emerson from America.

This summary is unfair to Murray, who was inclined, on Jeffrey's recommendation, to accept the book; but on finding that Carlyle had carried the MS. to Longmans and another publisher, in hopes of a better bargain, and that it had been refused, naturally wished to refer the matter to his "reader," and the negotiation closed. *Sartor* struggled into half life in parts of the

Magazine to which the writer had already contributed several of his German essays, and it was even then published with reluctance, and on half pay. The reception of this work, a nondescript, yet among the finest prose poems in our language, seemed to justify bookseller, editor, and readers alike, for the British public in general were of their worst opinion. "It is a heap of clotted nonsense," pronounced the *Sun*. "Stop that stuff or stop my paper," wrote one of *Fraser's* constituents. "When is that stupid series of articles by the crazy tailor going to end?" cried another. At this time Carlyle used to say there were only two people who found anything in his book worth reading—Emerson and a priest in Cork, who said to the editor that he would take the magazine when anything in it appeared by the author of *Sartor*. The volume was only published in 1838, by Saunders and Otley, after the *French Revolution* had further raised the writer's name, and then on a guarantee from friends willing to take the risk of loss. It does not appear whether Carlyle refers to this edition or to some slighter reissue of the magazine articles when he writes in the *Reminiscences*: "I sent off six copies to six Edinburgh literary friends, from not one of whom did I get the smallest whisper even of receipt—a thing disappointing more or less to human nature, and which has silently and insensibly led me never since to send any copy of a book to Edinburgh. . . . The plebs of literature might be divided in their verdicts about me; though by count of heads I always suspect the guilty clear had it; but the conscript fathers declined to vote at all."¹ In America *Sartor* was pieced together from *Fraser*, published in a volume introduced by Alexander Everett, extolled by

¹ *Tempora mutantur*. A few months before Carlyle's death a cheap edition of *Sartor* was issued, and 30,000 copies were sold within a few weeks.

Emerson as "A criticism of the spirit of the age in which we live; exhibiting in the most just and novel light the present aspect of religion, politics, literature, and social life." The editors add: "We believe no book has been published for many years . . . which discovers an equal mastery over all the riches of the language. The author makes ample amends for the occasional eccentricity of his genius not only by frequent bursts of pure splendour, but by the wit and sense which never fail him."

Americans are intolerant of honest criticism on themselves; but they are, more than any other nation, open to appreciate vigorous expressions of original views of life and ethics—all that we understand by philosophy—and equally so to new forms of art. The leading critics of the New England have often been the first and best testers of the fresh products of the Old. A land of experiment in all directions, ranging from Mount Lebanon to Oneida Creek, has been ready to welcome the suggestions, physical or metaphysical, of startling enterprise. Ideas which filter slowly through English soil and abide for generations, flash over the electric atmosphere of the West. Hence Coleridge, Carlyle and Browning were already accepted as prophets in Boston, while their own countrymen were still examining their credentials. To this readiness, as of a photographic plate, to receive, must be added the fact that the message of *Sartor* crossed the Atlantic when the hour to receive it had struck. To its publication has been attributed the origin of a movement that was almost simultaneously inaugurated by Emerson's *Harvard Discourse*. It was a revolt against the reign of Commerce in practice, Calvinism in theory, and precedent in Art that gave birth to the Transcendentalism of *The Dial*—a Pantheon in which Carlyle had at once assigned to him a place. He meanwhile was busy in London making friends by his conspicuous, almost

