In the summer of 1834 Carlyle left Craigenputtoch and its solitary moors and removed to London, there to make a last experiment whether it would be possible for him to abide by literature as a profession, or whether he must seek another employment and perhaps another country. I have already told how he set up his modest establishment in Cheyne Row in the house where he was to remain till he died. He had some £200 in money for immediate necessities; of distinct prospects he had none at all. He had made a reputation by his articles in reviews as a man of marked ability. He had been well received on his visit to London in 1831-32, and was an object of admiring interest to a number of young men who were themselves afterwards to become famous, to John Mill, to Charles Buller, to Charles Austin, Sir William Molesworth, and the advanced section of the Philosophic Radicals, and he doubtless hoped that when he was seen and more widely known, some editorship, secretaryship, or analogous employment might fall in his way, which would enable him to live. Even Brougham and Macaulay and the orthodox Whigs of the Edinburgh Review admitted his talents, though they disliked the use which he made of them, and would have taken him up and provided for him if he would have allowed Jeffrey to put him into harness. But harness it was impossible for him to wear, even harness as light as was required by booksellers and editors. They had wondered at him and tried him, but since the appearance of Sartor they had turned their backs
upon him as hopeless, and had closed in his face the door of periodical literature. He was impracticable, unpersuadable, unmalleable, as independent and wilful as if he were an eldest son and the heir of a peerage. He had created no "public" of his own; the public which existed could not understand his writings and would not buy them, nor could he be induced so much as to attempt to please it; and thus it was that in Cheyne Row he was more neglected than he had been in Scotland. No one seemed to want his services, no one applied to him for contributions. At the Bullers' house, at the Austins', and in a gradually increasing circle, he went into society and was stared at as if he were a strange wild animal. His conversational powers were extraordinary. His unsparing veracity, his singular insight, struck everyone who came in contact with him, but were more startling than agreeable. He was unobtrusive, but when asked for his opinion he gave it in his metaphoric manner, and when contradicted was contemptuous and overbearing, "far too sarcastic for a young man," too sarcastic by far for the vanity of those whom he mortified. A worse fault was that he refused to attach himself to any existing sect, either religious or political. He abhorred cant in all its forms, and as cant in some shape gathers about every organised body of English opinion, he made many enemies and few friends; and those few, fearful of the consequences, were shy of confessing themselves his disciples. Month after month went by, and no opening presented itself of which he was able to avail himself. Molesworth founded a radical Review, but the management of it was not offered to Carlyle, though he hoped it might be offered. His money flowed away, and with the end of it would end also the prospect of making a livelihood in London.

I said no opening of which he could avail himself, but one opening there was which if he had chosen would have led him on to fortune, and which any one but Carlyle would have grasped at. In the small number of men who had studied Sartor seriously, and had discovered the golden veins in that rugged quartz rock, was John Sterling, then fresh from Cambridge and newly ordained a clergyman, of vehement but most noble nature, who though far from agreeing with Carlyle, though shrinking from and even hating,
so impetuous was he, many of Carlyle’s opinions, yet saw also that he was a man like none that he had yet fallen in with, a man not only brilliantly gifted, but differing from the common run of people in this, that he would not lie, that he would not equivocate, that he would say always what he actually thought, careless whether he pleased or offended. Such a quality, rare always, and especially rare in those who are poor and unfriended, could not but recommend the possessor of it to the brave and generous Sterling. He introduced Carlyle to his father, who was then the guiding genius of the *Times*; and the great editor of the first periodical of the world offered Carlyle work there, of course on the implied conditions. When a man enlists in the army, his soul as well as his body belong to his commanding officer. He is to be no judge of the cause for which he has to fight. His enemies are chosen for him and not by himself. His duty is to obey orders and to ask no questions. Carlyle, though with poverty at his door, and entire penury visible in the near future, turned away from a proposal which might have tempted men who had less excuse for yielding to it. He was already the sworn soldier of another chief. His allegiance from first to last was to truth, truth as it presented itself to his own intellect and his own conscience. He could not, would not, advocate what he did not believe; he would not march in the same regiment with those who did advocate what he disbelieved; nor would he consent to suppress his own convictions when he chose to make them known. By this resolution not the *Times* only, but the whole world of party life and party action, was necessarily closed against him. Organisation of any kind in free communities is only possible where individuals will forget their differences in general agreement. Carlyle, as he said himself, was fated to be an Ishmaelite, his hand against every man and every man’s hand against him; and Ishmaelites, if they are to prosper at all in such a society as ours, and escape being trampled under the horses’ hoofs, require better material sources behind them than a fast-shrinking capital of £200.

