

Robert Montgomery. But the graver critic would have us take to heart these sentences of his essay on Voltaire :—¹

Far be it from us to say that solemnity is an essential of greatness ; that no great man can have other than a rigid vinegar aspect of countenance, never to be thawed or warmed by billows of mirth. There are things in this world to be laughed at as well as things to be admired. Nevertheless, contempt is a dangerous element to sport in ; a deadly one if we habitually live in it. The faculty of love, of admiration, is to be regarded as a sign and the measure of high souls ; unwisely directed, it leads to many evils ; but without it, there cannot be any good. Ridicule, on the other hand, is the smallest of all faculties that other men are at pains to repay with any esteem. . . . Its nourishment and essence is denial, which hovers only on the surface, while knowledge dwells far below, . . . it cherishes nothing but our vanity, which may in general be left safely enough to shift for itself.

We may compare with this one of the writer's numerous warnings to young men taking to literature, as to drinking, in despair of anything better to do, ending with the exhortation, "Witty above all things, oh, be not witty" ; or turn to the passage in the review of Sir Walter Scott :—

Is it with ease or not with ease that a man shall do his best in any shape ; above all, in this shape justly named of soul's travail, working in the deep places of thought ? . . . Not so, now nor at any time. . . . Virgil and Tacitus, were they ready writers ? The whole *Prophecies of Isaiah* are not equal in extent to this cobweb of a Review article. Shakespeare, we may fancy, wrote with rapidity ; but not till he had thought with intensity, . . . no easy writer he. Neither was Milton one of the mob of gentlemen that write with ease. Goethe tells us he "had nothing sent to him in his sleep," no page of his but he knew well how it came there. Schiller—"konnte nie fertig werden"—never could get done. Dante sees himself "growing lean"

¹ As an estimate of Voltaire this brilliant essay is inadequate. Carlyle's maxim, we want to be told "not what is *not* true but what *is* true," prevented him from appreciating the great work of the Encyclopædists.

over his *Divine Comedy*; in stern solitary death wrestle with it, to prevail over it and do it, if his uttermost faculty may; hence too it is done and prevailed over, and the fiery life of it endures for evermore among men. No; creation, one would think, cannot be easy; your Jove has severe pains and fire flames in the head, out of which an armed Pallas is struggling! As for manufacture, that is a different matter. . . . Write by steam if thou canst contrive it and sell it, but hide it like virtue.

In these and frequent similar passages lies the secret of Carlyle's slow recognition, long struggle, and ultimate success; also of his occasional critical intolerance. Commander-in-chief of the "red artillery," he sets too little store on the graceful yet sometimes decisive charges of the light brigades of literature. He feels nothing but contempt for the banter of men like Jerrold; despises the genial pathos of Lamb; and salutes the most brilliant wit and exquisite lyrist of our century with the Puritanical comment, "Blackguard Heine." He deified work as he deified strength; and so often stimulated his imitators to attempt to leap beyond their shadows. Hard work will not do everything: a man can only accomplish what he was born fit for. Many, in the first flush of ambition doomed to wreck, are blind to the fact that it is not in every ploughman to be a poet, nor in every prize-student to be a philosopher. Nature does half: after all perhaps the larger half. Genius has been inadequately defined as "an infinite capacity for taking trouble"; no amount of pumping can draw more water than is in the well. Himself in "the chamber of little ease," Carlyle travestied Goethe's "worship of sorrow" till it became a pride in pain. He forgot that rude energy requires restraint. Hercules Furens and Orlando Furioso did more than cut down trees; they tore them up; but to no useful end. His power is often almost Miltonic; it is never Shakespearian; and his insistent earnestness would run the risk of fatiguing us were

it not redeemed by his humour. But he errs on the better side; and his example is a salutary counteractive in an age when the dust of so many skirmishers obscures the air, and laughter is too readily accepted as the test of truth. His stern conception of literature accounts for his exaltations of the ideal, and denunciations of the actual, profession of letters in passages which, from his habit of emphasising opposite sides of truth, instead of striking a balance, appear almost side by side in contradiction. The following condenses the ideal:—

If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he may have guidance, freedom, immortality? These two in all degrees I honour; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth. Doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself—all these like hell-hounds lie beleaguering the souls of the poor day worker as of every man; but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stifled—all these shrink murmuring far off in their caves.

Against this we have to set innumerable tirades on the crime of worthless writing, *e.g.*—

No mortal has a right to wag his tongue, much less to wag his pen, without saying something; he knows not what mischief he does, past computation, scattering words without meaning, to afflict the whole world yet before they cease. For thistle-down flies abroad on all winds and airs of wind. . . . Ship-loads of fashionable novels, sentimental rhymes, tragedies, farces . . . tales by flood and field are swallowed monthly into the bottomless pool; still does the press toil, . . . and still in torrents rushes on the great army of publications to their final home; and still oblivion, like the grave, cries give! give! How is it that of all these countless multitudes no one can . . . produce ought that shall endure longer than "snowflake on the river? Because they are foam, because there is no reality in them. . . ." Not by printing ink alone does man live. Literature, as followed at present, is but a species of brewing or cooking, where the cooks use poison and vend it by telling innumerable lies.

These passages owe their interest to the attestation of their sincerity by the writer's own practice. "Do not," he counsels one of his unknown correspondents, "take up a subject because it is singular and will get you credit, but because you *love* it;" and he himself acted on the rule. Nothing more impresses the student of Carlyle's works than his *thoroughness*. He never took a task in hand without the determination to perform it to the utmost of his ability; consequently when he satisfied himself that he was master of his subject he satisfied his readers; but this mastery was only attained, as it is only attainable, by the most rigorous research. He seems to have written down his results with considerable fluency: the molten ore flowed freely forth, but the process of smelting was arduous. The most painful part of literary work is not the actual composition, but the accumulation of details, the wearisome compilation of facts, weighing of previous criticisms, the sifting of the grains of wheat from the bushels of chaff. This part of his task Carlyle performed with an admirable conscientiousness. His numerous letters applying for out-of-the-way books to buy or borrow, for every pamphlet throwing light on his subject, bear testimony to the careful exactitude which rarely permitted him to leave any record unread or any worthy opinion untested about any event of which or any person of whom he undertook to write. From Templand (1833) he applies for seven volumes of Beaumarchais, three of Bassompierre, the Memoirs of Abbé Georgel, and every attainable account of Cagliostro and the Countess de la Motte, to fuse into *The Diamond Necklace*. To write the essay on *Werner* and the *German Playwrights* he swam through seas of trash. He digested the whole of *Diderot* for one review article. He seems to have read through *Jean Paul Richter*, a feat to accomplish which Germans require a special dictionary. When engaged on

the Civil War he routed up a whole shoal of obscure seventeenth-century papers from Yarmouth, the remnant of a yet larger heap, "read hundredweights of dreary books," and endured "a hundred Museum headaches." In grappling with *Friedrich* he waded through so many gray historians that we can forgive his sweeping condemnation of their dulness. He visited all the scenes and places of which he meant to speak, from St. Ives to Prague, and explored the battlefields. Work done after this fashion seldom brings a swift return; but if it is utilised and made vivid by literary genius it has a claim to permanence. Bating a few instances where his sense of proportion is defective, or his eccentricity is in excess, Carlyle puts his ample material to artistic use; seldom making ostentation of detail, but skilfully concentrating, so that we read easily and readily recall what he has written. Almost everything he has done has made a mark: his best work in criticism is final, it does not require to be done again. He interests us in the fortunes of his leading characters: *first*, because he feels with them; *secondly*, because he knows how to distinguish the essence from the accidents of their lives, what to forget and what to remember, where to begin and where to stop. Hence, not only his set biographies, as of Schiller and of Sterling, but the shorter notices in his Essays, are intrinsically more complete and throw more real light on character than whole volumes of ordinary memoirs.

With the limitations above referred to, and in view of his antecedents, the range of Carlyle's critical appreciation is wonderfully wide. Often perversely unfair to the majority of his English contemporaries, the scales seem to fall from his eyes in dealing with the great figures of other nations. The charity expressed in the saying that we should judge men, not by the number of their faults, but by the amount of their deflection from the circle, great or

small, that bounds their being, enables him often to do justice to those most widely differing in creed, sentiment, and lines of activity from one another and from himself. When treating congenial themes he errs by overestimate rather than by depreciation: among the qualities of his early work, which afterwards suffered some eclipse in the growth of other powers, is its flexibility. It was natural for Carlyle, his successor in genius in the Scotch lowlands, to give an account of Robert Burns which throws all previous criticism of the poet into the shade. Similarly he has strong affinities to Johnson, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, to all his so-called heroes: but he is fair to the characters, if not always to the work, of Voltaire and Diderot, slurs over or makes humorous the escapades of Mirabeau, is undeterred by the mysticism of Novalis, and in the fervour of his worship fails to see the gulf between himself and Goethe.

Carlyle's ESSAYS mark an epoch, *i.e.* the beginning of a new era, in the history of British criticism. The able and vigorous writers who contributed to the early numbers of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* successfully applied their taste and judgment to such works as fell within their sphere, and could be fairly tested by their canons; but they passed an alien act on everything that lay beyond the range of their insular view. In dealing with the efforts of a nation whose literature, the most recent in Europe save that of Russia, had only begun to command recognition, their rules were at fault and their failures ridiculous. If the old formulæ have been theoretically dismissed, and a conscientious critic now endeavours to place himself in the position of his author, the change is largely due to the influence of Carlyle's *Miscellanies*. Previous to their appearance, the literature of Germany, to which half of these papers are devoted, had been (with the exception of Sir

Walter Scott's translation of *Goetz von Berlichingen*, De Quincey's travesties, and Taylor's renderings from Lessing) a sealed book to English readers, save those who were willing to breathe in an atmosphere of Coleridgean mist. Carlyle first made it generally known in England, because he was the first fully to apprehend its meaning. The *Life of Schiller*, which the author himself depreciated, remains one of the best of comparatively short biographies, it abounds in admirable passages (conspicuously the contrast between the elder and the younger of the Dioscuri at Weimar) and has the advantage to some readers of being written in classical English prose.

To the essays relating to Germany, which we may accept as the *disjecta membra* of the author's unpublished History, there is little to add. In these volumes we have the best English account of the Nibelungen Lied—the most graphic, and in the main most just analyses of the genius of Heyne, Richter, Novalis, Schiller, and, above all, of Goethe, who is recorded to have said, "Carlyle is almost more at home in our literature than ourselves." With the Germans he is on his chosen ground; but the range of his sympathies is most apparent in the portrait gallery of eighteenth-century Frenchmen that forms, as it were, a proscenium to his first great History. Among other papers in the same collection the most prominent are the *Signs of the Times* and *Characteristics*, in which he first distinctly broaches some of his peculiar views on political philosophy and life.

The scope and some of the limitations of Carlyle's critical power are exhibited in his second Series¹ of Lec-

¹ Though a mere reproduction of the notes of Mr. Chisholm Anstey, this posthumous publication is justified by its interest and obvious authenticity. The appearance in a prominent periodical (while these sheets are passing through the press) of *Wotton Reinfred* is more open to question. This fragment of a romance, partly based on the

tures, delivered in 1838, when (*æt.* 43) he had reached the maturity of his powers. The first three of these lectures, treating of Ancient History and Literature, bring into strong relief the speaker's inadequate view of Greek thought and civilisation:—

Greek transactions had never anything alive, no result for us, they were dead entirely . . . all left is a few ruined towers, masses of stone and broken statuary. . . . The writings of Socrates are made up of a few wire-drawn notions about virtue; there is no conclusion, no word of life in him.

These and similar dogmatic utterances are comments of the Hebrew on the Hellene. To the Romans, "the men of antiquity," he is more just, dwelling on their agriculture and road-making as their "greatest work written on the planet;" but the only Latin author he thoroughly appreciates is Tacitus, "a Colossus on edge of dark night." Then follows an exaltation of the Middle Ages, in which "we see belief getting the victory over unbelief," in the strain of Newman's *Grammar of Assent*. On the surrender of Henry to Hildebrand at Canossa his approving comment is, "the clay that is about man is always sufficiently ready to assert its rights; the danger is always the other way, that the spiritual part of man will become overlaid with the bodily part." In the later struggle between the Popes and the Hohenstaufens his sympathy is with Gregory and Innocent. In the same vein* is his praise of Peter the Hermit, whose motto was not the "action, action" of Demosthenes, but, "belief, belief." In the brief space of those suggestive though unequal discourses the speaker allows awkward proximity to some of the self-contradictions which, even when scattered farther apart, perplex his readers plan of *Wilhelm Meister*, with shadowy love episodes recalling the manner of the "Minerva Press," can add nothing to Carlyle's reputation.

and render it impossible to credit his philosophy with more than a few strains of consistent thought.

In one page "the judgments of the heart¹ are of more value than those of the head." In the next "morals in a man are the counterpart of the intellect that is in him." The Middle Ages were "a healthy age," and therefore there was next to no Literature. "The strong warrior disdained to write." "Actions will be preserved when all writers are forgotten." Two days later, apropos of Dante, he says, "The great thing which any nation can do is to produce great men. . . . When the Vatican shall have crumbled to dust, and St. Peter's and Strassburg Minster be no more ; for thousands of years to come Catholicism will survive in this sublime relic of antiquity—the *Divina Commedia*."

Passing to Spain, Carlyle salutes Cervantes and the Cid, —calling Don Quixote the "poetry of comedy," "the age of gold in self-mockery,"—pays a more reserved tribute to Calderon, ventures on the assertion that Cortes was "as great as Alexander," and gives a sketch, so graphic that it might serve as a text for Motley's great work, of the way in which the decayed Iberian chivalry, rotten through with the Inquisition, broke itself on the Dutch dykes. After a brief outline of the rise of the German power, which had three avatars—the overwhelming of Rome, the Swiss resistance to Austria, and the Reformation—we have a rough estimate of some of the Reformers. Luther is exalted even over Knox ; Erasmus is depreciated, while Calvin and Melanchthon are passed by.

The chapter on the Saxons, in which the writer's love of the sea appears in picturesque reference to the old rover kings, is followed by unusually commonplace remarks on earlier English literature, interspersed with some of Carlyle's refrains.

¹ It has been suggested that Carlyle may have been in this instance a student of Vauvenargues, who in the early years of the much-maligned eighteenth century wrote "Les grandes pensées viennent du cœur."

The mind is one, and consists not of bundles of faculties at all . . . the same features appear in painting, singing, fighting . . . when I hear of the distinction between the poet and the . . . thinker, I really see no difference at all. . . . Bacon sees, Shakespeare sees through, . . . Milton is altogether sectarian—a Presbyterian one might say—he got his knowledge out of Knox. . . . Eve is a cold statue.

