The Carlyles left London on the 25th of March. They returned to Scotland by Liverpool, staying a few days with Mr. Welsh in Maryland Street, and then going on as they had come by the Annan steamer. Mrs. Carlyle suffered frightfully from sea-sickness. She endured the voyage for economy's sake; but she was in bad health and in worse spirits. The Craigenputtoch exile, dreary and disheartening, was again to be taken up; the prospect of release once more clouded over. Her life was the dreariest of slaveries to household cares and toil. She was without society, except on an occasional visit from a sister-in-law or a rare week or so with her mother at Templand. Carlyle, intensely occupied with his thoughts and his writing, was unable to bear the presence of a second person when busy at his desk. He sat alone, walked alone, generally rode alone. It was necessary for him some time or other in the day to discharge in talk the volume of thought which oppressed him. But it was in vehement soliloquy, to which his wife listened with admiration perhaps, but admiration dulled by the constant repetition of the dose, and without relief or comfort from it. The evenings in London, with the brilliant little circle which had gathered about them, served only to intensify the gloom of the desolate moor, which her nerves, already shattered with illness, were in no condition to encounter. Carlyle observed these symptoms less than he ought to have done. His own health, fiercely as at times he complained of it, was essentially robust. He was doing his
own duty with his utmost energy. His wife considered it to be part of hers to conceal from him how hard her own share of the burden had become. Her high principles enabled her to go through with it; but the dreams of intellectual companionship with a man of genius in which she had entered on her marriage had long disappeared; and she settled down into her place again with a heavy heart. Her courage never gave way; but she had a bad time of it. They stayed a fortnight at Scotsbrig, where they heard the news of Goethe's death. At the middle of April they were on the moor once more, and Carlyle was again at his work. The “Characteristics” and the article on Johnson had been received with the warmest admiration from the increasing circle of young intellectual men who were looking up to him as their teacher, and with wonder and applause from the reading London world. He sat down with fresh heart to new efforts. “The Death of Goethe” was written immediately on his return for Lytton Bulwer. Das Märchen, “The Tale,” so called in Germany, as if there were no other fit to be compared with it, was translated for Fraser's with its singular explanatory notes. His great concluding article on Goethe himself, on Goethe's position and meaning in European history, had to be written next for the Foreign Quarterly; another for the Edinburgh on Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-law Rhymer; and lastly the essay on Diderot, for which he had been collecting materials in London. He had added to his correspondents the new friend John Mill, between whom and himself there had sprung up an ardent attachment.

His letters to Mill are not preserved, but Mill's to him remain. Between Jeffrey and Mrs. Carlyle also the communication began again, Mrs. Carlyle apparently telling her cousin more of her inner state of feeling than she pleased to show to anyone else. Jeffrey had been an almost daily visitor in Ampton Street: he saw and felt for her situation, he regarded himself as, in a sense, her guardian, and he insisted that she should keep him regularly informed of her condition. In London he had observed that she was extremely delicate; that the prospect of a return to Craigenputtoch was intolerable to her. Carlyle's views and Carlyle's actions provoked him more and more. He thought him as visionary as the Astronomer in Rasselas, and confessed
that he was irritated at seeing him throwing away his talent and his prospects.

Carlyle, after his reception in London circles, was less than ever inclined to listen to Jeffrey's protests. If in the midst of his speculations he could have spared a moment to study his wife's condition, the state of things at Craigenputtoch might have been less satisfactory to him. He was extremely fond of her: more fond, perhaps, of her than of any other living person except his mother. But it was his peculiarity, that if matters were well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with anyone else; and, on the other hand, if he was uncomfortable, he required everybody to be uncomfortable along with him. After a week of restlessness he was at his work in vigorous spirits—especially happy because he found that he could supply Larry's place, and again afford to keep a horse.

Pleasant letters came from London. John Mill, young, ingenuous, and susceptible, had been profoundly impressed by Carlyle. He had an instinct for recognising truth in any form in which it might be presented to him. Charles Buller had foretold that although Mill's and Carlyle's methods of thought were as wide asunder as the poles, they would understand and appreciate each other. They sympathised in a common indignation at the existing condition of society, in a common contempt for the insincere professions with which men were veiling from themselves and from one another their emptiness of spiritual belief; and neither Mill nor Carlyle as yet realised how far apart their respective principles would eventually draw them. The review of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* had delighted Mill. He had read it so often that he could almost repeat it from end to end. He recognised the immense superiority of intellectual honesty to intellectual power. He recognised the shallowness and feebleness of modern thought in the midst of its cant of progress. He professed himself a humble disciple of Carlyle, eager to be convinced (which as yet he admitted that he was not) of the greatness of Goethe; eager to admit with innocent modesty Carlyle's own superiority to himself.