One occupation, and one only, absorbed Carlyle’s time and thought during these first years of his London life, the writing his history of the French Revolution. He had
studied it at Craigenputtoch. He had written as a preliminary flight, and as if to try his wings, the exquisite sketch of the episode of the Diamond Necklace, which lay in his desk still unpublished. He had written round the subject, on Voltaire, on Diderot, and on Cagliostro. The wild tornado in which the French monarchy perished had fascinated his attention, because it illustrated to him in all its features such theory as he had been able to form of the laws under which this world is ruled, and he had determined to throw it out of himself if afterwards he was to abandon literature for ever. His mind had been formed in his father's house upon the Old Testament and the Presbyterian creed, and, far as he had wandered and deeply as he had read, the original lesson had remained indelible.

To the Scotch people and to the Puritan part of the English, the Jewish history contained a faithful account of the dealings of God with man in all countries and in all ages. As long as men kept God's commandments it was well with them; when they forgot God's commandments and followed after wealth and enjoyment, the wrath of God fell upon them. Commerce, manufactures, intellectual enlightenment, political liberty, outward pretences of religiosity, all that modern nations mean when they speak of wealth and progress and improvement, were but Moloch or Astarte in a new disguise, and now as then it was impossible to serve God and Baal. In some form or other retribution would come, wherever the hearts of men were set on material prosperity.

To this simple creed Carlyle adhered as the central principle of all his thoughts. The outward shell of it had broken. He had ceased to believe in miracles and supernatural interpositions. But to him the natural was the supernatural, and the tales of signs and wonders had risen out of the efforts of men to realise the deepest of truths to themselves. The Jewish history was the symbol of all history. All nations in all ages were under the same dispensation. We did not come into the world with rights which we were entitled to claim, but with duties which we were ordered to do. Rights men had none, save to be governed justly. Duties waited for them everywhere. Their business was to find what those duties were and faithfully fulfil them. So and
only so the commonweal could prosper, only so would they be working in harmony with nature, only so would nature answer them with peace and happiness. Of forms of government, "that which was best administered was best." Any form would answer where there was justice between man and man. Constitutions, Bills of Rights, and such like were no substitutes for justice, and could not further justice, till men were themselves just. They must seek first God's kingdom, they must be loyally obedient to the law which was written in their consciences; or though miracles had ceased, or had never been, there were forces in the universe terrible as the thunders of Sinai or Assyrian armies, which would bring them to their senses or else destroy them. The French Revolution was the last and most signal example of "God's revenge." The world was not made that the rich might enjoy themselves while the poor piled and suffered. On such terms society itself was not allowed to exist. The film of habit on which it rested would burst through, and hunger and fury would rise up and bring to judgement the unhappy ones whose business it had been to guide and govern, and had not guided and had not governed.

England and Scotland were not yet like France, yet doubtless these impressions in Carlyle had originated in scenes which he had himself witnessed. The years which had followed the great war had been a time of severe suffering, especially in the North. It had been borne on the whole with silent patience, but the fact remained that hundreds of thousands of labourers and artisans had been out of work and their families starving while bread had been made artificially dear by the corn laws; and the gentry meanwhile had collected their rents and shot their grouse and their partridges, with a deep unconsciousness that anything else was demanded of them. That such an arrangement was not just—that it was entirely contrary, for one thing, to what was taught in the religion which everyone professed to believe—had early become evident to Carlyle, and not to him only, but to those whose opinions he most respected. His father, though too wise a man to meddle in active politics, would sternly say that the existing state of things could not last and ought not to last. His mother, pi-
ous and devout though she was, yet was a fiery Radical to the end of her days. Radicalism lay in the blood of the Scotch Calvinists, a bitter inheritance from the Covenanters. Carlyle felt it all to his heart; but he had thought too long and knew too much to believe in the dreams of the Radicals of politics. In them lay revolution, feasts of reason, and a reign of terror. Goethe had taught him the meaning and the worth of the apostles of freedom. They might destroy, but they could never build again. For the sick body and sick soul of modern Europe there was but one remedy, the old remedy of the Jewish prophets, repentance and moral amendment. All men high and low, wise and unwise, must call back into their minds the meaning of the word "duty"; must put away their cant and hypocrisy, their selfishness and appetite for pleasure, and speak truth and do justice. Without this, all tinkering of the constitution, all growth of wealth, though it rained ingots, would avail nothing.