obtrusive, genius, and sowing the seeds of discord by his equally obtrusive spleen. To his visit of 1831-1832 belongs one of the worst of the elaborate invectives against Lamb which have recoiled on the memory of his critic—to the credit of English sympathies with the most lovable of slightly erring men—with more than the force of a boomerang. A sheaf of sharp sayings of the same date owe their sting to their half truth, *e.g.* to a man who excused himself for profligate journalism on the old plea, “I must live, sir.” “No, sir, you need not live, if your body cannot be kept together without selling your soul.” Similarly he was abusing the periodicals—“mud,” “sand,” and “dust magazines”—to which he had contributed, *inter alia*, the great Essay on *Voltaire* and the consummate sketch of *Novalis*; with the second paper on *Richter* to the *Foreign Review*, the reviews of *History* and of *Schiller* to *Fraser*, and that on *Goethe's Works* to the *Foreign Quarterly*. During this period he was introduced to Molesworth, Austin, and J. S. Mill. On his summons, October 1st 1832, Mrs. Carlyle came up to Ampton Street, where he then resided, to see him safe through the rest of his London time. They lamented over the lapse of Irving, now lost in the delirium of tongues, and made a league of friendship with Mill, whom he describes as “a partial disciple of mine,” a friendship that stood a hard test, but was broken when the author of *Liberty* naturally found it impossible to remain a disciple of the writer of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Mill, like Napier, was at first staggered by the *Characteristics*, though he afterwards said it was one of Carlyle's greatest works, and was enthusiastic over the review of Boswell's *Johnson*, published in *Fraser* in the course of this year. Meanwhile Margaret, Carlyle's favourite sister, had died, and his brightest, Jean, “the Crow,” had married her cousin, James Aitken. In memory of the former he wrote as a

master of threnody: to the bridegroom of the latter he addressed a letter reminding him of the duties of a husband, "to do as he would be done by to his wife"! In 1832 John, again by Jeffrey's aid, obtained a situation at £300 a year as travelling physician to Lady Clare, and was enabled, as he promptly did, to pay back his debts. Alexander seems to have been still struggling with an imperfectly successful farm. In the same year, when Carlyle was in London, his father died at Scotsbrig, after a residence there of six years. His son saw him last in August 1831, when, referring to his Craigenputtock solitude, he said: "Man, it's surely a pity that thou shouldst sit yonder with nothing but the eye of Omniscience to see thee, and thou with such a gift to speak."

The Carlyles returned in March, she to her domestic services, baking bread, preserving eggs, and brightening grates till her eyes grew dim; he to work at his *Diderot*, doing justice to a character more alien to his own than even Voltaire's, reading twenty-five volumes, one per day, to complete the essay; then at *Count Cagliostro*, also for *Fraser*, a link between his last Craigenputtock and his first London toils. The period is marked by shoals of letters, a last present from Weimar, a visit to Edinburgh, and a candidature for a University Chair,¹ which Carlyle thought Jeffrey could have got for him; but the advocate did not, probably could not, in this case satisfy his client. In excusing himself he ventured to lecture the applicant on what he imagined to be the impracticable temper and perverse eccentricity which had retarded and might continue to retard his advancement. Carlyle, never tolerant of rebuke however just, was indignant, and though an open quarrel was avoided by letters, on both sides, of courteous compromise, the breach was in reality never healed, and

¹ The last was in 1836, for the Chair of Astronomy in Glasgow.

Jeffrey has a niche in the *Reminiscences* as a "little man who meant well but did not see far or know much." Carlyle went on, however, like Thor, at the *Diamond Necklace*, which is a proem to the *French Revolution*, but inly growling, "My own private impression is that I shall never get any promotion in this world." "A prophet is not readily acknowledged in his own country"; "Mein Leben geht sehr übel: all dim, misty, squally, disheartening at times, almost heartbreaking." This is the prose rather than the male of Byron. Of all men Carlyle could least reckon his own rede. He never even tried to consume his own smoke. His *Sartor* is indeed more contained, and takes at its summit a higher flight than Rousseau's *Confessions*, or the *Sorrows of Werther*, or the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*: but reading Byron's letters is mingling with a world gay and grave; reading Goethe's walking in the Parthenon, though the Graces in the niches are sometimes unclad; reading Carlyle's is travelling through glimpses of sunny fields and then plunging into coal-black tunnels. At last he decided, "Puttock is no longer good for me," and his brave wife approving, and even inciting, he resolved to burn his ships and seek his fortune—sink or swim—in the metropolis. Carlyle, for once taking the initiative of practical trouble, went in advance on a house-hunt to London, and by advice of Leigh Hunt fixed on the now famous house in Chelsea near the Thames.

Again?

Note

P.N.