Coming to the well-belaboured eighteenth century—when much was done of which the nineteenth talks, and massive books were written that we are content to criticise—we have the inevitable denunciations of scepticism, materialism, argumentation, logic; the quotation, (referred to a motto “in the Swiss gardens”), “Speech is silvern, silence is golden,” and a loud assertion that all great things are silent. The age is commended for Watt’s steam engine, Arkwright’s spinning jenny, and Whitfield’s preaching, but its policy and theories are alike belittled. The summaries of the leading writers are interesting, some curious, and a few absurd. On the threshold of the age Dryden is noted “as a great poet born in the worst of times”: Addison as “an instance of one formal man doing great things”: Swift is pronounced “by far the greatest man of that time, not unfeeling,” who “carried sarcasm to an epic pitch”: Pope, we are told, had “one of the finest heads ever known.” Sterne is handled with a tenderness that contrasts with the death sentence pronounced on him by Thackeray, “much is forgiven him because he loved much, . . . a good simple being after all.” Johnson, the “much enduring,” is treated as in the *Heroes* and the *Essay*. Hume, with “a far duller kind of sense,” is commended for “noble perseverance and Stoic endurance of failure; but his eye was not open to faith,” etc. On which follows a stupendous criticism of Gibbon, whom Carlyle, returning to his earlier and juster view, ended by admiring.

With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things than he has done of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The sketch of the Pre-Revolution period is slight, and marked by a somewhat shallow reference to Rousseau. The last lecture on the recent German writers is a mere *réchauffé* of the Essays. Carlyle closes with the famous passage from Richter, one of those which indicate the influence in style as in thought of the German over the Scotch humorist. "It is now the twelfth hour of the night, birds of darkness are on the wing, the spectres uprear, the dead walk, the living dream. Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn." The whole volume is a testimony to the speaker's power of speech, to his often unsurpassed penetration, and to the hopeless variance of the often rapidly shifting streams of his thought.

Detailed criticism of Carlyle's HISTORIES belongs to the sphere of separate disquisitions. Here it is only possible to take note of their general characteristics. His conception of what history should be is shared with Macaulay. Both writers protest against its being made a mere record of "court and camp," of royal intrigue and state rivalry, of pageants of procession, or chivalric encounters. Both find the sources of these outwardly obtrusive events in the underground current of national sentiment, the conditions of the civilisation from which they were evolved, the prosperity or misery of the masses of the people.

The essence of history does not lie in laws, senate-houses, or battle-fields, but in the tide of thought and action—the world of existence that in gloom and brightness blossoms and fades apart from these.

But Carlyle differs from Macaulay in his passion for the concrete. The latter presents us with pictures to illustrate his political theory; the former leaves his pictures to speak

for themselves. "Give him a fact," says Emerson, "he loaded you with thanks; a theory, with ridicule or even abuse." It has been said that with Carlyle History was philosophy teaching by examples. He himself defines it as "the essence of innumerable biographies." He individualises everything he meets; his dislike of abstractions is everywhere extreme. Thus while other writers have expanded biography into history, Carlyle condenses history into biography. Even most biographies are too vague for him. He delights in Boswell: he glides over their generalisations to pick out some previously obscure record from Clarendon or Hume. Even in *The French Revolution*, where the author has mainly to deal with masses in tumult, he gives most prominence to their leaders. They march past us, labelled with strange names, in the foreground of the scene, on which is being enacted the death wrestle of old Feudalism and young Democracy. This book is unique among modern histories for a combination of force and insight only rivalled by the most incisive passages of the seventh book of Thucydides, of Tacitus, of Gibbon, and of Michelet.¹

The French Revolution is open to the charge of being a comment and a prophecy rather than a narrative: the reader's knowledge of the main events of the period is too much assumed for the purpose of a school book. Even Dryasdust will turn when trod on, and this book has been a happy hunting field to aggressive antiquarians, to whom the mistake of a day in date, the omission or insertion of a letter in a name, is of more moment than the difference between vitalising or petrifying an era. The lumber merchants of history are the born foes of

¹ *Vide* a comparison of Carlyle and Michelet in Dr. Oswald's interesting and suggestive little volume of criticism and selection, *Thomas Carlyle, ein Lebensbild und Goldkörner aus seinen Werken.*

historians who, like Carlyle and Mr. Froude, have manifested their dramatic power of making the past present and the distant near. That the excess of this power is not always compatible with perfect impartiality may be admitted; for a poetic capacity is generally attended by heats of enthusiasm, and is liable to errors of detail; but without some share of it—

Die Zeiten der Vergangenheit
Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln.

Mere research, the unearthing and arrangement of what Sir Philip Sidney calls "old moth-eaten records," supplies material for the work of the historian proper; and, occasionally to good purpose, corrects it, but, as a rule, with too much flourish. Applying this minute criticism to *The French Revolution*, one reviewer has found that the author has given the wrong number to a regiment: another esteemed scholar has discovered that there are seven errors in the famous account of the flight to Varennes, to wit:—the delay in the departure was due to Bouillé, not to the Queen; she did not lose her way and so delay the start; Ste. Menhould is too big to be called a village; on the arrest, it was the Queen who asked for hot water and eggs; the King only left the coach once; it went rather faster than is stated; and, above all, *infandum!* it was not painted yellow, but green and black. This criticism does not in any degree detract from the value of one of the most vivid and substantially accurate narratives in the range of European literature. Carlyle's object was to convey the soul of the Revolution, not to register its upholstery. The annalist, be he dryasdust or gossip, is, in legal phrase, "the devil" of the prose artist, whose work makes almost as great a demand on the imaginative faculty as that of the poet. Historiography is related to History as the

Chronicles of Holinshed and the Voyages of Hakluyt to the Plays of Shakespeare, plays which Marlborough confessed to have been the main source of his knowledge of English history. Some men are born philologists or antiquarians; but, as the former often fail to see the books because of the words, so the latter cannot read the story for the dates. The mass of readers require precisely what has been contemptuously referred to as the "Romance of History," provided it leaves with them an accurate impression, as well as an inspiring interest. Save in his over-hasty acceptance of the French *blague* version of "The Sinking of the Vengeur," Carlyle has never laid himself open to the reproach of essential inaccuracy. As far as possible for a man of genius, he was a devotee of facts. He is never a careless, though occasionally an impetuous writer; his graver errors are those of emotional misinterpretation. It has been observed that, while contemning Robespierre, he has extenuated the guilt of Danton as one of the main authors of the September massacres, and, more generally, that "his quickness and brilliancy made him impatient of systematic thought." But his histories remain the best illuminations of fact in our language. *The French Revolution* is a series of flame-pictures; every page is on fire; we read the whole as if listening to successive volleys of artillery: nowhere has such a motley mass been endowed with equal life. This book alone vindicates Lowell's panegyric: "the figures of most historians seem like dolls stuffed with bran, whose whole substance runs through any hole that criticism may tear in them; but Carlyle's are so real that if you prick them they bleed."

When Carlyle generalises, as in the introductions to his Essays, he is apt to thrust his own views on his subject and on his readers; but, unlike De Quincey, who had a like love of excursus, he comes to the point before the close

The one claimed the privilege, assumed by Coleridge, of starting from no premises and arriving at no conclusion; the other, in his capacity as a critic, arrives at a conclusion, though sometimes from questionable premises. It is characteristic of his habit of concentrating, rather than condensing, that Carlyle abandoned his design of a history of the Civil Wars for *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*. The events of the period, whose issues the writer has firmly grasped, are brought into prominence mainly as they elucidate the career of his hero; but the "elucidations" have been accepted, with a few reservations, as final. No other work has gone so far to reverse a traditional estimate. The old current conceptions of the Protector are refuted out of his own mouth; but it was left for his editor to restore life to the half-forgotten records, and sweep away the clouds that obscured their revelations of a great though rugged character. *Cromwell* has been generally accepted in Scotland as Carlyle's masterpiece—a judgment due to the fact of its being, among the author's mature works, the least apparently opposed to the theological views prevalent in the north of our island. In reality—though containing some of his finest descriptions and battle-pieces, conspicuously that of "Dunbar"—it is the least artistic of his achievements, being overladen with detail and superabounding in extract. A good critic¹ has said that it was a labour of love, like Spedding's *Bacon*; but that the correspondence, lavishly reproduced in both works, has "some of the defects of lovers' letters for those to whom they are not addressed." Carlyle has established that Oliver was not a hypocrite, "not a man of falsehood, but a man of truth": he has thrown doubts on his being a fanatic; but he has left it open to M. Guizot to establish that his later rule was a practical despotism.

¹ In *St. James' Gazette*, February 11th, 1881.

In *Friedrich II.* he undertook a yet greater task; and his work stretching over a wider arena, is, of necessity, more of a history, less of a biography, than any of his others. In constructing and composing it he was oppressed not only by the magnitude and complexity of his theme, but, for the first time, by hesitations as to his choice of a hero. He himself confessed, "I never was admitted much to *Friedrich's* confidence, and I never cared very much about him." Yet he determined, almost of malice prepense, to exalt the narrow though vivid Prussian as "the last of the kings, the one genuine figure in the eighteenth century," and though failing to prove his case, he has, like a loyal lawyer, made the best of his brief. The book embodies and conveys the most brilliant and the most readable account of a great part of the century, and nothing he has written bears more ample testimony to the writer's pictorial genius. It is sometimes garrulous with the fluency of an old man eloquent; parts of the third volume, with its diffuse extracts from the king's survey of his realm, are hard if not weary reading; but the rest is a masterpiece of historic restoration. The introductory portion, leading us through one of the most tangled woods of genealogy and political adjustment, is relieved from tedium by the procession of the half-forgotten host of German worthies,—St. Adalbert and his mission; old Barbarossa; Leopold's mystery; Conrad and St. Elizabeth; Ptolemy Alphonso; Otto with the arrow; Margaret with the mouth; Sigismund *supra grammaticam*; Augustus the physically strong; Albert Achilles and Albert Alcibiades; Anne of Cleves; Mr. John Kepler,—who move on the pages, more brightly "pictured" than those of Livy, like marionettes inspired with life. In the main body of the book the men and women of the Prussian court are brought before us in fuller light and shade. Friedrich himself, at Sans Souci, with his cocked-hat, walking-stick,

and wonderful gray eyes; Sophia Charlotte's grace, wit, and music; Wilhelmina and her book; the old Hyperborean; the black artists Seckendorf and Grumkow; George I. and his blue-beard chamber; the little drummer; the Old Dessauer; the cabinet Venus; Grävenitz Hecate; Algarotti; Goetz in his tower; the tragedy of Katte; the immeasurable comedy of Maupertuis, the flattener of the earth, and Voltaire; all these and a hundred more are summoned by a wizard's wand from the land of shadows, to march by the central figures of these volumes; to dance, flutter, love, hate, intrigue, and die before our eyes. It is the largest and most varied show-box in all history; a prelude to a series of battle-pieces—Rossbach, Leuthen, Molwitz, Zorndorf—nowhere else, save in the author's own pages, approached in prose, and rarely rivalled out of Homer's verse.

Carlyle's style, in the chiar-oscuro of which his Histories and three-fourths of his Essays are set, has naturally provoked much criticism and some objurgation. M. Taine says it is "exaggerated and demoniacal." Hallam¹ could not read *The French Revolution* because of its "abominable" style, and Wordsworth, whose own prose was perfectly limpid, is reported to have said, "No Scotchman can write English. C—— is a pest to the language." Carlyle's style is not that of Addison, of Berkeley, or of Helps; its peculiarities are due to the eccentricity of an always eccentric being; but it is neither affected nor deliberately imitated. It has been plausibly asserted that his earlier manner of writing, as in *Schiller*, under the influence of Jeffrey, was not in his natural voice. "They forget," he said, referring to his critics, "that the style is the skin of the writer, not a coat:

¹ Carlyle with equal unfairness disparaged Hallam's *Middle Ages*:—"Eh, the poor miserable skeleton of a book," and regarded the *Literature of Europe* as a valley of dry bones.

and the public is an old woman." Erratic, metaphorical, elliptical to excess, and therefore a dangerous model, "the mature oaken Carlylese style," with its freaks, "nodosities and angularities," is as set and engrained in his nature as the *Birthmark* in Hawthorne's romance. To recast a chapter of the *Revolution* in the form of a chapter of Macaulay would be like rewriting Tacitus in the form of Cicero, or Browning in the form of Pope. Carlyle is seldom obscure, the energy of his manner is part of his matter; its abruptness corresponds to the abruptness of his thought, which proceeds often as it were by a series of electric shocks, that threaten to break through the formal restraints of an ordinary sentence. He writes like one who must, under the spell of his own winged words; at all hazards, determined to convey his meaning; willing, like Montaigne, to "despise no phrase of those that run in the streets," to speak in strange tongues, and even to coin new words for the expression of a new emotion. It is his fashion to care as little for rounded phrase as for logical argument: and he rather convinces and persuades by calling up a succession of feelings than by a train of reasoning. He repeats himself like a preacher, instead of condensing like an essayist. The American Thoreau writes in the course of an incisive survey:—

Carlyle's . . . mastery over the language is unrivalled; it is with him a keen, resistless weapon; his power of words is endless. All nature, human and external, is ransacked to serve and run his errands. The bright cutlery, after all the dross of Birmingham has been thrown aside, is his style. . . . He has broken the ice, and the torrent streams forth. He drives six-in-hand over ruts and streams and never upsets. . . . With wonderful art he grinds into paint for his picture all his moods and experiences, and crashes his way through shoals of dilettante opinions. It is not in man to determine what his style shall be, if it is to be his own.

But though a rugged, Carlyle was the reverse of a careless or ready writer. He weighed every sentence: if in all his works, from *Sartor* to the *Reminiscences*, you pencil-mark the most suggestive passages you disfigure the whole book. His opinions will continue to be tossed to and fro; but as an artist he continually grows. He was, let us grant, though a powerful, a one-sided historian, a twisted though in some aspects a great moralist; but he was, in every sense, a mighty painter, now dipping his pencil "in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse," now etching his scenes with the tender touch of a Millet.

Emerson, in one of his early letters to Carlyle, wrote, "Nothing seems hid from those wonderful eyes of yours; those devouring eyes; those thirsty eyes; those portrait-eating, portrait-painting eyes of thine." Men of genius, whether expressing themselves in prose or verse, on canvas or in harmony, are, save when smitten, like Beethoven, by some malignity of Nature, endowed with keener physical senses than other men. They actually, not metaphorically, see more and hear more than their fellows. Carlyle's super-sensitive ear was to him, through life, mainly a torment; but the intensity of his vision was that of a born artist, and to it we owe the finest descriptive passages, if we except those of Mr. Ruskin, in English prose. None of our poets, from Chaucer and Dunbar to Burns and Tennyson, has been more alive to the influences of external nature. His early letters abound in passages like the following, on the view from Arthur's Seat:—

The blue, majestic, everlasting ocean, with the Fife hills swelling gradually into the Grampians behind; rough crags and rude precipices at our feet (where not a hillock rears its head unsung) with Edinburgh at their base clustering proudly over her rugged foundations and covering with a vapoury mantle the jagged black masses of stonework that stretch far and wide, and show like a city of Faeryland. . . . I saw it all last evening when the

sun was going down, and the moon's fine crescent, like a pretty silver creature as it is, was riding quietly above me.