France was the latest instance of the action of the general law. France of all modern nations had been the greatest sinner, and France had been brought to open judgement. She had been offered light at the Reformation, she would not have it, and it had returned upon her as lightning. She had murdered her Colignys. She had preferred to live for pleasure and intellectual enlightenment, with a sham for a religion, which she maintained and herself disbelieved. The palaces and châteaux had been distinguished by the splendour of dissipation. The poor had asked for bread and had been scornfully told to eat grass. The Annandale masons in old James Carlyle's time had dined on grass in silence; the French peasantry had borne with the tyranny of their princes and seigneurs, patient as long as patience was possible, and submitting as sheep to be annually sheared for their masters' pleasure; but the duty of subjects and the duty of rulers answer one to the other, and the question, sooner or later inevitable in such cases, began to be asked, what this aristocracy, these splendid units were, for whom thousands were sacrificed, these nobles who regarded the earth as their hunting ground, these priests who drew such lavish wages for teaching what they knew to be untrue—an ominous enquiry which is never made till fact has
answered it already. False nobles, false priests, once detected, could not be allowed to remain. Unfortunately it did not occur to the French nation that when the false nobles and the false priests were shaken off they would need true nobles and true priests. The new creed rose, which has since become so popular, that every man can be his own ruler and his own teacher. The notion that one man was superior to another and had a right to lead or govern him was looked upon as a cunning fiction that had been submitted to for a time by credulity. All men were brothers of one family, born with the same inalienable right to freedom. The right had only to be acknowledged and respected, and the denial of it made treason to humanity, and Astraea would then return, and earth would be again a Paradise. This was the new Evangel. It was tried, and was tried with the guillotine as its minister, but no millennium arrived. The first article was false. Men were not equal, but infinitely unequal, and the attempt to build upon an untrue hypothesis could end only as all such attempts must end. The Revolution did not mean emancipation from authority, because the authority of the wise and good over fools and knaves was the first condition of natural human society. What it did mean was the bringing great offenders to justice, who for generation after generation had prospered in iniquity. Crown, nobles, prelates, seigneurs, they and the lies which they had taught and fattened on were burnt up as by an eruption from the nether deep, and of them at least the weary world was made quit.

It was thus that Carlyle regarded the great convulsion which shook Europe at the close of the last century. He believed that the fate of France would be the fate of all nations whose hearts were set on material things—who for religion were content with decent unrealities, satisfying their consciences with outward professions—treating God as if he were indeed, in Milton's words, "a buzzard idol." God would not be mocked. The poor wretches called mankind lay in fact under a tremendous dispensation which would exact an account of them for their misdoings to the smallest fibre. Every folly, every false word, or unjust deed was a sin against the universe, of which the consequences would remain, though the guilt might be purged by repentance. The
thought of these things was a weight upon his heart, and he
could not rest till he was delivered of it. England just then
was rushing along in the enthusiasm of Reform, and the
warning was needed. His own future was a blank. He had no
notion what was to become of him, how or where he was to
live, on what he was to live. His immediate duty was to write
down his convictions on this the greatest of all human prob­
lems, and *The History of the French Revolution* was the
shape in which these convictions crystallised.

Let the reader therefore picture Carlyle to himself, as
settled down to this work within a few months after his ar­
rival in London. He was now thirty-nine years old, in the
pride of his intellectual strength. His condition, his feel­
ings, his circumstances, and the outward elements of his
life are noted down in the letters and journals from which
I shall now make extracts.

My Book cannot get on, though I stick to it like a burr. Why
should I say Peace, Peace, where there is no peace? May God grant
me strength to do or to endure aright what is appointed me in this
coming now commenced division of Time. Let me not despair.
Nay I do not in general. Enough to-night; for I am done! Peace
be to my Mother, and all my loved ones that yet live! What a noisy
inanity is this world.—

Saturday, 7th February 1835.— The First Book of the French
Revolution is finished. ... Soul and body both very sick; yet I
have a kind of sacred defiance trotzend das Schicksal [in spite of
fate]. It has become clear to me that I have honestly more force and
faculty in me than belongs to the most I see; also it was always
clear that no honestly exerted force can be utterly lost; were it long
years after I am dead, in regions far distant from this, under names
far different from thine, the seed thou sowest will spring. The great
difficulty is to keep one's own self in right balance: not despon­
dent, not exasperated defiant; free and clear. O for faith! Food
and raiment thou hast never lacked and shalt not.

Nevertheless it is now some three and twenty months since I
have earned one penny by my craft of literature: be this recorded
as a fact and document for the Literary History of this time. I
have been ready to work; I am abler than ever to work; know no fault
I have committed: and yet so it stands. To ask able editors to
employ you will not improve but worsen the matter: you are like a
spinster waiting to be married; ... I have some serious thoughts
of quitting this Periodical craft one good time for all: it is not
synonymous with a life of wisdom; when want is approaching, one
must have done with whims. If literature will refuse me both bread
and a stomach to digest bread with, then surely the case is growing clear.