CHAPTER IV

CHEYNE ROW

[1834-1842]

THE curtain falls on Craigenputtock, the bleak farm by the bleak hills, and rises on Cheyne Row, a side street off the river Thames, that winds, as slowly as Cowper's Ouse, by the reaches of Barnes and Battersea, dotted with brown-sailed ships and holiday boats in place of the excursion steamers that now stop at Carlyle Pier; hard by the Carlyle Statue on the new (1874) Embankment, in front the "Carlyle mansions," a stone's-throw from "Carlyle Square." Turning up the row, we find over No. 24, formerly No. 5, the Carlyle medallion in marble, marking the house where the Chelsea prophet, rejected, recognised, and adulated of men, lived over a stretch of forty-seven years. Here were his headquarters, but he was a frequent wanderer. About half the time was occupied in trips almost yearly to Scotland, one to Ireland, one to Belgium, one to France, and two to Germany; besides, in the later days, constant visits to admiring friends, more and more drawn from the higher ranks in English society, the members of which learnt to appreciate his genius before he found a hearing among the mass of the people.

The whole period falls readily under four sections,

marking as many phases of the author's outer and inner life, while the same character is preserved throughout:—

I. 1834-1842 — When the death of Mrs. Welsh and the late success of Carlyle's work relieved him from a long, sometimes severe, struggle with narrow means. It is the period of the *French Revolution*, *The Lectures*, and *Hero-Worship*, and of *Chartism*, the last work with a vestige of adherence to the Radical creed.

II. 1842-1853 — When the death of his mother loosened his ties to the North. This decade of his literary career is mainly signalised by the writing and publication of the *Life and Letters of Cromwell*, of Carlyle's political works, *Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, and of the *Life of Sterling*, works which mark his now consummated disbelief in democracy, and his distinct abjuration of adherence, in any ordinary sense, to the "Creed of Christendom."

III. 1853-1866 — When the laurels of his triumphant speech as Lord Rector at Edinburgh were suddenly withered by the death of his wife. This period is filled with the *History of Friedrich II.*, and marked by a yet more decidedly accentuated trust in autocracy.

IV. 1866-1881.—Fifteen years of the setting of the sun.

The Carlyles, coming to the metropolis in a spirit of rarely realised audacity on a reserve fund of from £200 to £300 at most, could not propose to establish themselves in any centre of fashion. In their circumstances their choice of abode was on the whole a fortunate one. Chelsea,

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it,

was, even in those days of less constant communication, within measurable distance of the centres of London life: it had then and still preserves a host of interesting historic and literary traditions. Among the men who in old times lived or met together in that outlying region of London, we have memories of Sir Thomas More and of Erasmus, of the Essayists Addison and Steele, and of Swift. Hard by is the tomb of Bolingbroke and the Square of Sir Hans Sloane; Smollett lived for a time in Laurence Street; nearer our own day, Turner resided in Cheyne Walk, later George Eliot, W. B. Scott, Dante Rossetti, Swinburne for a season, and George Meredith. When Carlyle came to settle there, Leigh Hunt¹ in Upper Cheyne Row, an almost next-door neighbour, was among the first of a series of visitors; always welcome, despite his "hugger-mugger" household and his borrowing tendencies, his "unpractical messages" and "rose-coloured reform processes," as a bright "singing bird, musical in flowing talk," abounding in often subtle criticisms and constant good humour. To the Chelsea home, since the Mecca of many pilgrims, there also flocked other old Ampton Street friends, drawn thither by genuine regard. Mrs. Carlyle, by the testimony of Miss Cushman and all competent judges, was a "*raconteur* unparalleled." To quote the same authority, "that wonderful woman, able to live in the full light of Carlyle's genius without being overwhelmed by it," had a peculiar skill in drawing out the most brilliant conversationalist of the age. Burns and Wilson were his Scotch predecessors in an art of which the close of our century—when every fresh thought is treasured to be

¹ Cf. Byron's account of the same household at Pisa. Carlyle deals very leniently with the malignant volume on Byron which amply justified the epigram of Moore. But he afterwards spoke more slightly of his little satellite, attributing the faint praise, in the *Examiner*, of the second course of lectures to Hunt's jealousy of a friend now "beginning to be somebody."