Compare with this the picture, in a letter to Sterling, of Middlebie burn, "leaping into its cauldron, singing a song better than Pasta's"; or that of the Scaur Water, that may be compared with Tennyson's verses in the valley of Caunteretz; or the sketches of the Flemish cities in the tour of 1842, with the photograph of the lace-girl, recalling Sterne at his purest; or the account of the "atmosphere like silk" over the moor, with the phrase, "it was as if Pan slept"; or the few lines written at Thurso, where "the sea is always one's friend"; or the later memories of Mentone, old and new, in the *Reminiscences* (vol. ii. pp. 335-340).

The most striking of those descriptions are, however, those in which the interests of some thrilling event or crisis of human life or history steal upon the scene, and give it a further meaning, as in the dim streak of dawn rising over St. Abb's Head on the morning of Dunbar, or in the following famous apostrophe:—

O evening sun of July, how at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful, woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls at the Orangerie at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of an Hôtel-de-Ville.

Carlyle is, here and there, led astray by the love of contrast; but not even Heinrich Heine has employed antithesis with more effect than in the familiar passage on the sleeping city in *Sartor*, beginning, "Ach mein Lieber . . . it is a true sublimity to dwell here," and ending, "But I, mein Werther, sit above it all. I am alone with the stars." His thought, seldom quite original, is often a resuscitation or survival, and owes much of its celebrity to its splendid brocade. *Sartor Resartus* itself escaped the failure that was

at first threatened by its eccentricity partly from its noble passion, partly because of the truth of the "clothes philosophy," applied to literature as to life.

His descriptions, too often caricatures, of men are equally vivid. They set the whole great mass of *Friedrich* in a glow; they lighten the tedium of *Cromwell's* lumbering despatches; they give a heart of fire to *The French Revolution*. Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* attempts and fulfils on a smaller what Carlyle achieved on a greater scale. The historian makes us sympathise with the real actors, even more than the novelist does with the imaginary characters on the same stage. From the account of the dying Louis XV. to the "whiff of grapeshot" which closed the last scene of the great drama, there is not a dull page. Théroigne de Méricourt, Marat, Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Mirabeau, Robespierre, Talleyrand, Mdme. Roland, above all Marie Antoinette—for whom Carlyle has a strong affection—and Buonaparte, so kindle and colour the scene that we cannot pause to feel weary of the phrases with which they are labelled. The author's letters show the same power of baptizing, which he used often to unfair excess. We can no more forget Count d'Orsay as the "Phœbus Apollo of Dandyism," Daniel Webster's "brows like cliffs and huge black eyes," or Wordsworth "munching raisins" and recognising no poet but himself, or Maurice "attacked by a paroxysm of mental cramp," than we can dismiss from our memories "The Glass Coachman" or "The Tobacco Parliament."

Carlyle quotes a saying of Richter, that Luther's words were half battles; he himself compares those of Burns to cannon-balls; much of his own writing is a fusilade. All three were vehement in abuse of things and persons they did not like; abuse that might seem reckless, if not sometimes coarse, were it not redeemed, as the rogueries of

Falstaff are, by strains of humour. The most Protean quality of Carlyle's genius is his humour: now lighting up the crevices of some quaint fancy, now shining over his serious thought like sunshine over the sea, it is at its best as finely quaint as that of Cervantes, more humane than Swift's. There is in it, as in all the highest humour, a sense of apparent contrast, even of contradiction, in life, of matter for laughter in sorrow and tears in joy. He seems to check himself, and as if afraid of wearing his heart in his sleeve, throws in absurd illustrations of serious propositions, partly to show their universal range, partly in obedience to an instinct of reserve, to escape the reproach of sermonising and to cut the story short. Carlyle's grotesque is a mode of his golden silence, a sort of Socratic irony, in the indulgence of which he laughs at his readers and at himself. It appears now in the form of transparent satire, ridicule of his own and other ages, now in droll reference or mock heroic detail, in an odd conception, a character sketch, an event in parody, in an antithesis or simile,—sometimes it lurks in a word, and again in a sentence. In direct pathos—the other side of humour—he is equally effective. His denunciations of sentiment remind us of Plato attacking the poets, for he is at heart the most emotional of writers, the greatest of the prose poets of England; and his dramatic sympathy extends alike to the actors in real events and to his ideal creations. Few more pathetic passages occur in literature than his “stories of the deaths of kings.” The following among the less known of his eloquent passages is an apotheosis of their burials:—

In this manner did the men of the Eastern Counties take up the slain body of their Edmund, where it lay cast forth in the village of Hoxne; seek out the severed head and reverently reunite the same. They embalmed him with myrrh and sweet spices, with love, pity, and all high and awful thoughts; con-

secrating him with a very storm of melodious, adoring admiration, and sun-dried showers of tears ; joyfully, yet with awe (as all deep joy has something of the awful in it), commemorating his noble deeds and godlike walk and conversation while on Earth. Till, at length, the very Pope and Cardinals at Rome were forced to hear of it; and they, summing up as correctly as they well could, with *Advocatus Diaboli* pleadings and other forms of process, the general verdict of mankind, declared that he had in very fact led a hero's life in this world ; and, being now gone, was gone, as they conceived, to God above and reaping his reward there. Such, they said, was the best judgment they could form of the case, and truly not a bad judgment.

Carlyle's reverence for the past makes him even more apt to be touched by its sorrows than amused by its follies. With a sense of brotherhood he holds out hands to all that were weary ; he feels even for the pedlars climbing the Hohenzollern valley, and pities the solitude of soul on the frozen Schreckhorn of power, whether in a dictator of Paraguay or in a Prussian prince. He leads us to the death chamber of Louis XV., of Mirabeau, of Cromwell, of Sterling, his own lost friend ; and we feel with him in the presence of a solemnising mystery. Constantly, amid the din of arms or words, and the sarcasms by which he satirises and contemns old follies and idle strifes, a gentler feeling wells up in his pages like the sound of the Angelus. Such pauses of pathos are the records of real or fanciful situations, as of Teufelsdröckh "left alone with the night" when Blumine and Herr Towgood ride down the valley ; of Oliver recalling the old days at St. Ives ; of the Electress Louisa bidding adieu to her Elector.

At the moment of her death, it is said, when speech had fled, he felt from her hand, which lay in his, three slight slight pressures—farewell thrice mutely spoken in that manner, not easily to forget in this world.

There is nothing more pathetic in the range of his

works, if in that of our literature, than the account of the relations of father and son in the domestic history of the Prussian Court, from the first estrangement between them—the young Friedrich in his prison at Cüstrin, the old Friedrich gliding about seeking shelter from ghosts, mourning for Absalom—to the reconciliation, the end, and the afterthoughts:—

The last breath of Friedrich Wilhelm having fled, Friedrich hurried to a private room; sat there all in tears; looking back through the gulfs of the Past, upon such a Father now rapt away for ever. Sad all and soft in the moonlight of memory—the lost Loved One all in the right as we now see, we all in the wrong!—This, it appears, was the Son's fixed opinion. Seven years hence here is how Friedrich concludes the *History* of his Father, written with a loyal admiration throughout: "We have left under silence the domestic chagrins of this great Prince; readers must have some indulgence for the faults of the children, in consideration of the virtues of such a Father." All in tears he sits at present, meditating these sad things. In a little while the Old Dessauer, about to leave for Dessau, ventures in to the Crown Prince, Crown Prince no longer; "embraces his knees," offers weeping his condolence, his congratulation; hopes withal that his sons and he will be continued in their old posts, and that he the Old Dessauer "will have the same authority as in the late reign." Friedrich's eyes, at this last clause, flash out tearless, strangely Olympian. "In your posts I have no thought of making change; in your posts yes; and as to authority I know of none there can be but what resides in the king that is sovereign," which, as it were, struck the breath out of the Old Dessauer; and sent him home with a painful miscellany of feelings, astonishment not wanting among them. At an after hour the same night Friedrich went to Berlin, met by acclamation enough. He slept there not without tumult of dreams, one may fancy; and on awakening next morning the first sound he heard was that of the regiment Glasenap under his windows, swearing fealty to the new King. He sprang out of bed in a tempest of emotion; bustled distractedly to and fro, wildly weeping. Pöllnitz, who came into the anteroom, found him in this state, "half-dressed, with dishevelled hair, in tears, and as if beside himself." "These

huzzahings only tell me what I have lost," said the new King. "He was in great suffering," suggested Pöllnitz; "he is now at rest." True, he suffered; but he was here with us; and now — !

Carlyle has said of Dante's *Francesca* "that it is a thing woven as of rainbows on a ground of eternal black." The phrase, well applied to the *Inferno*, is a perhaps half-conscious verdict on his own tenderness as exhibited in his life and in his works.

CHAPTER IX

CARLYLE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

ONE of the subtlest of Robert Browning's critics, in the opening sentence of his work,¹ quotes a saying of Hegel's, "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him"; adding, "The condemnation is a double one, and it generally falls heaviest on the great man himself who has to submit to explanation." Cousin, the graceful Eclectic, is reported to have said to the great Philosopher, "will you oblige me by stating the results of your teaching in a few sentences?" and to have received the reply, "It is not easy, especially in French."

The retort applies, with severity, to those who attempt to systematise Carlyle; for he himself was, as we have seen, intolerant of system. His mathematical attainment and his antipathy to logical methods beyond the lines of square and circle, his love of concise fact and his often sweeping assertions are characteristic of the same contradictions in his nature as his almost tyrannical premises and his practically tender-hearted conclusions. A hard thinker, he was never a close reasoner; in all that relates to human affairs he relies on nobility of feeling rather than on continuity of thought. Claiming the full latitude of

¹ *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, by Professor Henry Jones, of St. Andrews.

the prophet to warn, exhort, even to command, he declines either to preach or to accept the rubric of the partisan or of the priest.

In praise of German literature, he remarks, "One of its chief qualities is that it has no particular theory at all on the front of it;" and of its leaders, "I can only speak of the revelations these men have made to me. As to their doctrines, there is nothing definite or precise to be said"; yet he asserts that Goethe, Richter, and the rest, took him "out of the blackness and darkness of death." This is nearly the feeling that his disciples of forty years ago entertained towards himself; but their discipleship has rarely lasted through life. They came to his writings, inspired by the youthful enthusiasm that carries with it a vein of credulity, intoxicated by their fervour as by new wine or mountain air, and found in them the key of the perennial riddle and the solution of the insoluble mystery. But in later years the curtain to many of them became the picture.

When Carlyle was first recognised in London as a rising author, curiosity was rife as to his "opinions"; was he a Chartist at heart or an Absolutist, a Calvinist like Knox, a Deist like Hume, a Feudalist with Scott, or a Democrat with Burns—inquisitions mostly vain. He had come from the Scotch moors and his German studies, a strange element, into the midst of an almost foreign society, not so much to promulgate a new set of opinions as to infuse a new life into those already existing. He claimed to have a "mission," but it was less to controvert any form of creed than to denounce the insufficiency of shallow modes of belief. He raised the tone of literature by referring to higher standards than those currently accepted; he tried to elevate men's minds to the contemplation of something better than themselves, and impress upon them the

vacuity of lip-services; he insisted that the matter of most consequence was the grip with which they held their convictions and their willingness to sacrifice the interests on which they could lay their hands, in loyalty to some nobler faith. He taught that beliefs by hearsay are not only barren but obstructive; that it is only

When half-gods go, the gods arrive.

But his manner of reading these important lessons admitted the retort that he himself was content rather to dwell on what is *not* than to discover what is true. Belief, he reiterates, is the cure for all the worst of human ills; but belief in what or in whom? In "the eternities and immensities," as an answer, requires definition. It means that we are not entitled to regard ourselves as the centres of the universe; that we are but atoms of space and time, with relations infinite beyond our personalities; that the first step to a real recognition of our duties is the sense of our inferiority to those above us, our realisation of the continuity of history and life, our faith and acquiescence in some universal law. This truth, often set forth

By saint, by sage, by preacher, and by poet,

no one has enforced with more eloquence than Carlyle; but though he founded a dynasty of ideas, they are comparatively few; like a group of strolling players, each with a well-filled wardrobe, and ready for many parts.

The difficulty of defining Carlyle results not merely from his frequent golden nebulosity, but from his love of contradicting even himself. Dr. Johnson confessed to Boswell that when arguing in his dreams he was often worsted and took credit for the resignation with which he

bore these defeats, forgetting that the victor and the vanquished were one and the same. Similarly his successor took liberties with himself which he would allow to no one else, and in doing so he has taken liberties with his reader. His praise and blame of the profession of letters, as the highest priesthood and the meanest trade; his early exaltation of "the writers of newspapers, pamphlets, books," as "the real effective working church of a modern country"; and his later expressed contempt for journalism as "mean and demoralising"—"we must destroy the faith in newspapers"; his alternate faith and unfaith in Individualism; the teaching of the *Characteristics* and the *Signs of the Times* that all healthy genius is unconscious, and the censure of Sir Walter Scott for troubling himself too little with mysteries; his commendation of "the strong warrior" for writing no books, and his taking sides with the mediæval monks against the kings—there is no reconciliation of such contradictories. They are the expression of diverse moods and emphatically of different stages of mental progress, the later, as a rule, more negative than the earlier.

This change is most marked in the sphere of politics. At the close of his student days Carlyle was to all intents a Radical, and believed in Democracy;¹ he saw hungry masses around him, and, justly attributing some of their suffering to misgovernment, vented his sympathetic zeal for the oppressed in denunciation of the oppressors. He began not only by sympathising with the people, but by believing in their capacity to manage best their own affairs: a belief that steadily waned as he grew older until he denied to them even the right to choose their rulers. As late, however, as 1830, he argued against Irving's conservatism in terms recalled in the *Reminiscences*. "He objected clearly to my Reform Bill notions, found Demo-

¹ Passage quoted (Chap. II.) about the Glasgow Radical rising in 1819.

cracy a thing forbidden, leading even to outer darkness: I a thing inevitable and obliged to lead whithersoever it could." During the same period he clenched his theory by taking a definite side in the controversy of the age. "This," he writes to Macvey Napier, "this is the day when the lords are to reject the Reform Bill. The poor lords can only accelerate (by perhaps a century) their own otherwise inevitable enough abolition."

The political part of *Sartor Resartus*, shadowing forth some scheme of well-organised socialism, yet anticipates, especially in the chapter on *Organic Filaments*, the writer's later strain of belief in dukes, earls, and marshals of men: but this work, religious, ethical, and idyllic, contains mere vague suggestions in the sphere of practical life. About this time Carlyle writes of liberty: "What art thou to the valiant and the brave when thou art thus to the weak and timid, dearer than life, stronger than death, higher than purest love?" and agrees with the verdict, "The slow poison of despotism is worse than the convulsive struggles of anarchy." But he soon passed from the mood represented by Emily Brontë to that of the famous apostrophe of Madame Roland. He proclaimed that liberty to do as we like is a fatal license, that the only true liberty is that of doing what is right, which he interprets living under the laws enacted by the wise. Mrs. Austin in 1832 wrote to Mrs. Carlyle, "I am that monster made up of all the Whigs hate—a Radical and an Absolutist." The expression, at the time, accurately defined Carlyle's own political position: but he shifted from it, till the Absolutist, in a spirit made of various elements, devoured the Radical. The leading counsel against the aristocracy changed his brief and became chief advocate on their side, declaring "we must recognise the hereditary principle if there is to be any fixity in things." In 1835, he says to Emerson:—

I believe literature to be as good as dead . . . and nothing but hungry Revolt and Radicalism appointed us for perhaps three generations. . . . I suffer also terribly from the solitary existence I have all along had ; it is becoming a kind of passion with me to feel myself among my brothers. And then How ? Alas, I care not a doit for Radicalism, nay, I feel it to be a wretched necessity unfit for me ; Conservatism being not unfit only but false for me : yet these two are the grand categories under which all English spiritual activity, that so much as thinks remuneration possible, must range itself.