*His Journal* shows how powerfully Carlyle's intellect was working, how he was cutting out an original road for
himself, far away from the Radicalism of the day. But it is in the nature of such thoughts that they draw off a man's attention from what is round him, and prevent him from attending to the thousand little things and the many great things of which the commonplaces of life are composed. Vocal as he was—pouring out whatever was in him in a stream of talk for hours together—he was not the cheerfullest of companions. He spoke much of hope, but he was never hopeful. The world was not moving to his mind. His anticipations were habitually gloomy. The persons with whom he had come in contact fell short of the demands which the sternness of his temper was inclined to make on them, from the drudge who had ill-cleaned a vegetable dish, to the man of letters who had written a silly article, or the Phaeton who was driving the State chariot through the wrong constellations. Thus, although indigestion, which interfered with his working, recalled his impatience to himself, he could leave his wife to ill-health and toil, assuming that all was well as long as she did not complain; and it was plain to every one of her friends, before it was suspected by her husband, that the hard, solitary life on the moor was trying severely both her constitution and her nerves.

Carlyle saw, and yet was blind. If she suffered she concealed her trials from him, lest his work should suffer also. But she took refuge in a kind of stoicism, which was but a thin disguise for disappointment and at times for misery. It was a sad fate for a person so bright and gifted; and if she could endure it for herself, others, and especially Jeffrey, were not inclined to endure it for her. Jeffrey had been often in Ampton Street, claiming the privileged intimacy of a cousin. Eyes so keen as the Lord Advocate's could not fail to see how things were going with her. She herself perhaps did not hide from him that the thought of being again immured in Craigenputtoch was horrible to her. Liking and even honouring Carlyle as he did, he did not like his faults, and the Lord Advocate was slightly irritated at the reception which Carlyle had met with in London, as tending to confirm him in the illusion that he was a prophet of a new religion. He continued to write to Mrs. Carlyle tenderly and even passionately, as he would have written to a daughter.
of his own. It was intolerable to him to think of her with her fine talents lost to all the enjoyments that belonged to her age and character, and provoking to feel that it was owing to moody fancies too long cherished, and fantastic opinions engendered and fed in solitude. She made the best of her position, as she always did.

To him his cousin's situation had no relieving feature, for he believed that Carlyle was entered on a course which would end only less ruinously than Irving's—that he was sacrificing his own prospects, as well as his wife's happiness, to arrogant illusions. The fact was not as Jeffrey saw it. Carlyle was a knight errant, on the noblest quest which can animate a man. He was on the right road, though it was a hard one; but the lot of the poor lady who was dragged along at his bridle-rein to be the humble minister of his necessities was scarcely less tragic. One comfort she had—she had recovered her pony for her, and she could occasionally ride with him. His mother came now and then to Craigenputtoch to stay for a few days; or when a bit of work was done they would themselves drive over to Scotsbrig.

So passed the summer. The Goethe paper (which did not please him: "these are no days for speaking of Goethe") being finished and despatched, Carlyle took up Diderot. Diderot's works, five and twenty large volumes of them, were to be read through before he could put pen to paper. He could read with extraordinary perseverance from nine in the morning till ten at night without intermission save for his meals and his pipes. The twelfth of August brought the grouse shooting and young Welsh relations with guns, who drove him out of his house and sent him on a few days' riding tour about the country. On returning he at once let the shooting of Craigenputtoch, that he might be troubled with such visitors no more. A small domestic catastrophe followed, the maid-servant having misconducted herself and having to be sent away at an hour's notice. "O Mother! Mother!" exclaimed Carlyle in telling her the story, "what trouble the Devil does give us; how busy he is wheresoever men are! I could not have fancied this unhappy shameless heartless creature would have proved herself so; but she was long known for a person that did not speak the
truth, and of such (as I have often remarked) there never comes good.”

Meanwhile he “stuck,” as he said, “like a burr to my reading, and managed a volume every lawful day. On Sabbath I read to my assembled household [his wife, the maid, and the stableboy], in the Book of Genesis.” And so the time wore on.