printed and paid for—knows little but the shadow. Of Carlyle, as of Johnson, it might have been said, “There is no use arguing with him, for if his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt”: both men would have benefited by revolt from their dictation, but the power to contradict either was overborne by a superior power to assert. Swift’s occasional insolence, in like manner, prevailed by reason of the colossal strength that made him a Gulliver in Lilliput. Carlyle in earlier, as in later times, would have been the better of meeting his mate, or of being overmatched; but there was no Wellington found for this “grand Napoleon of the realms” of prose. His reverence for men, if not for things, grew weaker with the strengthening of his sway, a sway due to the fact that men of extensive learning are rarely men of incisive force, and Carlyle—in this respect more akin to Johnson than to Swift—had the acquired material to serve as fuel for the inborn fire. Hence the least satisfactory of his criticisms are those passed on his peers. Injustices of conversation should be pardoned to an impulsive nature, even those of correspondence in the case of a man who had a mania for pouring out his moods to all and sundry; but where Carlyle has carefully recarved false estimates in cameo, his memory must abide the consequence. Quite late in life, referring to the Chelsea days, he says, “The best of those who then flocked about us was Leigh Hunt,” who never seriously said him nay; “and the worst Lamb,” who was not among the worshippers. No one now doubts that Carlyle’s best adviser and most candid critic might have been John Stuart Mill, for whom he long felt as much regard as it was possible for him to entertain towards a proximate equal. The following is characteristic: “He had taken a great attachment to me (which lasted about ten years and then sud-

denly ended, I never knew how), an altogether clear, logical, honest, amicable, affectionate young man, and respected as such here, though sometimes felt to be rather colourless, even aqueous, no religion in any form traceable in him." And similarly of his friend, Mrs. Taylor, "She was a will-o'-the-wispish iridescence of a creature; meaning nothing bad either"; and again of Mill himself, "His talk is sawdustish, like ale when there is no wine to be had." Such criticisms, some ungrateful, others unjust, may be relieved by reference to the close of two friendships to which (though even these were clouded by a touch of personal jealousy) he was faithful in the main; for the references of both husband and wife to Irving's "delirations" are the tears due to the sufferings of errant minds. Their last glimpse of this best friend of earlier days was in October 1834, when he came on horseback to the door of their new home, and left with the benediction to his lost Jane, "You have made a little Paradise around you." He died in Glasgow in December of the same year, and his memory is pathetically embalmed in Carlyle's threnody. The final phases of another old relationship were in some degree similar. During the first years of their settlement, Lord Jeffrey frequently called at Cheyne Row, and sent kind letters to his cousin, received by her husband with the growl, "I am at work stern and grim, not to be interrupted by Jeffrey's theoretic flourish of epistolary trumpeting." Carlyle, however, paid more than one visit to Craigmook, seeing his host for the last time in the autumn of 1849, "worn in body and thin in mind," "grown lunar now and not solar any more." Three months later he heard of the death of this benefactor of his youth, and wrote the memorial which finds its place in the second volume of the *Reminiscences*.

The work "stern and grim" was the *French Revolution*,

the production of which is the dominant theme of the first chapter of Carlyle's London life. Mr. Froude, in the course of an estimate of this work which leaves little room for other criticism, dwells on the fact that it was written for a purpose, *i.e.* to show that rulers, like those of the French in the eighteenth century, who are solely bent on the pleasures and oblivious of the duties of life, must end by being "burnt up." This, doubtless, is one of the morals of the *French Revolution*—the other being that anarchy ends in despotism—and unquestionably a writer who never ceased to be a preacher must have had it in his mind. But Carlyle's peculiarity is that he combined the functions of a prophet and of an artist, and that while now the one, now the other, was foremost, he never wholly forgot the one in the other. In this instance he found a theme well fit for both, and threw his heart into it, though under much discouragement. Despite the Essays, into each of which he had put work enough for a volume, the Reviews were shy of him; while his *Sartor* had, on this side of the Atlantic, been received mainly with jeers. Carlyle, never unconscious of his prerogative and apostolic primogeniture, felt like an aspirant who had performed his vigils, and finding himself still ignored, became a knight of the rueful countenance. Thoroughly equipped, adept enough in ancient tongues to appreciate Homer, a master of German and a fluent reader of French, a critic whose range stretched from Diderot to John Knox, he regarded his treatment as "tragically hard," exclaiming, "I could learn to do all things I have seen done, and am forbidden to try any of them." The efforts to keep the wolf from his own doors were harder than any but a few were till lately aware of. Landed in London with his £200 reserve, he could easily have made way in the usual ruts; but he would have none of them, and refused to accept the employment which is