And somewhat later—

People accuse me, not of being an incendiary Sansculotte, but of being a Tory, thank Heaven !

Some one has written with a big brush, "He who is not a radical in his youth is a knave, he who is not a conservative in his age is a fool." The rough, if not rude, generalisation has been plausibly supported by the changes in the mental careers of Burke, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth. But Carlyle was "a spirit of another sort," of more mixed yarn ; and, as there is a vein of Conservatism in his early Radicalism, so there is, as also in the cases of Landor and even of Goethe, still a revolutionary streak in his later Conservatism. Consequently, in his instance, there is a plea in favour of the prepossession (especially strong in Scotland) which leads the political or religious party that a distinguished man has left still to persist in claiming him ; while that which he has joined accepts him, if at all, with distrust. Scotch Liberals will not give up Carlyle, one of his biographers keenly asseverating that he was to the last "a democrat at heart" ; while the representative organ of northern Conservatism on the same ground continues to assail him—"mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens." On all questions directly bearing on the physical welfare of the masses of the people, his speech and action remained consistent with his declaration

that he had "never heard an argument for the corn laws which might not make angels weep." From first to last, he was an advocate of Free Trade — though under the constant protest that the greatness of a nation depended in a very minor degree on the abundance of its possessions — and of free, unsectarian, and compulsory Education; while, in theology, though remote from either, he was more tolerant of the dogmatic narrowness of the Low Church of the lower, than of the Ritualism of the upper, classes. His unwavering interest in the poor and his belief that legislation should keep them in constant view, was in accord with the spirit of Bentham's standard: but Carlyle, rightly or wrongly, came to regard the bulk of men as children requiring not only help and guidance but control.

On the question of "the Suffrage" he completely revolved. It appears, from the testimony of Mr. Froude, that the result of the Reform Bill of 1832 disappointed him in merely shifting power from the owners of land to the owners of shops, and leaving the handicraftsmen and his own peasant class no better off. Before a further extension became a point of practical politics he had arrived at the conviction that the ascertainment of truth and the election of the fittest did not lie with majorities. These sentences of 1835 represent a transition stage:—

Conservatism I cannot attempt to conserve, believing it to be a portentous embodied sham. . . . Whether the Tories stay out or in, it will be all for the advance of Radicalism, which means revolt, dissolution, and confusion and a darkness which no man can see through.

No one had less faith in the pæan chanted by Macaulay and others on the progress of the nation or of the race, a progress which, without faith in great men, was to him inevitably downward; no one protested with more emphasis against the levelling doctrines of the French

Revolution. It has been observed that Carlyle's *Chartism* was "his first practical step in politics"; it is more true to say that it first embodied, with more than his usual precision, the convictions he had for some time held of the dangers of our social system; with an indication of some of the means to ward them off, based on the realisation of the interdependence of all classes in the State. This book is remarkable as containing his last, very partial, concessions to the democratic creed, the last in which he is willing to regard a wide suffrage as a possible, though by no means the best, expedient. Subsequently, in *Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, he came to hold "that with every extension of the Franchise those whom the voters would elect would be steadily inferior and more unfit." Every stage in his political progress is marked by a growing distrust in the judgment of the multitude, a distrust set forth, with every variety of metaphor, in such sentences as the following:—

There is a divine message or eternal regulation of the Universe. How find it? All the world answers me, "Count heads, ask Universal Suffrage by the ballot-box and that will tell!" From Adam's time till now the Universe was wont to be of a somewhat abstruse nature, partially disclosing itself to the wise and noble-minded alone, whose number was not the majority. Of what use towards the general result of finding out what it is wise to do, can the fools be? . . . If of ten men nine are recognisable as fools, which is a common calculation, how in the name of wonder will you ever get a ballot-box to grind you out a wisdom from the votes of these ten men? . . . Only by reducing to zero nine of these votes can wisdom ever issue from your ten. The mass of men consulted at the hustings upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human stupidity as this world sees. . . . If the question be asked and the answer given, I will generally consider in any case of importance, that the said answer is likely to be wrong, and that I have to go and do the reverse of the same . . . for how should I follow a multitude to do evil? Cease to brag to me of America and its model

institutions. . . . On this side of the Atlantic or on that, Democracy is for ever impossible! The Universe is a monarchy and a hierarchy, the noble in the high places, the ignoble in the low; this is in all times and in all places the Almighty Maker's law. Democracy, take it where you will, is found a regulated method of rebellion, it abrogates the old arrangement of things, and leaves zero and vacuity. It is the consummation of no-government and *laissez faire*.

Alongside of this train of thought there runs a constant protest against the spirit of revolt. In *Sartor* we find: "Whoso cannot obey cannot be free, still less bear rule; he that is the inferior of nothing can be the superior of nothing"; and in *Chartism*—

Men who rebel and urge the lower classes to rebel ought to have other than formulas to go upon, . . . those to whom millions of suffering fellow-creatures are "masses," mere explosive masses for blowing down Bastiles with, for voting at hustings for us—such men are of the questionable species. . . . Obedience . . . is the primary duty of man. . . . Of all "rights of men" this right of the ignorant to be guided by the wiser, gently or forcibly—is the indisputablest. . . . Cannot one discern, across all democratic turbulence, clattering of ballot-boxes, and infinite sorrowful jangle, that this is at bottom the wish and prayer of all human hearts everywhere, "Give me a leader"?

The last sentence indicates the transition from the merely negative aspect of Carlyle's political philosophy to the positive, which is his HERO-WORSHIP, based on the excessive admiration for individual greatness,—an admiration common to almost all imaginative writers, whether in prose or verse; on his notions of order and fealty, and on a reverence for the past, which is also a common property of poets. The Old and Middle Ages, according to his view, had their chiefs, captains, kings, and waxed or waned with the increase or decrease of their Loyalty. Democracy, the new force of our times, must in its turn be dominated by

leaders. Raised to independence over the arbitrary will of a multitude, these are to be trusted and followed, if need be, to death.

Your noblest men at the summit of affairs is the ideal world of poets. . . . Other aim in this earth we have none. That we all reverence "great men" is to me the living rock amid all rushings down whatsoever. All that democracy ever meant lies there, the attainment of a truer Aristocracy or Government of the Best. Make search for the Able man. How to get him is the question of questions.

It is precisely the question to which Carlyle never gives, and hardly attempts, a reply; and his failure to answer it invalidates the larger half of his Politics. Plato has at least detailed a scheme for eliminating his philosopher guardians, though it somewhat pedantically suggests a series of Chinese examinations: his political, though probably unconscious disciple has only a few negative tests. The warrior or sage who is to rule is *not* to be chosen by the majority, especially in our era, when they would choose the Orators who seduce and "traduce the State"; nor are we ever told that the election is to rest with either Under or Upper House: the practical conclusion is that when we find a man of great force of character, whether representing our own opinions or the reverse, we should take him on trust. This brings us to the central maxim of Carlyle's political philosophy, to which we must, even in our space, give some consideration, as its true meaning has been the theme of so much dispute.

It is a misfortune of original thought that it is hardly ever put in practice by the original thinker. When his rank as a teacher is recognised, his words have already lost half their value by repetition. His manner is aped by those who find an easy path to notoriety in imitation; the belief he held near his heart is worn as a creed like

a badge ; the truth he promulgated is distorted in a room of mirrors, half of it is a truism, the other half a falsism. That which began as a denunciation of tea-table morality, is itself the tea-table morality of the next generation : an outcry against cant may become the quintessence of cant ; a revolt from tyranny the basis of a new tyranny ; the condemnation of sects the foundation of a new sect ; the proclamation of peace a bone of contention. There is an ambiguity in most general maxims, and a seed of error which assumes preponderance over the truth when the interpreters of the maxim are men easily led by formulæ. Nowhere is this degeneracy more strikingly manifested than in the history of some of the maxims which Carlyle either first promulgated or enforced by his adoption. When he said, or quoted, "Silence is better than speech," he meant to inculcate patience and reserve. Always think before you speak : rather lose fluency than waste words : never speak for the sake of speaking. It is the best advice, but they who need it most are the last to take it ; those who speak and write not because they have something to say, but because they wish to say or must say something, will continue to write and speak as long as they can spell or articulate. Thoughtful men are apt to misapply the advice, and betray their trust when they sit still and leave the "war of words to those who like it." When Carlyle condemned self-consciousness, a constant introspection and comparison of self with others, he theoretically struck at the root of the morbid moods of himself and other mental analysts ; he had no intention to over-exalt mere muscularity or to deify athletic sports. It were easy to multiply instances of truths clearly conceived at first and parodied in their promulgation ; but when we have the distinct authority of the discoverer himself for their correct interpretation, we can at once appeal to it. A yet graver, not

uncommon, source of error arises when a great writer misapplies the maxims of his own philosophy, or states them in such a manner that they are sure to be misapplied.

Carlyle has laid down the doctrine that MIGHT IS RIGHT at various times and in such various forms, with and without modification or caveat, that the real meaning can only be ascertained from his own application of it. He has made clear, what goes without saying, that by "might" he does not intend mere physical strength.

Of conquest we may say that it never yet went by brute force ; conquest of that kind does not endure. The strong man, what is he ? The wise man. His muscles and bones are not stronger than ours ; but his soul is stronger, clearer, nobler. . . . Late in man's history, yet clearly at length, it becomes manifest to the dullest that mind is stronger than matter, that not brute Force, but only Persuasion and Faith, is the king of this world. . . . Intellect has to govern this world and will do it.

There are sentences which indicate that he means something more than even mental force ; as in his *Diary* (Froude, iv. 422), "I shall have to tell Lecky, Right is the eternal symbol of Might" ; and again in *Chartism*, "Might and right do differ frightfully from hour to hour ; but give them centuries to try it, and they are found to be identical. The strong thing is the just thing. In kings we have either a divine right or a diabolic wrong." On the other hand, we read in *Past and Present* :—

Savage fighting Heptarchies : their fighting is an ascertainment who has the right to rule over them.

And again—

Clear undeniable right, clear undeniable might : *either* of these, once ascertained, puts an end to battle.

And elsewhere—

Rights men have none save to be governed justly. . . .

Rights I will permit thee to call everywhere correctly articulated might. . . . All goes by wager of battle in this world, and it is, well understood, the measure of all worth. . . . By right divine the strong and capable govern the weak and foolish. . . . Strength we may say is Justice itself.

It is not left for us to balance those somewhat indefinite definitions. Carlyle has himself in his Histories illustrated and enforced his own interpretations of the summary views of his political treatises. There he has demonstrated that his doctrine, "Might is Right," is no mere unguarded expression of the truism that moral might is right. In his hands it implies that virtue is in all cases a property of strength, that strength is everywhere a property of virtue; that power of whatever sort having any considerable endurance, carries with it the seal and signal of its claim to respect, that whatever has established itself has, in the very act, established its right to be established. He is never careful enough to keep before his readers what he must himself have dimly perceived, that victory *by right* belongs not to the force of will alone, apart from clear and just conceptions of worthy ends. Even in its crude form, the maxim errs not so much in what it openly asserts as in what it implicitly denies. Aristotle (the first among ancients to *question* the institution of slavery, as Carlyle has been one of the last of moderns to defend it) more guardedly admits that strength is in itself a good,—*καὶ ἔστιν αἰεὶ τὸ κρατοῦν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ἀγαθοῦ τινος*,—but leaves it to be maintained that there are forms of good which do not show themselves in excess of strength. Several of Carlyle's conclusions and verdicts seem to show that he only acknowledges those types of excellence that have already manifested themselves as powers; and this doctrine (which, if adopted in earlier ages, would practically have left possession with physical strength) colours all his

History and much of his Biography. Energy of any sort compels his homage. Himself a Titan, he shakes hands with all Titans, Gothic gods, Knox, Columbus, the fuliginous Mirabeau, burly Danton dying with "no weakness" on his lips. The fulness of his charity is for the errors of Mohammed, Cromwell, Burns, Napoleon I.,—whose mere belief in his own star he calls sincerity,—the atrocious Francia, the Norman kings, the Jacobins, Brandenburg despots; the fulness of his contempt for the conscientious indecision of Necker, the Girondists, the Moderates of our own Commonwealth. He condones all that ordinary judgments regard as the tyranny of conquest, and has for the conquered only a *væ victis*. In this spirit, he writes:—

M. Thierry celebrates with considerable pathos the fate of the Saxons; the fate of the Welsh, too, moves him; of the Celts generally, whom a fiercer race swept before them into the mountains, whither they were not worth following. What can we say, but that the cause which pleased the gods had in the end to please Cato also?

When all is said, Carlyle's inconsistent optimism throws no more light than others have done on the apparent relapses of history, as the overthrow of Greek civilisation, the long night of the Dark Ages, the spread of the Russian power during the last century, or of continental Militarism in the present. In applying the tests of success or failure we must bear in mind that success is from its very nature conspicuous. We only know that brave men have failed when they have had a "sacred bard." The good that is lost is, *ipso facto*, forgotten. We can rarely tell of greatness unrecognised, for the very fact of our being able to tell of it would imply a former recognition. The might of evil walks in darkness: we remember the martyrs who, by their deaths, ultimately drove the Inquisition from England; not those

whose courage quailed. "It was their fate," as a recent writer remarks, "that was the tragedy." Reading Carlyle's maxim between the lines of his chapter on the Reformation, and noting that the Inquisition triumphed in Spain, while in Austria, Bavaria, and Bohemia Protestantism was stifled by stratagem or by force; that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was successful; and that the revocation of the Edict of Nantes killed the France of Henry IV., we see its limitations even in the long perspective of the past.¹ Let us, however, grant that in the ultimate issue the Platonic creed, "Justice is stronger than injustice," holds good. It is when Carlyle turns to politics and regards them as history accomplished instead of history in progress that his principle leads to the most serious error. No one has a more withering contempt for evil as meanness and imbecility; but he cannot see it in the strong hand. Of two views, equally correct, "evil is weakness," such evil as sloth, and "corruptio optimi pessima," such evil as tyranny—he only recognises the first. Despising the palpable anarchies of passion, he has no word of censure for the more settled form of anarchy which announced, "Order reigns at Warsaw." He refuses his sympathy to all unsuccessful efforts, and holds that if races are trodden under foot, they are φύσει δοῦλοι . . . δυνάμενοι ἄλλον εἶναι; they who have allowed themselves to be subjugated deserve their fate. The cry of "oppressed nationalities" was to him mere cant. His Providence is on the side of the big battalions, and forgives very violent means to an orderly end. To his credit he declined to acknowledge the right of Louis Napoleon to rule France; but he accepted the Czars, and ridiculed Mazzini till forced to admit, almost with chagrin, that he had, "after all," substantially succeeded.