In the middle of October, the Diderot article being finished, the Carlyles made an expedition into Annandale. They stayed for a day or two at Templand. Carlyle, “having nothing better to do,” rode over, with Dr. Russell, of Thornhill, to Morton Castle, “a respectable old ruin; looked sternly expressive, striking enough, in the pale October evening.” The castle had belonged to the Randolphs, and had been uninhabited for two centuries. The court was then a cattlefold. In the distance they saw the remains of the old Church of Kilbride, where Dr. Russell told Carlyle, “there still lies, open and loose on the wall, a circular piece of iron framing once used for supporting the baptismal ewer: protected for these hundred and fifty years by a superstitious feeling alone.” Leaving Templand, they drove round by Loch Ettrick, Kirkmichael, and Lockerby, stopping to visit Alexander Carlyle in his new farm, and thence to Scotsbrig. Here the inscription was to be fixed on old Mr. Carlyle’s grave in Ecclefechan churchyard. It was the last light of dusk when they arrived at the spot where Carlyle himself is now lying. “Gloomy empire of time!” he wrote, after looking at it. “How all had changed, changed; nothing stood still but some old Tombstones with their crossstones, which I remembered from boyhood. Their strange süs-schauerliche [bittersweet] effect on me. Our House where we had once all lived was within stone cast; but this too knew us no more again at all forever.” After ten days they returned to Craigenputtoch, bringing “sister Jane” with them, who was followed afterwards by the mother. The winter they meditated spending in Edinburgh.

Jeffrey’s relations with Carlyle might be cooling. To his cousin his affection was as warm as ever, though they seemed to enjoy tormenting each other. He had been long silent, finding a correspondence which could not help Mrs. Carlyle exceedingly painful. He had been busy getting
himself returned for Edinburgh; but something more than this—impatience, provocation, and conscious inability to do any good—had stopped his pen. Now, however, he heard that the Carlyles were actually coming to Edinburgh, and the news brought a letter from him of warm anticipation.

The journey, which had been arranged for the beginning of December, was delayed by the illness of Mrs. Carlyle's grandfather, her mother's father, old Mr. Welsh of Temple, which ended in death. Mrs. Carlyle went down to assist in nursing him, leaving her husband alone with his mother at Craigenputtoch, himself busy in charge of the household economies, which his mother, either out of respect for her daughter-in-law, or in fear of her, declined to meddle with. He had to congratulate himself that the establishment was not on fire; nevertheless, he wrote that his "Coadjutor's return will bring blessings with it." The illness, however, ended fatally, and she could not come back to him till it was over.

Sick of Craigenputtoch, sick of solitude, sick with thoughts of many kinds for which he could as yet find no proper utterance, Carlyle went to Edinburgh [in January 1833] to find books and hear the sound of human voices. Books he found in the Advocates' Library, books in plenty upon every subject; on the one subject, especially, which had now hold of his imagination. The French Revolution had long interested him, as illustratingsignally his own conclusions on the Divine government of the world. Since he had written upon Diderot, that tremendous convulsion had risen before him more and more vividly as a portent which it was necessary for him to understand. He had read Thiers' history lately. Mill, who had been a careful student of the Revolution, furnished him with memoirs, pamphlets, and newspapers. But these only increased his thirst.

In the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh he was able to look round his subject, and examine it before and after; to look especially to scattered spiritual and personal phenomena; to look into Mirabeau's life, and Danton's, and Madame Roland's; among side pictures to observe Cagliostro's history, and as growing out of it the melodrama of
“The Diamond Necklace.” All this Carlyle devoured with voracity, and the winter so spent in Edinburgh was of immeasurable moment to him. Under other aspects the place was unfortunately less agreeable than he had expected to find it. In his choice of a future residence he had been hesitating between London and Edinburgh. In his choice of a subject on which to write he had been doubting between “The French Revolution” and “John Knox and the Scotch Reformation.” On both these points a few weeks’ experience of the modern Athens decided him. Edinburgh society was not to his mind. He discerned, probably not for the first time in human history, that a prophet is not readily acknowledged in his own country. No circle of disciples gathered round him as they had done in Ampton Street. His lodgings proved inconvenient, and even worse. Neither he nor his wife could sleep for the watchman telling the hours in the street. When they moved into a back room they were disturbed by noises overhead. A woman, it appeared, of the worst character, was nightly entertaining her friends there. They could do with little money in Craigenputtoch; life in Edinburgh, even on humble terms, was expensive. Napier was remiss in his payments for the articles in the *Edinburgh Review*. He was generally six months in arrear. He paid only after repeated dunning, and then on a scale of growing illiberality. These, however, were minor evils, and might have been endured. They had gone up with light hearts, in evident hope that they would find Edinburgh an agreeable change from the moors. Carlyle himself thought that, with his increasing reputation, his own country would now, perhaps, do something for him.