the most open, as it is the most lucrative, to literary aspirants. To nine out of ten the "profession of literature" means Journalism; while Journalism often means dishonesty, always conformity. Carlyle was, in a sense deeper than that of the sects, essentially a nonconformist; he not only disdained to write a word he did not believe, he would not suppress a word he did believe—a rule of action fatal to swift success. During these years there began an acquaintance, soon ripening into intimacy, the memories of which are enshrined in one of the most beautiful of biographies. Carlyle's relation to John Sterling drew out the sort of affection which best suited him—the love of a master for a pupil, of superior for inferior, of the benefactor for the benefited; and consequently there is no line in the record of it that jars. Sterling once tried to benefit his friend, and perhaps fortunately failed. He introduced Carlyle to his father, then the chief writer in the *Times*, and the Editor invited the struggling author to contribute to its columns, but, according to Mr. Froude, "on the implied conditions . . . when a man enlists in the army, his soul as well as his body belong to his commanding officer." Carlyle talked, all his life, about what his greatest disciple calls "The Lamp of Obedience"; but he himself would obey no one, and found it hard to be civil to those who did not see with his eyes. He rejected—we trust in polite terms—the offer of "the Thunderer." "In other respects also," says our main authority, "he was impracticable, unmalleable, and as independent and wilful as if he were the heir to a peerage. He had created no 'public' of his own; the public which existed could not understand his writings and would not buy them; and thus it was that in Cheyne Row he was more neglected than he had been in Scotland." Welcome to a limited range of literary society, he astonished and amused by his vehement eloquence, but when crossed he was not only

“sarcastic” but rude, and speaking of people, as he wrote of them, with various shades of contempt, naturally gave frequent offence. Those whose toes are trodden on, not by accident, justifiably retaliate. “Are you looking for your t-t-turban?” Charles Lamb is reported to have said in some entertainer’s lobby after listening for an evening to Carlyle’s invectives, and the phrase may have rankled in his mind. Living in a glass case, while throwing stones about, super-sensitive to criticism though professing to despise critics, he made at least as many enemies as friends, and by his own confession became an Ishmaelite. In view of the reception of *Sartor*, we do not wonder to find him writing in 1833—

It is twenty-three months since I earned a penny by the craft of literature, and yet I know no fault I have committed. . . . I am tempted to go to America. . . . I shall quit literature, it does not invite me. Providence warns me to have done with it. I have failed in the Divine Infernal Universe ;

or meditating, when at the lowest ebb, to go wandering about the world like Teufelsdröckh, looking for a rest for the sole of his foot. And yet all the time, with incomparable naïveté, he was asserting :—

P.N. | The longer I live among this people the deeper grows my feeling of natural superiority to them. . . . The literary world here is a thing which I have no other course left me but to defy. . . . I can reverence no existing man. With health and peace for one year, I could write a better book than there has been in this country for generations.

All through his journal and his correspondence there is a perpetual alternation of despair and confidence, always closing with the refrain, “Working, trying is the only remover of doubt,” and wise counsels often echoed from Goethe, “Accomplish as well as you can the task on hand, and the next step will become clear ;” on the other hand—

A man must not only be able to work but to give over working. . . . If a man wait till he has entirely brushed off his imperfections, he will spin for ever on his axis, advancing no whither. . . . The *French Revolution* stands pretty fair in my head, nor do I mean to investigate much more about it, but to splash down what I know in large masses of colours, that it may look like a smoke-and-flame conflagration in the distance.