¹ *Vide* Mill's *Liberty*, chap. ii. pp. 52-54

Treason never prospers, what's the reason?
That when it prospers, none dare call it treason.

Apprehending, on the whole more keenly than any of his contemporaries, the foundations of past greatness, his invectives and teaching lay athwart much that is best as well as much that is most hazardous in the new ideas of the age. Because mental strength, endurance, and industry do not appear prominently in the Negro race, he looks forward with satisfaction to the day when a band of white buccaneers shall undo Toussaint l'Ouverture's work of liberation in Hayti, advises the English to revoke the Emancipation Act in Jamaica, and counsels the Americans to lash their slaves—better, he admits, made serfs and not saleable by auction—not more than is necessary to get from them an amount of work satisfactory to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Similarly he derides all movements based on a recognition of the claims of weakness to consideration and aid.

Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.

The application of the maxim, "Might is Right," to a theory of government is obvious; the strongest government must be the best, *i.e.* that in which Power, in the last resort supreme, is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler; the weakest, that in which it is most widely diffused, is the worst. Carlyle in his Address to the Edinburgh students commends Machiavelli for insight in attributing the preservation of Rome to the institution of the Dictatorship. In his *Friedrich* this view is developed in the lessons he directs the reader to draw from Prussian history. The following conveys his final comparative estimate of an absolute and a limited monarchy:—

This is the first triumph of the constitutional Principle which has since gone to such sublime heights among us—heights

which we begin at last to suspect may be depths leading down, all men now ask whitherwards. A much-admired invention in its time, that of letting go the rudder or setting a wooden figure expensively to take care of it, and discovering that the ship would sail of itself so much the more easily. Of all things a nation needs first to be drilled, and a nation that has not been governed by so-called tyrants never came to much in the world.

Among the currents of thought contending in our age, two are conspicuously opposed. The one says: Liberty is an end not a mere means in itself; apart from practical results the crown of life. Freedom of thought and its expression, and freedom of action, bounded only by the equal claim of our fellows, are desirable for their own sakes as constituting national vitality: and even when, as is sometimes the case, Liberty sets itself against improvements for a time, it ultimately accomplishes more than any reforms could accomplish without it. The fewer restraints that are imposed from without on human beings the better: the province of law is only to restrain men from violently or fraudulently invading the province of other men. This view is maintained and in great measure sustained by J. S. Mill in his *Liberty*, the *Areopagitica* of the nineteenth century, and more elaborately if not more philosophically set forth in the comprehensive treatise of Wilhelm von Humboldt on *The Sphere and Duties of Government*. These writers are followed with various reserves by Grote, Buckle, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and by Mr. Lecky. Mill writes:—

The idea of rational Democracy is not that the people themselves govern; but that they have security for good government. This security they can only have by retaining in their own hands the ultimate control. The people ought to be masters employing servants more skilful than themselves.¹

¹ It should be noted that Mill lays as great stress on Individualism as Carlyle does, and a more practical stress. He has the same belief in the essential mediocrity of the masses of men whose "think-

To this Carlyle, with at least the general assent of Mr. Froude, Mr. Ruskin, and Sir James Stephen, substantially replies:—

In freedom for itself there is nothing to raise a man above a fly; the value of a human life is that of its work done; the prime province of law is to get from its subjects the most of the best work. The first duty of a people is to find—which means to accept—their chief; their second and last to obey him. We see to what men have been brought by “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” by the dreams of idealogues, and the purchase of votes.

This, the main drift of Carlyle’s political teaching, rests on his absolute belief in strength (which always grows by concentration), on his unqualified admiration of order, and on his utter disbelief in what his adverse friend Mazzini was wont, with over-confidence, to appeal to as “collective wisdom.” Theoretically there is much to be said for this view: but, in practice, it involves another idealism as aerial as that of any “ideologue” on the side of Liberty. It points to the establishment of an Absolutism which must continue to exist, whether wisdom survives in the absolute rulers or ceases to survive. *Κρατεῖν δ’ ἔστι καὶ μὴ δικάως.* The rule of Cæsars, Napoleons, Czars may have been beneficent in times of revolution; but their right to rule is apt to pass before their power, and when the latter descends by inheritance, as from M. Aurelius to Commodus, it commonly degenerates. It is well to learn, from a safe distance, the amount of good that may be associated with despotism: its worst evil is lawlessness, it not only suffocates freedom and

ing is done for them . . . through the newspapers,” and the same scorn for “the present low state of society.” He writes, “The initiation of all wise and noble things comes and must come from individuals: generally at first from some one individual”; but adds, “I am not countenancing the sort of ‘hero-worship’ which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world. . . . All he can claim is freedom to point out the way.”

induces inertia, but it renders wholly uncertain the life of those under its control. Most men would rather endure the "slings and arrows" of an irresponsible press, the bustle and jargon of many elections, the delay of many reforms, the narrowness of many streets, than have lived from 1814 to 1840, with the noose around all necks, in Paraguay, or even precariously prospered under the paternal shield of the great Fritz's extraordinary father, Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia.

Carlyle's doctrine of the ultimate identity of "might and right" never leads, with him, to its worst consequence, a fatalistic or indolent repose; the withdrawal from the world's affairs of the soul "holding no form of creed but contemplating all." That he was neither a consistent optimist nor a consistent pessimist is apparent from his faith in man's partial ability to mould his fate. Not "belief, belief," but "action, action," is his working motto. On the title-page of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* he quotes from Rushworth on a colloquy of Sir David Ramsay and Lord Reay in 1638: "Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all!'—'Nay, by God, Donald; we must help Him to mend it,' said the other."

"I am not a Tory," he exclaimed, after the clamour on the publication of *Chartism*, "no, but one of the deepest though perhaps the quietest of Radicals." With the Toryism which merely says "stand to your guns" and, for the rest, "let well alone," he had no sympathy. There was nothing selfish in his theories. He felt for and was willing to fight for mankind, though he could not trust them; even his "king" he defines to be a minister or servant of the State. "The love of power," he says, "if thou understand what to the manful heart power signifies, is a very noble and indispensable love"; that is, the power to raise men above the "Pig Philosophy," the worship of clothes, the acquiescence

in wrong. "The world is not here for me, but I for it." "Thou shalt is written upon life in characters as terrible as thou shalt not"; are protests against the mere negative virtues which religionists are wont unduly to exalt.

Carlyle's so-called Mysticism is a part of his German poetry; in the sphere of common life and politics he made use of plain prose, and often proved himself as shrewd as any of his northern race. An excessively "good hater," his pet antipathies are generally bad things. In the abstract they are always so; but about the abstract there is no dispute. Every one dislikes or professes to dislike shams, hypocrisies, phantoms,—by whatever tiresomely reiterated epithet he may be pleased to address things that are not what they pretend to be. Diogenes's toil with the lantern alone distinguished the cynic Greek, in admiration of an honest man. Similarly the genuine zeal of his successor appears in painstaking search; his discrimination in the detection, his eloquence in his handling of humbugs. Occasional blunders in the choice of objects of contempt and of worship—between which extremes he seldom halts,—demonstrate his fallibility, but outside the sphere of literary and purely personal criticism he seldom attacks any one, or anything, without a show of reason. To all gospels there are two sides; and a great teacher who, by reason of the very fire that makes him great, disdains to halt and hesitate and consider the *juste milieu*, seldom guards himself against misinterpretation or excess. Mazzini writes, "He weaves and unweaves his web like Penelope, preaches by turns life and nothingness, and wearies out the patience of his readers by continually carrying them from heaven to hell." Carlyle, like Ruskin, keeps himself right not by caveats but by contradictions of himself, and sometimes in a way least to be expected. Much of his writing is a blast of war, or a protest against the philanthropy

that sets charity before justice. Yet in a letter to the London Peace Congress of 1851, dated 18th July, we find:—

I altogether approve of your object. Clearly the less war and cutting of throats we have among us, it will be the better for us all. As men no longer wear swords in the streets, so neither by and by will nations. . . . How many meetings would one expedition to Russia cover the cost of?

He denounced the Americans, in apparent ignorance of their "Constitution," for having no Government; and yet admitted that what he called their anarchy had done perhaps more than anything else could have done to subdue the wilderness. He spoke with scorn of the "rights of women," their demand for the suffrage, and the *cohue* of female authors, expressing himself in terms of ridiculous disparagement of writers so eminent as George Sand and George Eliot; but he strenuously advocated the claim of women to a recognised medical education. He reviled "Model Prisons" as pampering institutes of "a universal sluggard and scoundrel amalgamation society," and yet seldom passed on the streets one of the "Devil's elect" without giving him a penny. He set himself against every law or custom that tended to make harder the hard life of the poor: there was no more consistent advocate of the abolition of the "Game Laws." Emerson says of the mediæval architects, "they builded better than they knew." Carlyle felt more softly than he said, and could not have been trusted to execute one of his own Rhadamanthine decrees.¹ Scratch the skin of the Tartar and you find beneath the despised humanitarian. Everything that he has written on "The Condition of England Question" has a practical bearing, and many of his suggestions have found a place

¹ *Vide* a remarkable instance of this in the best short *Life of Carlyle*, that by Dr. Richard Garnett, p. 147.

on our code, vindicating the assertion of the *Times* of the day after his death, that "the novelties and paradoxes of 1846 are to a large extent nothing but the good sense of 1881." Such are:—his insistence on affording every facility for merit to rise from the ranks, embodied in measures against promotion by Purchase; his advocacy of State-aided Emigration, of administrative and civil service Reform,—the abolition of "the circumlocution office" in Downing Street,—of the institution of a Minister of Education; his dwelling on the duties as well as the rights of landowners,—the theme of so many Land Acts; his enlarging on the superintendence of labour,—made practical in Factory and Limited Hours Bills—on care of the really destitute, on the better housing of the poor, on the regulation of weights and measures; his general contention for fixing more exactly the province of the legislative and the executive bodies. Carlyle's view that we should find a way to public life for men of eminence who will not cringe to mobs, has made a step towards realisation in further enfranchisement of Universities. Other of his proposals, as the employment of our army and navy in time of peace, and the forcing of able-bodied paupers into "industrial regiments," have become matter of debate which may pave the way to legislation. One of his desiderata, a practical veto on "puffing," it has not yet been found feasible, by the passing of an almost prohibitive duty on advertisements, to realise.

Besides these specific recommendations, three ideas are dominant in Carlyle's political treatises. *First*—a vehement protest against the doctrine of *Laissez faire*; which, he says, "on the part of the governing classes will, we repeat again and again, have to cease; pacific mutual divisions of the spoil and a would-let-well-alone will no longer suffice":—a doctrine to which he is disposed to trace the Trades

Union wars, of which he failed to see the issue. He is so strongly in favour of *Free-trade* between nations that, by an amusing paradox, he is prepared to make it *compulsory*. "All men," he writes in *Past and Present*, "trade with all men when mutually convenient, and are even bound to do it. Our friends of China, who refused to trade, had we not to argue with them, in cannon-shot at last?" But in *Free-trade* between class and class, man and man, within the bounds of the same kingdom, he has no trust: he will not leave "supply and demand" to adjust their relations. The result of doing so is, he holds, the scramble between Capital for larger interest and Labour for higher wage, in which the rich if unchecked will grind the poor to starvation, or drive them to revolt.

Second.—As a corollary to the abolition of *Laissez faire*, he advocates the *Organisation of Labour*, "the problem of the whole future to all who will pretend to govern men." The phrase from its vagueness has naturally provoked much discussion. Carlyle's bigoted dislike of Political Economists withheld him from studying their works; and he seems ignorant of the advances that have been made by the "dismal science," or of what it has proved and disproved. Consequently, while brought in evidence by most of our modern Social idealists, Comtists and Communists alike, all they can say is that he has given to their protest against the existing state of the commercial world a more eloquent expression than their own. He has no compact scheme,—as that of St. Simon or Fourier, or Owen—few such definite proposals as those of Karl Marx, Bellamy, Hertzka or Gronlund, or even William Morris. He seems to share with Mill the view that "the restraints of communism are weak in comparison with those of capitalists," and with Morris to look far forward to some golden age; he has given emphatic support to a copartnership of employers and employed,

in which the profits of labour shall be apportioned by some rule of equity, and insisted on the duty of the State to employ those who are out of work in public undertakings.

Enlist, stand drill, and become from banditti soldiers of industry. I will lead you to the Irish bogs . . . English fox-covers . . . New Forest, Salisbury Plains, and Scotch hill-sides which as yet feed only sheep . . . thousands of square miles . . . destined yet to grow green crops and fresh butter and milk and beef without limit:—

an estimate with the usual exaggeration. But Carlyle's later work generally advances on his earlier, in its higher appreciation of Industrialism. He looks forward to the boon of "one big railway right across America," a prophecy since three times fulfilled; and admits that "the new omnipotence of the steam engine is hewing aside quite other mountains than the physical," *i.e.* bridging the gulf between races and binding men to men. He had found, since writing *Sartor*, that dear cotton and slow trains do not help one nearer to God, freedom, and immortality.

Carlyle's *third* practical point is his advocacy of *Emigration*, or rather his insistence on it as a sufficient remedy for Over-population. He writes of "Malthusianism" with his constant contempt of convictions other than his own:—

A full formed man is worth more than a horse. . . . One man in a year, as I have understood it, if you lend him earth will feed himself and nine others (?) . . . Too crowded indeed! . . . What portion of this globe have ye tilled and delved till it will grow no more? How thick stands your population in the Pampas and Savannahs—in the Curragh of Kildare? Let there be an *Emigration Service*, . . . so that every honest willing workman who found England too strait, and the organisation of labour incomplete, might find a bridge to carry him to western lands. . . . Our little isle has grown too narrow for us, but the world is wide enough yet for another six thousand years. . . . If this

small western rim of Europe is over-peopled, does not everywhere else a whole vacant earth, as it were, call to us "Come and till me, come and reap me"?

On this follows an eloquent passage about our friendly Colonies, "overarched by zodiacs and stars, clasped by many-sounding seas." Carlyle would apparently force emigration, and coerce the Australians, Americans, and Chinese, to receive our ship-loads of living merchandise; but the problem of population exceeds his solution of it. He everywhere inclines to rely on coercion till it is overmastered by resistance, and to overstretch jurisdiction till it snaps.

In Germany, where the latest representative of the Hohenzollerns is ostentatiously laying claim to "right divine," Carlyle's appraisal of Autocracy may have given it countenance. In England, where the opposite tide runs full, it is harmless: but, by a curious irony, our author's leaning to an organised control over social and private as well as public life, his exaltation of duties above rights, may serve as an incentive to the very force he seemed most to dread. Events are every day demonstrating the fallacy of his view of Democracy as an embodiment of *laissez faire*. Kant with deeper penetration indicated its tendency to become despotic. Good government, according to Aristotle, is that of one, of few, or of many, for the sake of all. A Democracy where the poor rule for the poor alone, may be a deadly engine of oppression; it may trample without appeal on the rights of minorities, and, in the name of the common good, establish and enforce an almost unconditioned tyranny. Carlyle's blindness to this superlative danger—a danger to which Mill, in many respects his unrecognised coadjutor, became alive¹

¹ *Vide passim* the chapter in *Liberty* entitled "Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual," where Mill denounces the idea of "the majority of operatives in many branches of industry . . . that bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as good."