So Carlyle's first winter in London was passing away. His prospects were blank, and the society in which he moved gave him no particular pleasure, but it was good of its kind, and was perhaps more agreeable to him than he knew. His money would hold out till the book was done at the rate at which it was progressing. The first volume was finished. On the whole he was not dissatisfied with it. It was the best that he could do, and he was for him, in moderately fair spirits. But the strain was sharp; his "labour-pains" with his books were always severe. He had first to see that the material was pure, with no dross of lies in it, and then to fuse it all into white heat before it would run into the mould, and he was in no condition to bear any fresh burden. Alas for him, he had a stern taskmistress. Providence or destiny (he himself always believed in Providence, without reason as he admitted, or even against reason) meant to try him to the utmost. Not only was all employment closed in his face, save what he could make for himself, but it was as if something said "Even this too you shall not do till we have proved your mettle to the last." A catastrophe was to overtake him, which for a moment fairly broke his spirit, so cruel it seemed—for the moment, but for the moment only. It served in fact to show how admirably, though in little things so querulous and irritable, he could behave under real misfortunes.

John Mill, then his closest and most valuable friend, was ardently interested in the growth of the new book. He borrowed the manuscript as it was thrown off, that he might make notes and suggestions, either for Carlyle's use, or as material for an early review. The completed first volume was in his hands for this purpose, when one evening, the 6th of March, 1835, as Carlyle was sitting with his wife, "toiling along like a Nigger" at the Feast of Pikes, a rap was heard at the door, a hurried step came up the stairs, and Mill entered deadly pale, and at first unable to speak. "Why, Mill," said Carlyle, "what ails ye, man? What is it?" Staggering, and supported by Carlyle's arm, Mill gasped out to Mrs. Carlyle to go down and speak to some one who was in a carriage in the street. Both Carlyle
and she thought that a thing which they had long feared
must have actually happened, and that Mill had come to an­
nounce it and to take leave of them. So genuine was the
alarm that the truth when it came out was a relief. Carlyle
led his friend to a seat “the very picture of despair.” He
then learnt in broken sentences that his manuscript, “left
. . . out (too carelessly)” after it had been read, was, “ex­
cept some three or four bits of leaves,” irrevocably “de­
stroyed.” That was all, nothing worse; but it was ugly
news enough, and the uglier the more the meaning of
it was realised. Carlyle wrote always in a highly wrought
quasi-automatic condition both of mind and nerves. He read
till he was full of his subject. His notes, when they were
done with, were thrown aside and destroyed; and of this
unfortunate volume, which he had produced as if “pos­
sessed” while he was about it, he could remember nothing.
Not only were the fruits of “five months of steadfast oc­
casionally excessive and always sickly and painful toil” gone irretrievably, but the spirit in which he had worked
seemed to have fled too, not to be recalled; worse than all,
his work had been measured carefully against his re­
sources, and the household purse might now be empty be­
fore the loss could be made good. The carriage and its oc­
cupant drove off—and it would have been better had Mill
gone too after he had told his tale, for the forlorn pair
wished to be alone together in the face of such a calamity.
But Carlyle, whose first thought was of what Mill must
be suffering, made light of it, and talked of indifferent
things, and Mill stayed and talked too—stayed, I believe,
two hours. At length he left them. Mrs. Carlyle told me
that the first words her husband uttered as the door closed
were: “Well, Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up; we must
endeavour to hide from him how very serious this business
is to us.”

The money part of the injury Mill was able to repair. He
knew Carlyle’s circumstances. He begged, and at last
passionately entreated, Carlyle not to punish him by mak­
ing him feel that he had occasioned real distress to friends
whom he so much honoured; and he enclosed a cheque for
£200, the smallest sum which he thought that he could
offer. Carlyle returned it; but, his financial condition re­
quiring that he should lay his pride aside, he intimated
that he would accept half, as representing the wages of five months' labour. To this Mill unwillingly consented. He sent a hundred pounds, and, so far as money went, Carlyle was in the same position as when he began to write. He was not aware till he tried it what difficulty he would find in replacing what had been destroyed; and he was able to write to his brother of what had happened, before he did try again, as of a thing which had ceased to distress him.

For Mill's sake the misadventure was not spoken of in London. Carlyle had been idle for a week or two till he could muster strength to set to work again, and had gone into society as much as he could to distract himself. He was a frequent guest at Henry Taylor's, "a good man," he said, "whose laugh reminds me of poor Irving's." At Taylor's he had met Southey. Shortly after the accident he met Wordsworth at the same house.