The progress of this work was retarded by the calamity familiar to every reader, but it must be referred to as throwing one of the finest lights on Carlyle's character. His closest intellectual link with J. S. Mill was their common interest in French politics and literature; the latter, himself meditating a history of the Revolution, not only surrendered in favour of the man whose superior pictorial genius he recognised, but supplied him freely with the books he had accumulated for the enterprise. His interest in the work was unfortunately so great as to induce him to borrow the MS. of the first volume, completed in the early spring of 1835, and his business habits so defective as to permit him to lend it without authority; so that, as appears, it was left lying about by Mrs. Taylor and mistaken by her servant for waste paper: certainly it was destroyed; and Mill came to Cheyne Row to announce the fact in such a desperate state of mind that Carlyle's first anxiety seems to have been to console his friend. According to Mrs. Carlyle, as reported by Froude, "the first words her husband uttered as the door closed were, 'Well, Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up; we must endeavour to hide from him how very serious this business is to us.'" This trait of magnanimity under the first blow of a disaster which seemed to cancel the work of years¹ should be set against his nearly contemporaneous criticisms of

¹ Carlyle had only been writing the volume for five months; but he was preparing for it during much of his life at Craigenputtock.

Coleridge, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sydney Smith, Macaulay, etc.

Mill sent a cheque of £200 as "the slightest external compensation" for the loss, and only, by urgent entreaty, procured the acceptance of half the sum. Carlyle here, as in every real emergency, bracing his resolve by courageous words, as "never tine heart or get provoked heart," set himself to re-write the volume with an energy that recalls that of Scott rebuilding his ruined estate; but the work was at first so "wretched" that it had to be laid aside for a season, during which the author wisely took a restorative bath of comparatively commonplace novels. The re-writing of the first volume was completed in September 1835; the whole book in January 1837. The mood in which it was written throws a light on the excellences as on the defects of the history. The *Reminiscences* again record the gloom and defiance of "Thomas the Doubter" walking through the London streets "with a feeling similar to Satan's stepping the burning marl," and scowling at the equipages about Hyde Park Corner, sternly thinking, "Yes, and perhaps none of you could do what I am at. I shall finish this book, throw it at your feet, buy a rifle and spade, and withdraw to the Transatlantic wilderness." In an adjacent page he reports himself as having said to his wife—

What they will do with this book none knows, my lass; but they have not had for two hundred years any book that came more truly from a man's very heart, and so let them trample it under foot and hoof as they see best. . . . "They cannot trample that," she would cheerily answer.

This passage points at once to the secret of the writer's spell and to the limits of his lasting power. His works were written seldom with perfect fairness, never with the dry light required for a clear presentation of the truth; they have all "an infusion from the will and the affections"; but

they were all written with a whole sincerity and utter fervour; they rose from his hot heart, and rushed through the air "like rockets driv' by their own burnin'." Consequently his readers confess that he has never forgot the Horatian maxim—

Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.

About this time Carlyle writes, "My friends think I have found the art of living upon nothing," and there must, despite Mill's contribution, have been "bitter thrift" in Cheyne Row during the years 1835-1837. He struggled through the unremunerative interval of waiting for the sale of a great work by help of fees derived from his essay on the *Diamond Necklace* (which, after being refused by the *Foreign Quarterly*, appeared in *Fraser*, 1837), that on *Mirabeau* in the *Westminster*, and in the following year, for the same periodical, the article on *Sir Walter Scott*. To the last work, undertaken against the grain, he refers in one of the renewed wails of the year: "O that literature had never been devised. I am scourged back to it by the whip of necessity." The circumstance may account for some of the manifest defects of one of the least satisfactory of Carlyle's longer reviews. Frequent references in previous letters show that he never appreciated Scott, to whom he refers as a mere Restaurateur.

Meanwhile the appearance of the *French Revolution* had brought the name of its author, then in his forty-third year, for the first time prominently before the public. It attracted the attention of Thackeray, who wrote a generous review in the *Times*, of Southey, Jeffrey, Macaulay, Hallam, and Brougham, who recognised the advent of an equal, if sometimes an adverse power in the world of letters. But, though the book established his reputation, the sale