—emphasises the limits of his political foresight. He has consecrated Fraternity with an eloquence unapproached by his peers, and with equal force put to scorn the superstition of Equality; but he has aimed at Liberty destructive shafts, some of which may find a mark the archer little meant.

CHAPTER X

CARLYLE'S RELIGION AND ETHICS—RELATION TO PREDECESSORS—INFLUENCE

THE same advance or retrogression that appears in Carlyle's Politics is traceable in his Religion; though it is impossible to record the stages of the change with even an equal approach to precision. Religion, in the widest sense—faith in some supreme Power above us yet acting for us—was the great factor of his inner life. But when we further question his Creed, he is either bewilderingly inconsistent or designedly vague. The answer he gives is that of Schiller: "Welche der Religionen? Keine von allen. Warum? Aus Religion." In 1870 he writes: "I begin to think religion again possible for whoever will piously struggle upwards and sacredly refuse to tell lies: which indeed will mostly mean refusal to speak at all on that topic." This and other implied protests against intrusive inquisition are valid in the case of those who keep their own secrets: it is impertinence to peer and "interview" among the sanctuaries of a poet or politician or historian who does not himself open their doors. But Carlyle has done this in all his books. A reticent writer may veil his convictions on every subject save that on which he writes. An avowed preacher or prophet cannot escape interrogation as to his text.

With all the evidence before us—his collected works, his friendly confidences, his journals, his fragmentary papers, as the interesting series of jottings entitled “Spiritual Optics,” and the partial accounts to Emerson and others of the design of the “Exodus from Houndsditch”—it remains impossible to formulate Carlyle’s Theology. We know that he abandoned the ministry, for which he was destined, because, at an early date, he found himself at irreconcilable variance, not on matters of detail but on essentials, with the standards of Scotch Presbyterianism. We know that he never repented or regretted his resolve; that he went, as continuously as possible for a mind so liable to fits and starts, further and further from the faith of his fathers; but that he remained to the last so much affected by it, and by the ineffaceable impress of early associations, that he has been plausibly called “a Calvinist without dogma,” “a Calvinist without Christianity,” “a Puritan who had lost his creed.” We know that he revered the character of Christ, and theoretically accepted the ideal of self-sacrifice: the injunction to return good for evil he never professed to accept; and vicarious sacrifice was contrary to his whole philosophy, which taught that every man must “dree his weird.” We know that he not only believed in God as revealed in the larger Bible, the whole history of the human race, but that he threatened, almost with hell-fire, all who dared on this point to give refuge to a doubt. Finally, he believed both in fate and in free-will, in good and evil as powers at internecine war, and in the greater strength and triumph of good at some very far distant date. If we desire to know more of Carlyle’s creed we must proceed by “the method of exclusions,” and note, in the first place, what he did *not* believe. This process is simplified by the fact that he assailed all convictions other than his own.

Half his teaching is a protest, in variously eloquent phrase, against all forms of *Materialism* and *Hedonism*, which he brands as "worships of Moloch and Astarte," forgetting that progress in physical welfare may lead not only to material, but to mental, if not spiritual, gain. Similarly he denounces *Atheism*, never more vehemently than in his Journals of 1868-1869:—

Had no God made this world it were an insupportable place. Laws without a lawgiver, matter without spirit is a gospel of dirt. All that is good, generous, wise, right . . . who or what could by any possibility have given it to me, but One who first had it to give! This is not logic, it is axiom. . . . Poor "Comtism, ghastliest of algebraic spectralities." . . . Canst *thou* by searching find out God? I am not surprised thou canst not, vain fool. If they do abolish God from their poor bewildered hearts, there will be seen such a world as few are dreaming of.

Carlyle calls evidence from all quarters, appealing to Napoleon's question, "Who made all that?" and to Friedrich's belief that intellect "could not have been put into him by an entity that had none of its own," in support of what he calls the Eternal Fact of Facts, to which he clings as to the Rock of Ages, the sole foundation of hope and of morality to one having at root little confidence in his fellow-men.

If people are only driven upon virtuous conduct . . . by association of ideas, and there is no "Infinite Nature of Duty," the world, I should say, had better count its spoons to begin with, and look out for hurricanes and earthquakes to end with.

Carlyle hazardously confessed that as regards the foundations of his faith and morals, with Napoleon and Friedrich II. on his side, he had against him the advancing tide of modern *Science*. He did not attempt to disprove its facts, or, as Emerson, to sublimate them into a new idealism; he scoffed at and made light of them, *e.g.*—

Geology has got rid of Moses, which surely was no very sublime achievement either. I often think . . . it is pretty much all that science in this age has done. . . . Protoplasm (unpleasant doctrine that we are all, soul and body, made of a kind of blubber, found in nettles among other organisms) appears to be delightful to many. . . . Yesterday there came a pamphlet published at Lewes, a hallelujah on the advent of Atheism. . . . The real joy of Julian (the author) was what surprised me, like the shout of a hyæna on finding that the whole universe was actually carrion. In about seven minutes my great Julian was torn in two and lying in the place fit for him. . . . Descended from Gorillas! Then where is the place for a Creator? Man is only a little higher than the tadpoles, says our new Evangelist. . . . Nobody need argue with these people. Logic never will decide the matter, or will seem to decide it their way. He who traces nothing of God in his own soul, will never find God in the world of matter—mere circlings of force there, of iron regulation, of universal death and merciless indifference. . . . Matter itself is either Nothing or else a product due to man's *mind*. . . . The fast-increasing flood of Atheism on me takes no hold—does not even wet the soles of my feet.¹

“Carlyle,” says one of his intimates, “speaks as if Darwin wished to rob or to insult him.” *Scepticism* proper fares as hardly in his hands as definite denial. It is, he declares, “a fatal condition,” and, almost in the spirit of the inquisitors, he attributes to it moral vice as well as intellectual weakness, calling it an “atrophy, a disease of the whole soul,” “a state of mental paralysis,” etc. His fallacious habit of appeal to consequences, which in others he would have scouted as a commonplace of the pulpit, is conspicuous in his remark on Hume's view of life as “a most melancholy theory,” according to which, in the words of Jean Paul, “heaven becomes a gas, God a force, and the second world a grave.” He fails to see that all such

¹ Cf. Othello, “Not a jot, not a jot.” Carlyle writes on this question with the agitation of one himself not quite at ease, with none of the calmness of a faith perfectly secure.

appeals are beside the question ; and deserts the ground of his answer to John Sterling's expostulation, "that is downright Pantheism": "What if it were Pot-theism if it is true?" It is the same inconsistency which, in practice, led his sympathy for suffering to override his Stoic theories ; but it vitiated his reasoning, and made it impossible for him to appreciate the calm, yet legitimately emotional, religiosity of Mill. Carlyle has vetoed all forms of so-called *Orthodoxy*—whether Catholic or Protestant, of Churches High or Low ; he abhorred Puseyism, Jesuitry, spoke of the "Free Kirk and other rubbish," and recorded his definite disbelief, in any ordinary sense, in Revelation and in Miracles. "It is as certain as Mathematics that no such thing has ever been on earth." History is a perpetual revelation of God's will and justice, and the stars in their courses are a perpetual miracle, is his refrain. *This is not what Orthodoxy means*, and no one was more intolerant than Carlyle of all shifts and devices to slur the difference between "Yes" and "No." But having decided that his own "Exodus from Houndsditch" might only open the way to the wilderness, he would allow no one else to take in hand his uncompleted task ; and disliked Strauss and Renan even more than he disliked Colenso. "He spoke to me once," says Mr. Froude, "with loathing of the *Vie de Jésus*." I asked if a true life could be written. He said, "Yes, certainly, if it were right to do so ; but it is not." Still more strangely he writes to Emerson :—

You are the only man of the Unitarian persuasion whom I could unobstructedly like. The others that I have seen were all a kind of half-way-house characters, who I thought should, if they had not wanted courage, have ended in unbelief, in faint possible *Theism* ; which I like considerably worse than Atheism. Such, I could not but feel, deserve the fate they find here ; the bat fate ; to be killed among the bats as a bird, among the birds as a bat.

What then is left for Carlyle's Creed? Logically little, emotionally much. If it must be defined, it was that of a Theist with a difference. A spirit of flame from the empyrean, he found no food in the cold *Deism* of the eighteenth century, and brought down the marble image from its pedestal, as by the music of the "Winter's Tale," to live among men and inspire them. He inherited and *coûte que coûte* determined to persist in the belief that there was a personal God—"a Maker, voiceless, formless, within our own soul." To Emerson he writes in 1836, "My belief in a special Providence grows yearly stronger, unsubduable, impregnable"; and later, "Some strange belief in a special Providence was always in me at intervals." Thus, while asserting that "all manner of pulpits are as good as broken and abolished," he clings to the old Ecclefechan days.

"To the last," says Mr. Froude, "he believed as strongly as ever Hebrew prophet did in spiritual religion;" but if we ask the nature of the God on whom all relies, he cannot answer even with the Apostles' Creed. Is He One or Three? "Wer darf ihn nennen." Carlyle's God is not a mere "tendency that makes for righteousness"; He is a guardian and a guide, to be addressed in the words of Pope's *Universal Prayer*, which he adopted as his own. A personal God does not mean a great Figure Head of the Universe,—Heine's fancy of a venerable old man, before he became "a knight" of the Holy Ghost,—it means a Supreme Power, Love, or Justice having relations to the individual man: in this sense Carlyle believed in Him, though more as Justice, exacting "the terriblest penalties," than as Love, preaching from the Mount of Olives. He never entered into controversies about the efficacy of prayer; but, far from deriding, he recommended it as "a turning of one's soul to the Highest." In 1869 he writes:—

I occasionally feel able to wish, with my whole softened heart—it is my only form of prayer—"Great Father, oh, if Thou canst, have pity on her and on me and on all such!" In this at least there is no harm.

And about the same date to Erskine :—

"Our Father ;" in my sleepless tossings, these words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind with an altogether new emphasis ; as if written and shining for me in mild pure splendour on the black bosom of the night there ; when I as it were read them word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was much unexpected. Not for perhaps thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer : nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is, the inmost inspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature, right worthy to be recommended with an "After this manner pray ye."

Carlyle holds that if we do our duty—the best work we can—and faithfully obey His laws, living soberly and justly, God will do the best for us in this life. As regards the next we have seen that he ended with Goethe's hope. At an earlier date he spoke more confidently. On his father's death (*Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 65) he wrote :—

Man follows man. His life is as a tale that has been told : yet under time does there not lie eternity ? . . . Perhaps my father, all that essentially was my father, is even now near me, with me. Both he and I are with God. Perhaps, if it so please God, we shall in some higher state of being meet one another, recognise one another. . . . The possibility, nay (in some way) the certainty, of perennial existence daily grows plainer to me.

On the death of Mrs. Welsh he wrote to his wife : "We shall yet go to her. God is great. God is good" : and earlier, in 1835-1836, to Emerson on the loss of his brother :—

What a thin film it is that divides the living and the dead.

Your brother is in very deed and truth with God, where both you and I are. . . . Perhaps we shall all meet YONDER, and the tears be wiped from all eyes. One thing is no perhaps: surely we shall all meet, if it be the will of the Maker of us. If it be not His will, then is it not better so?

After his wife's death, naturally, the question of Immortality came uppermost in his mind; but his conclusions are, like those of Burns, never dogmatic:—

The truth about the matter is absolutely hidden from us. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Yes, if you are God you may have a right to say so; if you are a man what do you know more than I, or any of us?

And later—

What if Omnipotence should actually have said, "Yes, poor mortals, such of you as have gone so far shall be permitted to go farther"?

To Emerson in 1867 he writes:—

I am as good as without hope and without fear; a gloomily serious, silent, and sad old man, gazing into the final chasm of things in mute dialogue with "Death, Judgment, and Eternity" (dialogue mute on both sides), not caring to discourse with poor articulate speaking mortals, on their sorts of topics—disgusted with the world and its roaring nonsense, which I have no further thought of lifting a finger to help, and only try to keep out of the way of, and shut my door against.

There can be no question of the sincerity of Carlyle's conviction that he had to make war on credulity and to assail the pretences of a *formal Belief* (which he regards as even worse than Atheism) in order to grapple with real Unbelief. After all explanations of Newton or Laplace, the Universe is, to him, a mystery, and we ourselves the miracle of miracles; sight and knowledge leave us no "less forlorn," and beneath all the soundings of science there is a deeper deep. It is this frame of mind that qualified him to be the exponent of the religious epochs in history. "By this

alone," wrote Dr. Chalmers, "he has done so much to vindicate and bring to light the Augustan age of Christianity in England," adding that it is the secret also of the great writer's appreciation of the higher Teutonic literature. His sombre rather than consolatory sense of "God in History," his belief in the mission of righteousness to constrain unrighteousness, and his Stoic view that good and evil are absolute opposites, are his links with the Puritans, whom he habitually exalts in variations of the following strain :—

The age of the Puritans has gone from us, its earnest purpose awakens now no reverence in our frivolous hearts. Not the body of heroic Puritanism alone which was bound to die, but the soul of it also, which was and should have been, and yet shall be immortal, has, for the present, passed away.

Yet Goethe, the only man of recent times whom he regarded with a feeling akin to worship, was in all essentials the reverse of a Puritan.

To Carlyle's, as to most substantially emotional works, may be applied the phrase made use of in reference to the greatest of all the series of ancient books—

*Hic liber est in quo quisquis sua dogmata quærit ;
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.*

From passages like those above quoted—his complaints of the falling off of old Scotch faith ; his references to the kingdom of a God who has written "in plain letters on the human conscience a Law that all may read" ; his insistence that the great soul of the world is just ; his belief in religion as a rule of conduct, and his sympathy with the divine depths of sorrow—from all these many of his Scotch disciples persist in maintaining that their master was to the end essentially a Christian. The question between them and other critics who assert that "he had renounced Christianity" is to some extent, not wholly,

a matter of nomenclature ; it is hard exactly to decide it in the case of a man who so constantly found again in feeling what he had abandoned in thought. Carlyle's Religion was to the last an inconsistent mixture, not an amalgam, of his mother's and of Goethe's. The Puritan in him never dies ; he attempts in vain to tear off the husk that cannot be separated from its kernel. He believes in no historical Resurrection, Ascension, or Atonement, yet hungers and thirsts for a supramundane source of Law, and holds fast by a faith in the Nemesis of Greek, Goth, and Jew. He abjures half-way houses ; but is withheld by pathetic memories of the church spires and village graveyards of his youth from following his doubts to their conclusion ; yet he gives way to his negation in his reference to "old Jew lights now burnt out," and in the half-despair of his expression to Froude about the Deity Himself, "He does nothing." Professor Masson says that "Carlyle had abandoned the Metaphysic of Christianity while retaining much of its Ethic." To reverse this dictum would be an overstrain on the other side : but the *Metaphysic* of Calvinism is precisely what he retained ; the alleged *Facts* of Revelation he discarded ; of the *Ethic* of the Gospels he accepted perhaps the lesser half, and he distinctly ceased to regard the teaching of Christ as final.¹ His doctrine of Renunciation (suggested by the Three Reverences in *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*) is Carlyle's transmutation, if not transfiguration, of Puritanism ; but it took neither in him nor in Goethe any very consistent form, save that it meant Temperance, keeping the body well under the control of the head, the will strong, and striving, through all the lures of sense, to attain to some ideal life.