I did not expect much; but got mostly what I expected. The old man has a fine shrewdness and naturalness in his expression of face (a long Cumberland figure); one finds also a kind of sincerity in his speech: but for prolixity, thinness, endless dilution it excels all the other speech I had heard from mortal. A genuine man (which is much) but also essentially a small genuine man: nothing perhaps is sadder (of the glad kind) than the unbounded laudation of such a man; sad proof of the rarity of such. I fancy however he has fallen into the garrulity of age, and is not what he was: also that his environment (and rural Prophethood) has hurt him much. He seems impatient that even Shakespear should be admired: "so much out of my own pocket"! The shake of hand he gives you is feckless, egoistical; I rather fancy he loves nothing in the world so much as one could wish. When I compare that man with a great man,—alas, he is like dwindling into a contemptibility. Jean Paul (for example), neither was he great, could have worn him as a finger-ring.10

To resolve to rewrite the burnt volume was easier than to do it. The "Fête des Piques" at which Carlyle had been engaged was leisurely finished. He then turned back to the death of Louis XV, the most impressive passage in the whole book as he eventually finished it, but he found that it would not prosper with him.

There was no hope now of the promised summer holiday when John Carlyle was to come home from Italy, and The French Revolution was to have been finished, and
the brothers to have gone to Scotland together and settled their future plans in family council. Holidays were not now to be thought of, at least till the loss was made good. Then, as always when in real trouble, Carlyle faced his difficulties like a man. The household at Chelsea was never closer drawn together than in these times of trial.

Carlyle was brave; his Heldin [heroine, i.e., Jane] cheering him with word and look, his brother strong upon his own feet and heartily affectionate. But he needed all that affection could do for him. The “accelerated speed” slackened to slow, and then to no motion at all. He sat daily at his desk, but his imagination would not work. Early in May, for the days passed heavily, and he lost the count of them, he notes “that I never at any period of my life, felt more thoroughly disconsolate, beaten-down, powerless than now. Simply impossible it seems that I should ever do that weariest miserablest of tasks.” A man can rewrite what he has known; but he cannot rewrite what he has felt. Emotion forcibly recalled is artificial, and, unless spontaneous, is hateful. He laboured on “with the feeling of a man swimming in a rarer and rarer element.” At length there was no element at all. “My will,” he said, “is not conquered; but my vacuum of element to swim in seems complete.” He locked up his papers, drove the subject out of his mind, and sat for a fortnight reading novels, English, French, German—anything that came to hand. “In this determination too,” he thought, “there may be instruction for me.” It was the first of the kind that he had ever deliberately formed. He would keep up his heart. He would be idle, he would rest. He would try, if the word was not a mockery, to enjoy himself.

Another effect of Carlyle’s enforced period of idleness was that he saw more of his friends, and of one especially, whose interest in himself had first amused and then attracted him. John Sterling, young, eager, enthusiastic, had been caught by the Radical epidemic on the spiritual side. Hating lies as much as Carlyle hated them, and plunging like a high-bred colt under the conventional harness of a clergyman, he believed, nevertheless, as many others then believed, that the Christian religion would again become the instrument of a great spiritual renovation. While the
Tractarians were reviving mediaevalism at Oxford, Sterling, Maurice, Julius Hare, and a circle of Cambridge liberals were looking to Luther, and through Luther to Neander and Schleiermacher, to bring "revelation" into harmony with intellect, and restore its ascendancy as a guide into a new era. Coleridge was the high priest of this new prospect for humanity. It was a beautiful hope, though not destined to be realised. Sterling, who was gifted beyond the rest, was among the first to see how much a movement of this kind must mean, if it meant anything at all. He had an instinctive sympathy with genius and earnestness wherever he found it. In the author of Sartor Resartus he discovered these qualities, while his contemporaries were blind to them. I have already mentioned that he sought Carlyle's acquaintance, and procured him the offer of employment on the Times. His admiration was not diminished when that offer was declined. He missed no opportunity of becoming more intimate with him, and he hoped that he might himself be the instrument of bringing Carlyle to a clearer faith. Carlyle, once better instructed in the great Christian verities, might become a second and a greater Knox.

"[I] have seen," Carlyle writes in this same May, "a good deal of that young Clergyman (singular clergyman!) during these two weeks: a sanguine, light, loving man; of whom to me nothing but good seems likely to come; to himself a mixture (unluckily) of good and evil." Of good and evil—for Carlyle, clearer-eyed than his friend, foresaw the consequences. Frederick Maurice, Sterling's brother-in-law, on the occasion of the agitation about subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, had written a pamphlet extremely characteristic of him, to show that subscription was not a bondage, as foolish people called it, but a deliverance from bondage; that the Articles properly read were the great charter of spiritual liberty and reasonable belief. Sterling lent the pamphlet to Carlyle, who examined it, respectfully recognising that "an earnest man's earnest word was worth reading; but," he said, "my verdict lay in these four lines of jingle; which I, virtuously, spared Sterling the sight of:

Thirty-nine English Articles,
Ye wondrous little particles,
Did God shape His universe really by you?  
In that case, I swear it,  
And solemnly declare it,  
This logic of M[aurice]'s is true.""14