was slow, and for some years the only substantial profits, amounting to about £400, came from America, through the indefatigable activity and good management of Emerson. It is pleasant to note a passage in the interesting volumes of their *Correspondence* which shows that in this instance the benefited understood his financial relation to the benefactor: "A reflection I cannot but make is that, at bottom, this money was all yours; not a penny of it belonged to me by any law except that of helpful friendship. . . . I could not examine it (the account) without a kind of crime." Others who, at this period, made efforts to assist "the polar Bear" were less fortunate. In several instances good intentions paved the palace of Momus, and in one led a well-meaning man into a notoriously false position. Mr. Basil Montagu being in want of a private secretary offered the post to his former guest, as a temporary makeshift, at a salary of £200, and so brought upon his memory a torrent of contempt. Undeterred by this and similar warnings, the indefatigable philanthropist, Miss Harriet Martineau, who at first conciliated the Carlyles by her affection for "this side of the street," and was afterwards an object of their joint ridicule, conceived the idea of organising a course of lectures to an audience collected by canvass to hear the strange being from the moors talk for an hour on end about literature, morals, and history. He was then an object of curiosity to those who knew anything about him at all, and lecturing was at that time a lucrative and an honourable employment. The "good Harriet," so called by Cheyne Row in its condescending mood, aided by other kind friends of the Sterling and Mill circles—the former including Frederick Denison Maurice—made so great a success of the enterprise that it was thrice repeated. The *first* course of six lectures on "German Literature," May 1837, delivered in Willis's Rooms, realised £135; the

second of twelve, on the "History of European Literature," at 17 Edward Street, Portman Square, had a net result of £300; the *third*, in the same rooms, on "Revolutions," brought £200; the *fourth*, on "Heroes," the same. In closing this course Carlyle appeared for the last time on a public platform until 1866, when he delivered his Inaugural Address as Lord Rector to the students of Edinburgh.

The impression he produced on his unusually select audiences was that of a man of genius, but roughly clad. The more superficial auditors had a new sensation, those who came to stare remained to wonder; the more reflective felt that they had learnt something of value. Carlyle had no inconsiderable share of the oratorical power which he latterly so derided; he was able to speak from a few notes; but there were comments more or less severe on his manner and style. J. Grant, in his *Portraits of Public Characters*, says: "At times he distorts his features as if suddenly seized by some paroxysm of pain . . . he makes mouths; he has a harsh accent and graceless gesticulation." Leigh Hunt, in the *Examiner*, remarks on the lecturer's power of extemporising; but adds that he often touches only the mountain-tops of the subject, and that the impression left was as if some Puritan had come to life again, liberalised by German philosophy. Bunsen, present at one of the lectures, speaks of the striking and rugged thoughts thrown at people's heads; and Margaret Fuller, afterwards Countess Ossoli, referred to his arrogance redeemed by "the grandeur of a Siegfried melting down masses of iron into sunset red." Carlyle's own comments are for the most part slighting. He refers to his lectures as a mixture of prophecy and play-acting, and says that when about to open his course on "Heroes" he felt like a man going to be hanged. To Emerson, April 17th 1839, he writes:—

My lectures come on this day two weeks. O heaven! I cannot "speak"; I can only gasp and writhe and stutter, a spectacle to gods and fashionables,—being forced to it by want of money. In five weeks I shall be free, and then—! Shall it be Switzerland? shall it be Scotland? nay, shall it be America and Concord?

Emerson had written about a Boston publication of the *Miscellanies* (first there collected), and was continually urging his friend to emigrate and speak to more appreciative audiences in the States; but the London lectures, which had, with the remittances from over sea, practically saved Carlyle from ruin or from exile, had made him decide "to turn his back to the treacherous Syren"—the temptation to sink into oratory. Mr. Froude's explanation and defence of this decision may be clenched by a reference to the warning his master had received. He had announced himself as a preacher and a prophet, and been taken at his word; but similarly had Edward Irving, who for a season of sun or glamour gathered around him the same crowd and glitter: the end came; twilight and clouds of night. Fashion had flocked to the sermons of the elder Annandale youth—as to the recitatives of the younger—to see a wild man of the woods and hear him sing; but the novelty gone, they passed on "to Egyptian crocodiles, Iroquois hunters," and left him stranded with "unquiet fire" and "flaccid face." "O foulest Circean draft," exclaimed his old admirer in his fine dirge, "thou poison of popular applause, madness is in thee and death, thy end is Bedlam and the grave," and with the fixed resolve, "De me fabula non narrabitur," he shut the book on this phase of his life.

The lectures on "Hero-Worship" (a phrase taken from Hume) were published in 1841, and met with considerable success, the name of the writer having then begun to run