For the first week or two Edinburgh itself was not disagreeable. “The transi[t]ion is so singular from bare solitary moors, with only myself for company, to crowded streets and the converse of men.” The streets themselves were “orderly and airy.” “The reek generally of *Auld Reekie* seems the clearness of mountain tops compared to the horrible vapours of London.”

Friends came about them, Jeffrey, Sir William Hamilton, Harry Inglis, and many more, “all kind and courteous”; but their way of thinking was not Carlyle’s way of thinking, “the things they a[re] running the race for are no prizes to me,” and “I feel my-
self singularly a stranger among them. . . . The men stare at me when I give voice; I listen when they have the word, 'with a sigh or a smile.' "

Then came another disappointment. A Professorship at Glasgow was vacant. Jeffrey, as Lord Advocate, had the appointment, or a power of recommending which would be as emphatic as a congé d'élire. Carlyle gave Jeffrey a hint about it, but Jeffrey left for London directly after, and Carlyle instinctively felt that he was not to have it. "My own private impression," he said, "is that I shall never get any promotion in this world; and happy shall I be if Providence enable me only to stand my own friend. That is (or should be) all the prayer I offer to Heaven."

Carlyle had for some time spoken cheerfully of his wife, as not well, but as better than she had been. He observed nothing, as through his life he never did observe anything, about her which called away his attention from his work and from what was round him. A characteristic postscript in her own hand gives a sadly different picture of her condition.

In truth I am always so sick now and so heartless that I cannot apply myself to any mental effort without a push from Necessity. . . . Indeed for the last year I have not made an inch of way but sat whimpering on a milestone lamenting over the roughness of the road—If you would come home and set my "interior" to rights it would wonderfully facilitate the problem of living for me—but perhaps it is best for me that it should not be made easier.

Edinburgh society pleased less the longer the Carlyles stayed. The fault partially, perhaps, was in Carlyle's own spiritual palate, which neither that nor anything was likely to please.

As for the people here they are very kind, and would give us three "dinners" for one that we can eat: otherwise I must admit them to be rather a barren set of men. The spirit of Mammon rules all their world; Whig, Tory, Radical, all are alike of the earth earthy: they look upon me as a strong well-intending, utterly misguided man, who must needs run his head against posts yet. They are very right.

To Mill he had written a letter full of discontent, and looking, in the absence of comfort in Edinburgh society about him, for sympathy from his friend. But Mill rather
needed comfort for himself than was in a situation to console others. He, like many others, had expected that the Reform Bill would bring the Millennium, and the Millennium was as far off as ever.

To his mother, whatever his humour, Carlyle wrote regularly. To her, more than even to his brother, he showed his real heart. She was never satisfied without knowing the smallest incidents of his life and occupation; and he, on his part, was on the watch for opportunities to give her pleasure. He had sent her from Edinburgh a copy of Thomas à Kempis, with an introduction by Chalmers. The introduction he considered "wholly, or in great part, a dud." Of the book itself he says: "No Book, I believe, except the Bible, has been so universally read and loved by Christians of all tongues and sects: it gives me pleasure to fancy that the Christian heart of my good Mother may also derive nourishment and strengthening from what has already nourished and strengthened so many." In Edinburgh he described himself as at home, yet not at home; unable to gather out of the place or its inhabitants the sustenance which he had looked for.