Carlyle afterwards came to know Maurice, esteemed him, and personally liked him, as all his acquaintance did. But the "verdict" was unchanged. As a thinker he found him confused, wearisome, ineffectual; and he thought no better of the whole business in which he was engaged. An amalgam of "Christian verities" and modern critical philosophy was, and could be nothing else but, poisonous insincerity. This same opinion in respectful language he had to convey to Sterling, if he was required to give one. But he never voluntarily introduced such subjects, and Sterling's anxiety to improve Carlyle was not limited to the circle of theology. Sterling was a cultivated and classical scholar; he was disturbed by Carlyle's style, which offended him as it offended the world. This style, which has been such a stone of stumbling, originated, he has often said to myself, in the old farmhouse at Annandale. The humour of it came from his mother. The form was his father's common mode of speech, and had been adopted by himself for its brevity and emphasis. He was aware of its singularity and feared that it might be mistaken for affectation, but it was a natural growth, with this merit among others, that it is the clearest of styles. No sentence leaves the reader in doubt of its meaning. Sterling's objections, however, had been vehement. Carlyle admitted that there was foundation for them, but defended himself.

Your objections as to phraseology and style have good grounds to stand on; many of them indeed are considerations to which I myself was not blind; which there (unluckily) were no means of doing more than nodding to as one passed. A man has but a certain strength; imperfections cling to him, which if he wait till he have brushed off entirely, he will spin for ever on his axis, advancing nowhither. Know thy thought, believe it; front Heaven and Earth with it,—in whatsoever words nature and art have made readiest for thee. . . . If one has thoughts not hitherto uttered in English Books, I see nothing for it but that you must use words not found ther[e], must make words,—with moderation and discretion, of course. . . . But finally do you reckon this really a time for Purism of Style; or that Style (mere dictionary style) has much to do with the worth or unworth of a Book? I do not:
with whole ragged battalions of Scott’s-novel Scotch, with Irish, German, French, and even Newspaper Cockney (when “Literature” is little other than a Newspaper) storming in on us, and the whole structure of our Johnsonian English breaking up from its foundations,—revolution there as visible as everywhere else.\(^\text{15}\)

“The style; ah, the style!” Carlyle notes nevertheless, as if he was uneasy about it; for in *The French Revolution* the peculiarities of it were more marked than even in *Sartor*:

These poor people seem to think a style can be put off or put on not like a skin but like a coat! Now I refer it to Sterling himself (enemy as he is), whether a skin be not verily the product and close kinsfellow of all that lies under it; exact type of the nature of the beast: *not* to be plucked off without flaying and death? The Public is an old woman: let her maulder and mumble.\(^\text{16}\)

Sterling was not satisfied, and again persisted in his remonstrances. “*Das wird zu lang* [this is becoming too protracted],” Carlyle said; “*I made it* [the letter] *into matches*”;\(^\text{17}\) not loving his friend the less for advice which was faithfully given, but knowing in himself that he could not and ought not to attend to it. The *style* was and is the *skin*—an essential part of the living organisation.

But besides the style, Sterling had deeper complaints to make. He insisted on the defects of Carlyle’s spiritual belief, being perhaps led on into the subject by the failure of Maurice’s eloquence. *Sartor* was still the text. It had been ridiculed in *Fraser’s* when it first appeared. It had been republished and admired in America, but in England so far it had met with almost entire neglect. Why should this have been? It was obviously a remarkable book, the most remarkable perhaps which had been published for many years.

You ask, how it comes that none of the “leading minds” of this country... have given the Clothes-Philosophy any response? Why, my good friend, not one of them has had the happiness of seeing it! It issued thro’ one of the main *cloacas* of Periodical Literature, where no leading mind, I fancy, looks, if he can help it: the poor Book cannot be destroyed by fire or other violence now, but solely by the *general* law of Destiny; and I have nothing more to do with it henceforth... Meanwhile, do not suppose the poor Book has *not* been responded to; for the historical fact is, I could show very curious response to it here; not ungratifying, and fully three times as much as I counted on, as the wretched farrago itself deserved.\(^\text{18}\)
Meanwhile the fortnight's idleness expired; he went to work again over his lost volume, but became "so sick" that he still made little progress. Emerson continued to press him to move for good and all to America, where he would find many friends and a congenial audience for his teaching; and more than once he thought of leaving the unlucky thing unwritten and of acting on Emerson's advice. He was very weary, and the books with which he tried to distract himself had no charm.

It was significant of a growing misgiving on Carlyle's part that he had mistaken his profession, and that as a man of letters—as a true and honest man of letters—he could not live. Everything was against him. No one wanted him; no one believed his report; and even Fate itself was now warning him off with menacing finger.