¹ A passage in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, p. 173, is decisive on this point, and perhaps too emphatic for general quotation.

Both write of Christianity as "a thing of beauty," a perennial power, a spreading tree, a fountain of youth; but Goethe was too much of a Greek—though, as has been said, "a very German Greek"—to be, in any proper sense of the word, a Christian; Carlyle too much of a Goth. His Mythology is Norse; his Ethics, despite his prejudice against the race, are largely Jewish. He proclaimed his code with the thunders of Sinai, not in the reconciling voice of the Beatitudes. He gives or forces on us world-old truths splendidly set, with a leaning to strength and endurance rather than to advancing thought. He did not, says a fine critic of morals, recognise that "morality also has passed through the straits." He did not really believe in Content, which has been called the Catholic, nor in Progress, more questionably styled the Protestant virtue. His often excellent practical rule to "do the duty nearest to hand" may be used to gag the intellect in its search after the goal; so that even his Everlasting Yea, as a pre-determined affirmation, may ultimately result in a deeper negation.¹

"Duty," to him as to Wordsworth, "stern daughter of the voice of God," has two aspects, on each of which he dwells with a persistent iteration. The *first* is *Surrender* to something higher and wider than ourselves. That he has nowhere laid the line between this abnegation and the self-assertion which in his heroes he commends, partly means that correct theories of our complex life are impossible; but Matthew Arnold's criticism, that his Ethics "are made paradoxical by his attack on Happiness, which he should rather have referred to as the result of Labour and of Truth," can only be rebutted by the assertion that the pursuit of pleasure as an end defeats itself. The *second*

¹ *Vide* Professor Jones's *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, pp. 66-90.

aspect of his "Duty" is *Work*. His master Goethe is to him as Apollo to Hercules, as Shakespeare to Luther; the one entire as the chrysolite, the other like the Schreckhorn rent and riven; the words of the former are oracles, of the latter battles; the one contemplates and beautifies truth, the other wrestles and fights for it. Carlyle has a limited love of abstract truth; of action his love is unlimited. His lyre is not that of Orpheus, but that of Amphion which built the walls of Thebes. *Laborare est orare*. He alone is honourable who does his day's work by sword or plough or pen. Strength is the crown of toil. Action converts the ring of necessity that girds us into a ring of duty, frees us from dreams, and makes us men.

The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

There are few grander passages in literature than some of those litanies of labour. They have the roll of music that makes armies march, and if they have been made so familiar as to cease to seem new, it is largely owing to the power of the writer which has compelled them to become common property.

Carlyle's practical Ethics, though too little indulgent to the light and play of life, in which he admitted no *ἀδιαφόρα* and only the relaxation of a rare genial laugh, are more satisfactory than his conception of their sanction, which is grim. His "Duty" is a categorical imperative, imposed from without by a taskmaster who has "written in flame across the sky, 'Obey, unprofitable servant.'" He saw the infinite above and around, but not *in* the finite. He insisted on the community of the race, and struck with a bolt any one who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

All things, the minutest that man does, influence all men, the very look of his face blesses or curses. . . . It is a mathe-

matical fact that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the universe.

But he left a great gulf fixed between man and God, and so failed to attain to the Optimism after which he often strove. He held, with Browning, that "God's in His heaven," but not that "All's right with the world." His view was the Zoroastrian ἀθάνατος μάχη, "in God's world presided over by the prince of the powers of the air," a "divine infernal universe." The Calvinism of his mother, who said "The world is a lie, but God is truth," landed him in an *impasse*; he could not answer the obvious retort,—Did then God make and love a lie, or make it hating it? There must have been some other power τὸ ἕτερον, or, as Mill in his *Apologia for Theism* puts it, a limit to the assumed Omnipotence. Carlyle, accepting neither alternative, inconsequently halts between them; and his prevailing view of mankind¹ adds to his dilemma. He imposes an "infinite duty on a finite being," as Calvin imposes an infinite punishment for a finite fault. He does not see that mankind sets its hardest tasks to itself; or that, as Emerson declares, "the assertion of our weakness and deficiency is the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim." Hence, according to Mazzini, "He stands between the individual and the infinite without hope or guide, and crushes the human being by comparing him with God. From his lips, so daring, we seem to hear every instant the cry of the Breton mariner, 'My God, protect me; my bark is so small and Thy ocean so vast.'" Similarly, the critic of Browning above referred to concludes of the great prose writer, whom he has called the poet's twin:

¹ Some one remarked to Friedrich II. that the philanthropist Sulzer said, "Men are by nature good." "Ach, mein lieber Sulzer," ejaculated Fritz, as quoted approvingly by Carlyle, "er kennt nicht diese verdammte Rasse."

“He has let loose confusion upon us. He has brought us within sight of the future: he has been our guide in the wilderness; but he died there and was denied the view from Pisgah.”

Carlyle's Theism is defective because it is not sufficiently Pantheistic; but, in his view of the succession of events in the “roaring loom of time,” of the diorama of majesty girt by mystery, he has found a cosmic Pantheism and given expression to it in a passage which is the culmination of the English prose eloquence, as surely as Wordsworth's great Ode is the high-tide¹ mark of the English verse, of this century:—

Are we not spirits shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific fact: we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us as round the veriest spectre is Eternity, and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again do we not squeak and gibber and glide, bodeful and feeble and fearful, and revel in our mad dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon; does the steel host that yelled in fierce battle shouts at Issus and Arbela remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed goblins must? Napoleon, too, with his Moscow retreats and Austerlitz campaigns, was it all other than the veriest spectre hunt; which has now with its howling tumult that made night hideous flitted away? Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the earth openly at noontide; some half hundred have vanished from it, some half hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once. O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future ghost within him, but are in very deed ghosts.² These limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning

¹ A phrase applied by Emerson to the Ode.

² Cf. “Tempest,” “We are such stuff as dreams are made of.”

passion? They are dust and shadow; a shadow system gathered round our *me*, wherein through some moments or years the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the form of a body; and forth issuing from Cimmerian Night on Heaven's mission appears. What force and fire there is in each he expends, one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife in war with his fellow, and then the heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished shadow. Thus, like some wild flaming, wild thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious Mankind thunder and flame in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur through the unknown deep. Thus, like a God-created fire-breathing spirit host, we emerge from the Inane, haste stormfully across the astonished earth, then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled and her seas filled up. On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped; the rear of the host read traces of the earliest van. But whence, O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not. Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

Volumes might be written on Carlyle's relations, of sentiment, belief, opinion, method of thought, and manner of expression, to other thinkers. His fierce independence, and sense of his own prophetic mission to the exclusion of that of his predecessors and compeers, made him often unconscious of his intellectual debts, and only to the Germans, who impressed his comparatively plastic youth, is he disposed adequately to acknowledge them. Outside the Hebrew Scriptures he seems to have been wholly unaffected by the writings and traditions of the East, which exercised so marked an influence on his New England disciples. He never realised the part played by the philosophers of Greece in moulding the speculations of modern Europe. He knew Plato mainly through the Socratic dialogues. There is, however, a passage in a letter to

Emerson (March 13th 1853) which indicates that he had read, comparatively late in life, some portions of *The Republic*. "I was much struck with Plato last year, and his notions about Democracy—mere *Latter-Day Pamphlets, saxa et faces* . . . refined into empyrean radiance and the lightning of the gods." The tribute conveyed in the comparison is just; for there is nothing but community of political view between the bitter acorns dropped from the gnarled border oak and the rich fruit of the finest olive in Athene's garden. But the coincidences of opinion between the ancient and the modern writer are among the most remarkable in literary history. We can only refer, without comments, to a few of the points of contact in this strange conjunction of minds far as the poles asunder. Plato and Carlyle are both possessed with the idea that they are living in a degenerate age, and they attribute its degeneracy to the same causes:—*Laissez faire*; the growth of luxury; the effeminate preference of Lydian to Dorian airs in music, education, and life; the decay of the Spartan and growth of the Corinthian spirit; the habit of lawlessness culminating in the excesses of Democracy, which they describe in language as nearly identical as the difference of the ages and circumstances admit. They propose the same remedies:—a return to simpler manners, and stricter laws, with the best men in the State to regulate and administer them. Philosophers, says Plato, are to be made guardians, and they are to govern, not for gain or glory, but for the common weal. They need not be happy in the ordinary sense, for there is a higher than selfish happiness, the love of the good. To this love they must be *systematically educated* till they are fit to be kings and priests in the ideal state; if they refuse they *must*, when their turn comes, be *made to govern*. Compare the following declarations of Carlyle:—

Aristocracy and Priesthood, a Governing class and a Teaching class—these two sometimes combined in one, a Pontiff King—there did not society exist without those two vital elements, there will none exist. Whenever there are born Kings of men you had better seek them out and *breed them to the work*. . . . The few wise will have to take command of the innumerable foolish, they *must be got to do it*.

The Ancient and the Modern, the Greek and the Teuton, are further curiously at one:—in their dislike of physical or mental Valetudinarianism (cf. *Rep.* Bs. ii. and iii. and *Characteristics*); in their protests against the morality of consequences, of rewards and punishments as motives for the highest life (the just man, says Plato, crucified is better than the unjust man crowned); in their contempt for the excesses of philanthropy and the pampering of criminals (cf. *Rep.* B. viii.); in their strange conjunctions of free-thinking and intolerance. Plato in the *Laws* enacts that he who speaks against¹ the gods shall be first fined, then imprisoned, and at last, if he persists in his impiety, put to death; yet he had as little belief in the national religion as Carlyle. They both accept Destiny,—the Parcæ or the Norns spin the threads of life,—and yet both admit a sphere of human choice. In the *Republic* the souls select their lots: with Carlyle man can modify his fate. The juxtaposition in each of Humour and Pathos (cf. Plato's account of the dogs in a Democracy, and Carlyle's "Nigger gone masterless among the pumpkins," and, for pathos, the image of the soul encrusted by the world as the marine Glaucus, or the Vision of Er and Natural Supernaturalism) is another contact. Both held that philosophers and heroes were few, and yet both leant to a sort of Socialism, under State control; they both assail Poetry and deride the Stage (cf. *Rep.* B. ii. and

¹ Rousseau, in the "Contrat Social," also assumes this position; allowing freedom of thought, but banishing the citizen who shows disrespect to the State Religion.

B. x. with Carlyle on "The Opera"), while each is the greatest prose poet of his race; they are united in hatred of orators, who "would circumvent the gods," and in exalting action and character over "the most sweet voices"—the one enforcing his thesis in the "language of the gods," the other preaching silence in forty volumes of eloquent English speech.

Carlyle seems to have known little of Aristotle. His Stoicism was indigenous; but he always alludes with deference to the teaching of the Porch. Marcus Aurelius, the nearest type of the Philosophic King, must have riveted his regard as an instance of the combination of thought and action; and some interesting parallels have been drawn between their views of life as an arena on which there is much to be done and little to be known, a passage from time to a vague eternity. They have the same mystical vein, alongside of similar precepts of self-forgetfulness, abnegation, and the waiving of desire, the same confidence in the power of the spirit to defy or disdain vicissitudes, ideas which brought both in touch with the ethical side of Christianity; but their tempers and manner are as far as possible apart. Carlyle speaks of no one with more admiration than of Dante, recognising in the Italian his own intensity of love and hate and his own tenacity; but beyond this there is little evidence of the "Divina Commedia" having seriously attuned his thought: nor does he seem to have been much affected by any of the elder English poets. He scarcely refers to Chaucer; he alludes to Spenser here and there with some homage, but hardly ever, excepting Shakespeare, to the Elizabethan dramatists.

Among writers of the seventeenth century, he may have found in Hobbes some support of his advocacy of a strong government; but his views on this theme came rather from

a study of the history of that age. Milton he appreciates inadequately. To Dryden and Swift he is just; the latter, whether consciously to Carlyle or not, was in some respects his English master, and the points of resemblance in their characters suggest detailed examination. Their styles are utterly opposed, that of the one resting almost wholly on its Saxon base, that of the other being a coat of many colours; but both are, in the front rank of masters of prose-satire, inspired by the same audacity of "noble rage." Swift's humour has a subtler touch and yet more scathing scorn; his contempt of mankind was more real; his pathos equally genuine but more withdrawn; and if a worse foe he was a better friend. The comparisons already made between Johnson and Carlyle have exhausted the theme; they remain associated by their similar struggle and final victory, and sometimes by their tyrannous use of power; they are dissociated by the divergence of their intellectual and in some respects even their moral natures; both were forces of character rather than discoverers, both rulers of debate; but the one was of sense, the other of imagination, "all compact." The one blew "the blast of doom" of the old patronage; the other, against heavier odds, contended against the later tyranny of uninformed and insolent popular opinion. Carlyle did not escape wholly from the influence of the most infectious, if the most morbid, of French writers, J. J. Rousseau. They are alike in setting Emotion over Reason: in referring to the Past as a model; in subordinating mere criticism to ethical, religious or irreligious purpose; in being avowed propagandists; in their "deep unrest"; and in the diverse conclusions that have been drawn from their teaching.

Carlyle's enthusiasm for the leaders of the new German literature was, in some measure, inspired by the pride in a treasure-trove, the regard of a foster-father or *chaperon* who

first substantially took it by the hand and introduced it to English society: but it was also due to the feeling that he had found in it the fullest expression of his own perplexities, and at least their partial solution. His choice of its representatives is easily explained. In Schiller he found intellectually a younger brother, who had fought a part of his own fight and was animated by his own aspirations; in dealing with his career and works there is a shade of patronage. Goethe, on the other hand, he recognised across many divergencies as his master. The attachment of the belated Scotch Puritan to the greater German has provoked endless comment; but the former has himself solved the riddle. The contrasts between the teacher and pupil remain, but they have been exaggerated by those who only knew Goethe as one who had attained, and ignored the struggle of his hot youth on the way to attainment. Carlyle justly commends him, not for his artistic mastery alone, but for his sense of the reality and earnestness of life, which lifts him to a higher grade among the rulers of human thought than such more perfect artists and more passionate lyrists as Heine. He admires above all his conquest over the world, without concession to it, saying:—

With him Anarchy has now become Peace . . . the once perturbed spirit is serene and rich in good fruits. . . . Neither, which is most important of all, has this Peace been attained by a surrender to Necessity, or any compact with Delusion—a seeming blessing, such as years and dispiritment will of themselves bring to most men, and which is indeed no blessing, since ever-continued battle is better than captivity. Many gird on the harness, few bear it warrior-like, still fewer put it off with triumph. Euphorion still asserts, “To die in strife is the end of life.”