The four months' experience of Edinburgh had convinced Carlyle that there at least could be no permanent home for him. If driven to leave his "castle on the moor," it must be for London—only London. In April he found that he had gathered sufficient materials for his article on the Diamond Necklace, which he could work up at Craigenputtoch. At the beginning of May he was again in Annandale on his way home, Mrs. Carlyle miserably ill, and craving like a wounded wild animal to creep away out of human sight. "I left Edinburgh," he wrote, "with the grieved heart customary to me on visits thither; a wretched infidel place; not one man that could forward you cooperate with you in any useful thing." The work which Carlyle had done in the winter had more than paid his modest expenses. He was still undetermined how next to proceed, and felt a need of rest and reflection. It seemed, he said, as if "outwardly and inwardly a kind of closing of the First Act goes on with me; the second as yet quite unopened." Means to go on upon were found in
the hitherto unfortunate Teufelsdröckh. Unable to find an accoucheur who would introduce him to the world complete, he was to be cut in pieces and produced limb by limb in *Fraser's Magazine*. Fraser, however, who had hitherto paid Carlyle twenty guineas a sheet for his articles (five guineas more than he paid any other contributor), had to stipulate for paying no more than twelve upon this unlucky venture.¹⁶ Ten sheets were to be allotted to *Teufel* in ten successive numbers. Thus *Sartor Resartus* was to find its way into print at last in this and the following year, and sufficient money was provided for the Craigenputtoch housekeeping for another twelve months.

The summer so begun was a useful and not unpleasant one. John Carlyle, returning from Italy, spent two months of it in his brother's house, intending at the end of them to rejoin Lady Clare and go again abroad with her. There were occasional visits to Scotsbrig. Many books were read, chiefly about the French Revolution, while from the Journal it appears that Carlyle was putting himself through a severe cross-examination, discovering, for one thing, that he was too intolerant, "my own private discontent ming[ling] considerably with my zeal against evil-doers," too contemptuously indifferent to those who were "not forwarding me on my course"; wanting in courtesy, and "given to far too much emphasis in the expression of my convictions." It was necessary for him to ascertain what his special powers were, and what were the limits of them. "I begin to suspect," he wrote, "only that I have no poetic talent whatsoever; but of this too am nowise absolutely sure. It still seems as if a whole magazine of Faculty lay in me, all undeveloped; held in thraldom by the meanest physical and economical causes."

One discovery came on him as a startling surprise.

On the whole, however, art thou not among the vainest of living men? At bottom, among the very vainest. Oh the sorry mad ambitions that lurk in thee! God deliver me from vanity, from self-conceit; the first sin of this universe, and the last—for I think it will never leave us?¹⁷

Mrs. Carlyle continued ill and out of spirits, benefiting less than she had hoped from her brother-in-law's skill in

284
medicine, yet contriving now and then to sketch in her humorous way the accidents of the moorland existence.

John Carlyle remained at Craigenputtoch [until mid-August], and then left it to return with Lady Clare to Italy. Carlyle saw him off in the Liverpool steamer from Annan, and went back to solitude and work. He says that he was invariably sick and miserable before he could write to any real purpose. His first attempt at "The Diamond Necklace" had failed, and he had laid it aside. The entries in his Journal show more than usual despondency.

[One] entry in the Journal is in another handwriting. It is merely a name—"Ralph Waldo Emerson."

The Carlyles were sitting alone at dinner on a Sunday afternoon at the end of August when a Dumfries carriage drove to the door, and there stepped out of it a young American then unknown to fame, but whose influence in his own country equals that of Carlyle in ours, and whose name stands connected with his wherever the English language is spoken. Emerson, the younger of the two, had just broken his Unitarian fetters, and was looking out and round him like a young eagle longing for light. He had read Carlyle's articles and had discerned with the instinct of genius that here was a voice speaking real and fiery convictions, and no longer echoes and conventionalisms. He had come to Europe to study its social and spiritual phenomena; and to the young Emerson, as to the old Goethe, the most important of them appeared to be Carlyle. He had obtained an introduction to him from John Mill, in London, armed with which he had come off to Scotland. Mill had prepared Carlyle for his possible appearance not very favourably, and perhaps recognised in after years the fallibility of his judgement. Carlyle made no such mistake. The fact itself of a young American having been so affected by his writings as to have sought him out in the Dunscore moors, was a homage of the kind which he could especially value and appreciate. The acquaintance then begun to their mutual pleasure ripened into a deep friendship, which has remained unclouded in spite of wide divergences of opinion throughout their working lives, and continues warm as ever, at the moment when I am writing these words (June 27, 1880), when the labours of both of them are over, and they wait in
Ralph Waldo Emerson. A surprise visit paid by Emerson to Craigenputtoch in August 1833—an encounter vividly evoked in the first chapter of Emerson’s *English Traits*—inaugurated a friendship that lasted throughout their lives.