It was a mere chance at this time that *The French Revolution* and literature with it were not flung aside for good and all, and that the Carlyle whom the world knows had never been. If Charles Buller, or Molesworth, or any other leading Radical who had seen his worth, had told the Government that if they meant to begin in earnest on the education of the people, here was the man for them, Carlyle would have closed at once with the offer. The effort of writing, always great (for he wrote, as his brother said, "with his heart's blood" in a state of fevered tension), the indifference of the world to his past work, his uncertain future, his actual poverty, had already burdened him beyond his strength. He always doubted whether he had any special talent for literature. He was conscious of possessing considerable powers, but he would have preferred at all times to have found a use for them in action. And everything was now conspiring to drive him into another career. If nothing could be found for him at home, America was opening its arms. He could lecture for a season in New England, save sufficient money, and then draw away into the wilderness, to build a new Scotsbrig in the western forest. So the possibility presented itself to him in this interval of enforced helplessness. He would go away and struggle with the stream no more. And yet at the bottom of his mind, as he told me, something said to him, "My good fellow, you are not fit for that either." Perhaps he
felt that when he was once across the water, America would at any rate be a better mother to him than England, would find what he was suited for, and would not let his faculties be wasted.

As writing seemed impossible, Carlyle had determined to go to Scotland after all. Lady Clare had meant to be in England soon after midsummer, bringing John Carlyle with her. John was now the great man of the family, the man of income, the travelled doctor from Italy, the companion of a peeress. His arrival was looked forward to at Scotsbrig with natural eagerness. Carlyle and he were to go down together and consult with their mother about future plans. Mrs. Carlyle would go with them to pay a visit to her mother. The journey might be an expense, but John was rich, and the fares to Edinburgh by steamer were not considerable. In the gloom that hung over Chelsea this prospect had been the one streak of sunshine—and unhappily it was all clouded over. Lady Clare could not come home after all, and John was obliged to remain with her, though with a promise of leave of absence in the autumn. At Radical Scotsbrig there was indignation enough at a fine lady’s caprices destroying other people’s pleasures. Carlyle more gently could “pity the heart that suffers, whether it beat under silk or under sackcloth” for Lady Clare’s life was not a happy one. He collected his energy. To soften his wife’s disappointment, he invited Mrs. Welsh to come immediately on a long visit to Cheyne Row. Like his father he resolved to “gar [compel] himself,” finish the burnt volume in spite of everything, and to think no more of Scotland till it was done. The sudden change gave him back his strength.

Things after this began to brighten. Mrs. Welsh came up to cheer her daughter, whose heart had almost failed like her husband’s, for she had no fancy for an American forest. Carlyle went vigorously to work, and at last successfully. In ten days he had made substantial progress, though with “immense difficulty” still. “It is and continues the most ungrateful, intolerable of all tasks.” But he felt that he was getting on with it, and recovered his peace of mind. He even began to be interested again in the subject itself, which had become for the time entirely distasteful to him,
and to regret that he could not satisfy himself better in his treatment of it. Notwithstanding his defence of his style to Sterling, he wished the skin were less "rhinoceros-like.”

Gradually the story which he was engaged in telling got possession of him again. The terrible scenes of the Revolution seized his imagination, haunting him as he walked about the streets. London and its giddy whirl of life, that too might become as Paris had been. Ah! and what was it all but a pageant passing from darkness into darkness? The world often, indeed generally looks quite spectral, sometimes (as in Regent-Street, the other night; my nerves being all shattered), quite hideous, discordant, almost infernal.”

Amidst such “spectral” feelings the writing of The French Revolution went on. By August 10 Carlyle was within sight of the end of the unfortunate volume which had cost him so dear, and could form a notion of what he had done. His wife, an excellent judge, considered the second version better than the first. Carlyle himself thought it worse, but not much worse; at any rate he was relieved from the load, and could look forward to finishing the rest. Sometimes he thought the book would produce an effect; but he had hoped the same from Sartor, and he did not choose to be sanguine a second time. On September 23 he was able to tell his brother that the last line of the volume was actually written, that he was entirely exhausted and was going to Annandale to recover himself.