Goethe ceased to fight only when he had won; his want of sympathy with the so-called Apostles of Freedom, the stump orators of his day, was genuine and shared by

Carlyle. In the apologue of the *Three Reverences* in *Meister* the master indulges in humanitarian rhapsody and, unlike his pupil, verges on sentimental paradox, declaring through the lips of the Chief in that imaginary pedagogic province—which here and there closely recalls the *New Atlantis*—that we must recognise “humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and suffering, as divine—nay, even on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour them, as furtherances of what is holy.” In answer to Emerson’s Puritanic criticisms Carlyle replies:—

Believe me, it is impossible you can be more a Puritan than I; nay, I often feel as if I were far too much so, but John Knox himself, could he have seen the peaceable impregnable *fidelity* of that man’s mind, and how to him also Duty was infinite,—Knox would have passed on wondering, not reproaching. But I will tell you in a word why I like Goethe. His is the only *healthy* mind, of any extent, that I have discovered in Europe for long generations; it was he who first convincingly proclaimed to me . . . “Behold even in this scandalous Sceptico-Epicurean generation, when all is gone but hunger and cant, it is still possible that man be a man.” And then as to that dark ground on which you love to see genius paint itself: consider whether misery is not ill health too, also whether good fortune is not worse to bear than bad, and on the whole whether the glorious serene summer is not greater than the wildest hurricane—as Light, the naturalists say, is stronger than Lightning.

Among German so-called mystics the one most nearly in accord with Carlyle was Novalis, who has left a sheaf of sayings—as “There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the body of man,” “Who touches a human hand touches God”—that especially commended themselves to his commentator. Among philosophers proper, Fichte, in his assertion of the Will as a greater factor of human life and a nearer indication of personality than pure Thought, was Carlyle’s nearest tutor. The *Vocation of the Scholar* and *The Way to a Blessed Life* anticipated and probably suggested

much of the more speculative part of *Sartor*. But to show their relation would involve a course of Metaphysics.

We accept Carlyle's statement that he learnt most of the secret of life and its aims from his master Goethe: but the closest of his kin, the man with whom he shook hands more nearly as an equal, was Richter—*Jean Paul der einzige*, lord of the empire of the air, yet with feet firmly planted on German earth, a colossus of reading and industry, the quaintest of humorists, not excepting either Sir Thomas Browne or Laurence Sterne, a lover and painter of Nature unsurpassed in prose. He first seems to have influenced his translator's style, and set to him the mode of queer titles and contortions, fantastic imaginary incidents, and endless digressions. His Ezekiel visions as the dream in the first *Flower Piece* from the life of Siebenkäs, and that on *New Year's Eve*, are like pre-visions of *Sartor*, and we find in the fantasies of both authors much of the same machinery. It has been asserted that whole pages of *Schmelzle's Journey to Flätz* might pass current for Carlyle's own; and it is evident that the latter was saturated with *Quintus Fixlein*. The following can hardly be a mere coincidence. Richter writes of a dead brother, "For he chanced to leap on an ice-board that had jammed itself among several others; but these recoiled, and his shot forth with him, melted away as it floated under his feet, and so sank his heart of fire amid the ice and waves"; while in *Cui Bono* we have—

What is life? a thawing ice-board
On a sea with sunny shore.

Similarly, the eloquently pathetic close of *Fixlein*, especially the passage, "Then began the Æolian harp of Creation," recalls the deepest pathos of *Sartor*. The two writers, it has been observed, had in common "reverence, humour,

vehemence, tenderness, gorgeousness, grotesqueness, and pure conduct of life." Much of Carlyle's article in the *Foreign Quarterly* of 1830 might be taken for a criticism of himself.

Enough has been said of the limits of Carlyle's magnanimity in estimating his English contemporaries; but the deliberate judgments of his essays were often more genial than those of his letters and conversation; and perhaps his overestimate of inferiors, whom in later days he drew round him as the sun draws the mist, was more hurtful than his severity; it is good for no man to live with satellites. His practical severance from Mazzini was mainly a personal loss: the widening of the gulf between him and Mill was a public calamity, for seldom have two men been better qualified the one to correct the excesses of the other. Carlyle was the greater genius; but the question which was the greater mind must be decided by the conflict between logic and emotion. They were related proximately as Plato to Aristotle, the one saw what the other missed, and their hold on the future has been divided. Mill had "the dry light," and his meaning is always clear; he is occasionally open to the charge of being a formalist, allowing too little for the "infusion of the affections," save when touched, as Carlyle was, by a personal loss; yet the critical range indicated by his essay on "Coleridge" on the one side, that on "Bentham" on the other, is as wide as that of his friend; and while neither said anything base, Mill alone is clear from the charge of having ever said anything absurd. His influence, though more indirect, may prove, save artistically, more lasting. The two teachers, in their assaults on *laissez faire*, curiously combine in giving sometimes undesigned support to social movements with which the elder at least had no sympathy.

Carlyle's best, because his most independent, friend

lived beyond the sea. He has been almost to weariness compared with Emerson, initial pupil later ally, but their contrasts are more instructive than their resemblances. They have both at heart a revolutionary spirit, marked originality, uncompromising aversion to illusions, disdain of traditional methods of thought and stereotyped modes of expression; but in Carlyle this is tempered by greater veneration for the past, in which he holds out models for our imitation; while Emerson sees in it only finger-posts for the future, and exhorts his readers to stay at home lest they should wander from themselves. The one loves detail, hates abstraction, delights to dwell on the minutiae of biography, and waxes eloquent even on dates. The other, a brilliant though not always a profound generaliser, tells us that we must "leave a too close and lingering adherence to facts, and study the sentiment as it appeared in hope not in history . . . with the ideal is the rose of joy. But grief cleaves to names and persons, and the partial interests of to-day and yesterday." The one is bent under a burden, and pores over the riddle of the earth, till, when he looks up at the firmament of the unanswering stars, he can but exclaim, "It is a sad sight." The other is blown upon by the fresh breezes of the new world; his vision ranges over her clear horizons, and he leaps up elastic under her light atmosphere, exclaiming, "Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." Carlyle is a half-Germanised Scotchman, living near the roar of the metropolis, with thoughts of Weimar and reminiscences of the Covenanting hills. Emerson studies Swedenborg and reads the *Phædo* in his garden, far enough from the din of cities to enable him in calm weather to forget them. "Boston, London, are as fugitive as any whiff of smoke; so is society, so is the world." The one is strong

where the other is weak. Carlyle keeps his abode in the murk of clouds illumined by bolts of fire; he has never seen the sun unveiled. Emerson's "Threnody" shows that he has known the shadow; but he has fought with no Apollyons, reached the Celestial City without crossing the dark river, and won the immortal garland "without the dust and heat." Self-sacrifice, inconsistently maintained, is the watchword of the one: self-reliance, more consistently, of the other. The art of the two writers is in strong contrast. The charm of Emerson's style is its precision; his sentences are like medals each hung on its own string; the fields of his thought are combed rather than ploughed: he draws outlines, as Flaxman, clear and colourless. Carlyle's paragraphs are like streams from Pactolus, that roll nuggets from their source on their turbid way. His expressions are often grotesque, but rarely offensive. Both writers are essentially ascetic,—though the one swallows Mirabeau, and the other says that Jane Eyre should have accepted Rochester and "left the world in a minority." But Emerson is never coarse, which Carlyle occasionally is; and Carlyle is never flippant, as Emerson often is. In condemning the hurry and noise of mobs the American keeps his temper, and insists on justice without vindictiveness: wars and revolutions take nothing from his tranquillity, and he sets Hafiz and Shakespeare against Luther and Knox. Careless of formal consistency—"the hobgoblin of little minds"—he balances his aristocratic reserve with a belief in democracy, in progression by antagonism, and in collective wisdom as a limit to collective folly. Leaving his intellectual throne as the spokesman of a practical liberty, Emerson's wisdom was justified by the fact that he was always at first on the unpopular, and ultimately on the winning, side. Casting his vote for the diffusion of popular literature, a wide suffrage,

a mild penal code,¹ he yet endorsed the saying of an old American author, "A monarchy is a merchantman which sails well but will sometimes strike on a rock and go to the bottom; whilst a republic is a raft that will never sink, but then your feet are always in water." Maintaining that the State exists for its members, he holds that the enervating influences of authority are least powerful in popular governments, and that the tyranny of a public opinion not enforced by law need only be endured by voluntary slaves. Emerson confides in great men, "to educate whom the State exists"; but he regards them as inspired mouth-pieces rather than controlling forces: their prime mission is to "fortify our hopes," their indirect services are their best. The career of a great man should rouse us to a like assertion of ourselves. We ought not to obey, but to follow, sometimes by not obeying, him. "It is the imbecility not the wisdom of men that is always inviting the impudence of power."

It is obvious that many of these views are in essential opposition to the teaching of Carlyle; and it is remarkable that two conspicuous men so differing and expressing their differences with perfect candour should have lived so long on such good terms. Their correspondence, ranging over thirty-eight years (begun in 1834, after Emerson's visit to Craigenputtock, and ending in 1872, before his final trip to England), is on the whole one of the most edifying in literary history. The fundamental accord, unshaken by the ruffle of the visit in 1847, is a testimony to the fact that the common preservation of high sentiments amid

¹ Carlyle, on the other hand, holds "that," as has been said, "we are entitled to deal with criminals as relics of barbarism in the midst of civilisation." His protest, though exaggerated, against leniency in dealing with atrocities, emphatically requisite in an age apt to ignore the rigour of justice, has been so far salutary, and may be more so.

the irksome discharge of ordinary duties may survive and override the most distinct antagonisms of opinion. Matthew Arnold has gone so far as to say that he "would not wonder if Carlyle lived in the long run by such an invaluable record as that correspondence between him and Emerson and not by his works." This is paradoxical; but the volumes containing it are in some respects more interesting than the letters of Goethe and Schiller, as being records of "two noble kinsmen" of nearer intellectual claims. The practical part of the relationship on the part of Emerson is very beautiful; he is the more unselfish, and on the whole appears the better man, especially in the almost unlimited tolerance that passes with a smile even such violences as the "Ilias in nuce"; but Carlyle shows himself to be the stronger. Their mutual criticisms were of real benefit. Emerson succeeded in convincing his friend that so-called anarchy might be more effective in subduing the wilderness than any despotism; while the advice to descend from "Himalaya peaks and indigo skies" to concrete life is accepted and adopted in the later works of the American, *Society and Solitude* and the *Conduct of Life*, which Carlyle praises without stint. Keeping their poles apart they often meet half-way; and in matters of style as well as judgment tinge and tend to be transfused into each other, so that in some pages we have to look to the signature to be sure of the writer. Towards the close of the correspondence Carlyle in this instance admits his debt.

I do not know another man in all the world to whom I can speak with clear hope of getting adequate response from him. Truly Concord seems worthy of the name: no dissonance comes to me from that side. Ah me! I feel as if in the wide world there were still but this one voice that responded intelligently to my own: as if the rest were all hearsays . . . echoes: as if this alone were true and alive. My blessings on you, good Ralph Waldo.

Emerson answers in 1872, on receipt of the completed edition of his friend's work: "You shall wear the crown at the Pan-Saxon games, with no competitor in sight . . . well earned by genius and exhaustive labour, and with nations for your pupils and praisers."

The general verdict on Carlyle's literary career assigns to him the first place among the British authors of his time. No writer of our generation, in England, has combined such abundance with such power. Regarding his rank as a writer there is little or no dispute: it is admitted that the irregularities and eccentricities of his style are bound up with its richness. In estimating the value of his thought we must discriminate between instruction and inspiration. If we ask what new truths he has taught, what problems he has definitely solved, our answer must be, "few." This is a perhaps inevitable result of the manner of his writing, or rather of the nature of his mind. Aside from political parties, he helped to check their exaggerations by his own; seeing deeply into the under-current evils of the time, even when vague in his remedies he was of use in his protest against leaving these evils to adjust themselves—what has been called "the policy of drifting"—or of dealing with them only by catchwords. No one set a more incisive brand on the meanness that often marks the unrestrained competition of great cities; no one was more effective in his insistence that the mere accumulation of wealth may mean the ruin of true prosperity; no one has assailed with such force the mammon-worship and the frivolity of his age. Everything he writes comes home to the individual conscience: his claim to be regarded as a moral exemplar has been diminished, his hold on us as an ethical teacher remains unrelaxed. It has been justly observed that he helped to modify "the thought rather than the opinion of two generations." His message, as

that of Emerson, was that "life must be pitched on a higher plane." Goethe said to Eckermann in 1827 that Carlyle was a moral force so great that he could not tell what he might produce. His influence has been, though not continuously progressive, more marked than that of any of his compeers, among whom he was, if not the greatest, certainly the most imposing personality. It had two culminations; shortly after the appearance of *The French Revolution*, and again towards the close of the seventh decade of the author's life. To the enthusiastic reception of his works in the Universities, Mr. Froude has borne eloquent testimony, and the more reserved Matthew Arnold admits that "the voice of Carlyle, overstrained and misused since, sounded then in Oxford fresh and comparatively sound," though, he adds, "The friends of one's youth cannot always support a return to them." In the striking article in the *St. James' Gazette* of the date of the great author's death we read: "One who had seen much of the world and knew a large proportion of the remarkable men of the last thirty years declared that Mr. Carlyle was by far the most impressive person he had ever known, the man who conveyed most forcibly to those who approached him [best on resistance principles] that general impression of genius and force of character which it is impossible either to mistake or to define." Thackeray, as well as Ruskin and Froude, acknowledged him as, beyond the range of his own *métier*, his master, and the American Lowell, penitent for past disparagement, confesses that "all modern Literature has felt his influence in the right direction"; while the Emersonian hermit Thoreau, a man of more intense though more restricted genius than the poet politician, declares—"Carlyle alone with his wide humanity has, since Coleridge, kept to us the promise of England. His wisdom provokes rather than informs. He blows down narrow walls, and struggles, in a

lurid light, like the Jöthuns, to throw the old woman Time; in his work there is too much of the anvil and the forge, not enough hay-making under the sun. He makes us act rather than think: he does not say, know thyself, which is impossible, but know thy work. He has no pillars of Hercules, no clear goal, but an endless Atlantic horizon. He exaggerates. Yes; but he makes the hour great, the picture bright, the reverence and admiration strong; while mere precise fact is a coil of lead." Our leading journal on the morning after Carlyle's death wrote of him in a tone of well-tempered appreciation: "We have had no such individuality since Johnson. Whether men agreed or not, he was a touchstone to which truth and falsehood were brought to be tried. A preacher of Doric thought, always in his pulpit and audible, he denounced wealth without sympathy, equality without respect, mobs without leaders, and life without aim." To this we may add the testimony of another high authority in English letters, politically at the opposite pole: "Carlyle's influence in kindling enthusiasm for virtues worthy of it, and in stirring a sense of the reality on the one hand and the unreality on the other, of all that men can do and suffer, has not been surpassed by any teacher now living. Whatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion . . . here is the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark; here the prophet who first smote the rock." Carlyle, writes one of his oldest friends, "may be likened to a fugleman; he stood up in the front of Life's Battle and showed in word and action his notion of the proper attitude and action of men. He was, in truth, a prophet, and he has left his gospels." To those who contest that these gospels are for the most part negative, we may reply that to be taught what not to do is to be far advanced on the way to do.