(Courtesy of the Carlyle House, Chelsea.)
THE YEARS 1832-1833

age and infirmity to be called away from a world to which they have given freely all that they had to give.

Emerson's visit at this moment is particularly welcome, since it gives the only sketch we have of Carlyle's life at Craigenputtoch as it was seen by others.

From Edinburgh I went to the Highlands. On my return I came from Glasgow to Dumfries, and being intent on delivering a letter which I had brought from Rome, inquired for Craigenputtoch. It was a farm in Nithsdale, in the parish of Dunscore, sixteen miles distant. No public coach passed near it, so I took a private carriage from the inn. I found the house amid desolate heathery hills, where the lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart. Carlyle was a man from his youth, an author who did not need to hide from his readers, and as absolute a man of the world, unknown and exiled on that hill-farm, as if holding on his own terms what is best in London. He was tall and gaunt, with a cliff-like brow, self-possessed and holding his extraordinary powers of conversation in easy command; clinging to his northern accent with evident relish; full of lively anecdote and with a streaming humor which floated every thing he looked upon.

He had names of his own for all the matters familiar to his discourse. Blackwood's was the "sand magazine"; Fraser's nearer approach to possibility of life was the "mud magazine"; a piece of road near by, that marked some failed enterprise, was the "grave of the last sixpence." When too much praise of any genius annoyed him he professed hugely to admire the talent shown by his pig. He had spent much time and contrivance in confining the poor beast to one enclosure in his pen, but pig, by great strokes of judgment, had found out how to let a board down, and had foiled him. For all that he still thought man the most plastic little fellow in the planet, and he liked Nero's death, "Qualis Artifex pereol [What an artificer dies in me!]" better than most history. He worships a man that will manifest any truth to him. At one time he had inquired and read a good deal about America.

We talked of books. Plato he does not read, and he disparaged Socrates; and, when pressed, persisted in making Mirabeau a hero. Gibbon he called the "splendid bridge from the old world to the new." His own reading had been multifarious. Tristram Shandy was one of his first books after Robinson Crusoe, and Robertson's America an early favorite. Rousseau's Confessions had discovered to him that he was not a dunce; and it was now ten years since he had learned German, by the advice of a man who told him he would find in that language what he wanted.

He still returned to English pauperism, the crowded country, the selfish abdication by public men of all that public persons should perform. Government should direct poor men what to do. Poor Irish folk come wandering over these moors. My dame makes it a rule to give to every son of Adam bread to eat, and supplies his

287
wants to the next house. But here are thousands of acres which
might give them all meat, and nobody to bid these poor Irish go to
the moor and till it. They burned the stacks and so found a way to
force the rich people to attend to them.

We went out to walk over long hills, and looked at Criffel, then
without his cap, and down into Wordsworth’s country. There we
sat down and talked of the immortality of the soul. It was not
Carlyle’s fault that we talked on that topic, for he had the natural
disinclination of every nimble spirit to bruise itself against walls,
and did not like to place himself where no step can be taken. But
he was honest and true, and cognizant of the subtile links that bind
ages together, and saw how every event affects all the future.
“Christ died on the tree; that built Dunscore kirk yonder; that
brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence.”

He was already turning his eyes towards London with a scholar’s
appreciation. London is the heart of the world, he said, wonderful
only from the mass of human beings. He liked the huge machine.
Each keeps its own round. The baker’s boy brings muffins to the
window at a fixed hour every day, and that is all the Londoner
knows or wishes to know on the subject. But it turned out good
men. He named certain individuals, especially one man of letters,
his friend, the best mind he knew, whom London had well served.

Emerson stayed for a night and was gone in the morning,
seeking other notabilities. Carlyle liked him well. Two days
later he writes to his mother:

Our third happiness was the arrival of a certain young unknown
Friend named Emerson from Boston in the United States, who
turned aside so far from his British French and Italian travels, to
see me here! He had an introduction from Mill and a Frenchman
(Baron d’Eichthal’s Nephew) whom John knew in Rome. Of course
we could do no other than welcome him; the rather as he seemed
to be one of the most loveable creatures in himself we had ever
looked on. He staid till next day with us, and talked and heard talk
to his heart’s content, and left us all really sad to part with him.
Jane says, it is the first journey ever since Noah’s Deluge under­
taken to Craigenputtoch for such a purpose. In any case, we had a
cheerful day from it, and ought to be thankful.

During these months, the autumn of 1833 and the begin­
ning of the year which followed, a close correspondence
was maintained between Carlyle and John Mill. Carlyle’s
part of it I have not seen, but on both sides the letters
must have been of the deepest interest. Thinly sprinkled with
information about common friends, they related almost
entirely to the deepest questions which concern humanity;
and the letters of Mill are remarkable for simplicity, hu-
The Cairn Heights, above Craigenputtoch. The house lies hidden among the trees. Carlyle took Emerson on a long walk over the hills during Emerson's twenty-four hour visit in August 1833. "There we sat down and talked of the immortality of the soul," Emerson recalled in *English Traits*. (Photograph by John Patrick, courtesy of the University of Edinburgh.)
mility, and the most disinterested desire for truth. He had much to learn about Carlyle; he was not quick to understand character, and was distressed to find, as their communications became more intimate, how widely their views were divided. He had been bred a utilitarian. He had been taught that virtue led necessarily to happiness, and was perplexed at Carlyle’s insistence on *Entsagen* (renunciation of personal happiness) as essential to noble action. He had been surprised that Carlyle liked Emerson, who had appeared to him perhaps a visionary. Carlyle, intending to write another book, was hesitating between a life of John Knox and the French Revolution. Either subject would give him the opportunity, which he wanted, of expressing his spiritual convictions. His inclination at this moment was towards the history of his own country, and he had recommended Mill to write on the Revolution. Mill felt that it would be difficult if not impossible for him, without expressing completely his views on Christianity, which the condition of public feeling in England would not allow him to do. He spoke tenderly and reverently of the personal character of the Founder of Christianity, and on this part of the subject he wrote as if he was confident that Carlyle agreed with him. But, below the truth of any particular religion, there lay the harder problem of the existence and providence of God, and here it seemed that Carlyle had a positive faith, while Mill had no more than a sense of probability. Carlyle admitted that so far as external evidence went, the Being of God was a supposition inadequately proved. The grounds of certainty which Carlyle found in himself, Mill, much as he desired to share Carlyle’s belief, confessed that he was unable to recognise. So again with the soul. There was no proof that it perished with the body, but again there was no proof that it did not. Duty was the deepest of all realities, but the origin of duty, for all Mill could tell, might be the tendency of right action to promote the general happiness of mankind. Such general happiness doubtless could best be promoted by each person developing his own powers. Carlyle insisted that every man had a special task assigned to him, which it was his business to discover; but the question remained, by whom and how the task was assigned: and the truth might only be that men in fact were
born with various qualities, and that the general good was
most effectually promoted by the special cultivation of those
qualities.

I have alluded to the correspondence only because it
turned the balance in Carlyle's mind, sent him immediately
back again to Marie Antoinette and the Diamond Neck-
lace, and decided for him that he should himself undertake
the work which was to make his name famous.

When John Carlyle left Craigenputtoch to rejoin Lady
Clare, the parting between the brothers had been excep-
tionally sad. The popularity with Review editors which had
followed Carlyle's appearance in London was as brief as it
had been sudden. His haughty tone towards them, and his
theory of the "Dog's carrion-cart" as a description of
the periodicals of the day, could not have recommended him
to their favour. The article on Goethe was received un-
favourably, Cochrane said with unqualified disapproval.
Sartor, when it began to appear in Fraser's piecemeal, met
a still harder judgement. No one could tell what to make of
it. The writer was considered a literary maniac, and the
unlucky editor was dreading the ruin of his magazine. The
brothers had doubtless talked earnestly enough of the
threatening prospect. John, who owed all that he had and
was to his brother's care of him, and was in prosperous
circumstances, was leaving that brother to loneliness and
depression, and to a future on which no light was breaking
anywhere.

[Carlyle wrote to Cochrane, editor of the Foreign Quar-
terly Review, asking him whether he would take his article
on the Saint-Simonians or "The Diamond Necklace."
]

The answer was unfavourable. All editors, from this time
forward, gave Carlyle a cold shoulder till the appearance of
The French Revolution. After the first astonishment with
which his articles had been received, the world generally
had settled into the view taken at Edinburgh, that fine
talents, which no one had denied him, were being hopelessly
thrown away—that what he had to say was extravagant non-
sense. Whigs, Tories, and Radicals were for once agreed.
He was, in real truth, a Bohemian, whose hand was against
every man, and every man's hand, but too naturally, was
against him, and the battle was sadly unequal. If Carlyle
had possessed the peculiar musical quality which makes the form of poetry, his thoughts would have swept into popularity as rapidly and as widely as Byron's. But his verse was wooden. Rhymes and metre were to him no wings on which to soar to the empyrean. Happy for him in the end that it was so. Poetry in these days is read for pleasure. It is not taken to heart as practical truth. Carlyle's mission was that of a prophet and teacher—and a prophet's lessons can only be driven home by prose.

The dejected tone so visible in [his Journal] entries was due to no idle speculative distress, but to the menacing aspect which circumstances were beginning to assume. The editors and booksellers were too evidently growing shy; and unless articles could find insertion or books be paid for, no literary life for Carlyle would long be possible. Employment of some other kind, however humble and distasteful, would have to be sought for and accepted. Anything, even the meanest, would be preferable to courting popularity, and writing less than the very best that he could; writing "duds," as he called it, to please the popular taste. An experienced publisher once said to me: "Sir, if you wish to write a book which will sell, consider the ladies'-maids. Please the ladies'-maids, you please the great reading world." Carlyle would not, could not, write for ladies'-maids.

The dreary monotony of the Craigenputtoch life on those terms was interrupted in November by interesting changes in the family arrangements. The Carlyles, as has been more than once said, were a family whose warmest affections were confined to their own circle. Jean, the youngest sister, the "little crow," was about to be married to her cousin, James Aitken who had once lived at Scotsbrig, and was now a rising tradesman in Dumfries; a house-painter by occupation, of superior sort, and possessed of talents in that department which with better opportunities might have raised him to eminence as an artist. "James Aitken," Carlyle wrote, "is . . . certainly an ingenious, clever kind of fellow, with fair prospects, no bad habit, and perhaps very great skill in his craft. I saw a copied Ruysdael, of his doing, which certainly amazed me."21 The "crow" had not followed up the poetical promise of her childhood. She had educated herself into a clear, somewhat stern, well-informed and
sensible woman. Hard Annandale farm-work had left her no time for more. But, like all the Carlyles, she was of a rugged, independent temper. Jean, her mother said, was outgrowing the contracted limits of the Scotsbrig household. Her marriage consequently gave satisfaction to all parties. Carlyle himself was present at the ceremony: "a cold mutton-pie, of gigantic dimensions" was consumed for the breakfast; "the stirrup-cup" was drunk, Carlyle joining, and this domestic matter was happily ended.  

But Jean's marriage was not all. James Carlyle, the youngest brother, who carried on the Scotsbrig farm, had a similar scheme on foot, and had for himself fallen in love; "nothing almost, since Werter's time, has equalled the intensity of his devotion in that quarter." He, too, was eager to be married; but as this arrangement would affect his mother's position, Carlyle, as the eldest of the family, had to interfere to prevent precipitancy. All was well settled in the following spring, Carlyle making fresh sacrifices to bring it about. His brother Alick owed him more than £200. This, if it could be paid, or when it could be paid, was to be added to his younger brother's fortune. His mother was either to continue at Scotsbrig, or some new home was to be found for her, which Carlyle himself thought preferable. His letter to the intending bridegroom will be read with an interest which extends beyond its immediate subject.

I understand what wonderful felicities young men like you expect from marriage; I know too (for it is a truth as old as the world) that such expectations hold out but for a little while. I shall rejoice much (such is my experience of the world) if in your new situation you feel as happy as in the old; say nothing of happier. But, in any case, do I not know that you will never (whatever happen) venture on any such solemn engagement with a direct Duty to fly in the face of? The Duty namely of doing to your dear Mother and your dear Sisters as you would wish that they should do to you. Believe me, my dear Brother, wait; half a year for such an object is not long! If you ever repent so doing, blame me for it.—

Carlyle, perhaps, judged of possibilities by his own recollections. He, when it would have added much to his own wife's happiness, and might have shielded her entirely from the worst of her sufferings, had refused peremptorily to live with her mother, or let her live with them, except on
impossible terms. He knew himself and his peremptory disposition, and in that instance was probably right. His own mother happily found such an arrangement *not* impossible. Her son married [Isabella Calvert], and she did not leave her home, but lived out there her long and honoured life, and ended it under the old roof.