In the first week in October Carlyle started for his old home, not in a smack, though he had so purposed, but in a steamer to Newcastle, whence there was easy access, though railways as yet were not, to Carlisle and Annandale. His letters and diary give no bright picture of his first year’s experience in London, and fate had dealt hardly with him; but he had gained much notwithstanding. His strong personality had drawn attention wherever he had been seen. He had been invited with his wife into cultivated circles, literary and political. The Sterlings were not the only new friends whom they had made. Their poverty was unconcealed; there was no sham in either of the Carlyles, and there were many persons anxious to help them in any form in which help could be accepted. Presents of all kinds,
hampers of wine, and suchlike poured in upon them. Carlyle did not speak of these things. He did not feel them less than other people, but he was chary of polite expressions which are so often but half sincere, and he often seemed indifferent or ungracious when at heart he was warmly grateful. Mrs. Carlyle, when disappointed of her trip to Scotland, had been carried off into the country by the Sterlings for a week or two. In August Mrs. Welsh came, and stayed on while Carlyle was away. She was a gifted woman, a little too sentimental for her sarcastic daughter, and troublesome with her caprices. They loved each other dearly and even passionately. They quarrelled daily and made it up again. Mrs. Carlyle, like her husband, was not easy to live with. But on the whole they were happy to be together again after so long a separation. They had friends of their own who gathered about them in Carlyle’s absence. Mrs. Carlyle occupied herself in learning Italian, painting and arranging the rooms, negotiating a sofa out of her scanty allowance, preparing a pleasant surprise when he should come back to his work. He on his part was not left to chew his own reflections. He was to provide the winter stock of bacon and hams and potatoes and meal at Scotsbrig. He was to find a Scotch lass for a servant and bring her back with him. He was to dispose of the rest of the Craigenputtoch stock which had been left unsold, all excellent antidotes against spectral visions. He had his old Annandale relations to see again, in whose fortunes he was eagerly interested, and to write long stories about them to his brother John. In such occupation, varied with daily talks and smokes with his mother, and in feeding himself into health on milk or porridge, Carlyle passed his holiday.

The holiday lasted but four weeks, and Carlyle was again at his work at Chelsea. He was still restless, of course, with so heavy a load upon him; but he did his best to be cheerful under it. Her chief resources were the Sterlings and the Italian lessons, and as long as she was well in health her spirits did not fail. Him, too, the Sterlings’ friendship helped much to encourage; but he was absorbed in his writing and could think of little else.

[Parliament had addressed itself to the question of national education. Carlyle thought himself fit to write on the
subject and hoped for a government appointment, but] nothing came of the national education scheme.\textsuperscript{23} Carlyle was not a person to push himself into notice. Either Buller and his other friends did not exert themselves for him, or they tried and failed; governments, in fact, do not look out for servants among men who are speculating about the nature of the universe. Then as always the doors leading into regular employment remained closed. From his mother as far as possible he concealed his anxieties. But she knew him too well to be deceived. She, too, was heavy at heart for her idolised son, less on account of his uncertain prospects than for the want of faith, as she considered it, which was the real cause of his trouble. He told her always that essentially he thought as she did, but she could hardly believe it; and though she no longer argued or remonstrated, yet she dwelt in her letters to him, in her own simple way, on the sources of her own consolation.

It was very difficult for Carlyle (as he told me) to speak with or write to his mother directly about religion. She quieted her anxieties as well as she could by recognising the deep unquestionable piety of her son’s nature. It was on the worldly side, after all, that there was real cause for alarm. The little stock of money would be gone now in a few months; and then what was to be done? America seemed the only resource. Yet to allow such a man to expatriate himself—a man, too, who would be contented with the barest necessaries of life—because in England he could not live, would be a shame and a scandal; and various schemes for keeping him were talked over among his friends. The difficulty was that he was himself so stubborn and impracticable. He would not write in the \textit{Times}, because the \textit{Times} was committed to a great political party, and Carlyle would have nothing to do with parties. Shortly after he came back from Scotland, he was offered the editorship of a newspaper at Lichfield. This was unacceptable for the same reason; and if he could have himself consented, his wife would not. She could never persuade herself that her husband would fail to rise to greatness on his own lines, or allow him to take an inferior situation.

A more singular proposition reached Carlyle from another quarter, kindly meant perhaps, but set forward with an air of patronage which the humblest of men would have resent-
ed unless at the last extremity; and humility was certainly not one of Carlyle's qualities. The Basil Montagus had been among the first friends to whom he had been introduced by Irving when he came to London in 1824. Great things had been then expected of him on Irving's report. Mrs. Montagu had interested herself deeply in all his concerns. She had been initiated into the romance of Jane Welsh's early life, and it was by her interference (which had never been wholly forgiven) that her marriage with Carlyle had been precipitated. For some years a correspondence had been kept up, somewhat inflated on Mrs. Montagu's side, but showing real kindness and a real wish to be of use. The acquaintance had continued after the Carlyles settled in Chelsea, but Mrs. Montagu's advances had not been very warmly received, and were suspected, perhaps unjustly, of not being completely sincere. The sympathetic letter which she had ventured to write to Mrs. Carlyle on Irving's death had been received rather with resentment than satisfaction. Still the Montagus remained in the circle of Carlyle's friends. They were aware of his circumstances, and were anxious to help him if they knew how to set about it. It was with some pleasure, and perhaps with some remorse at the doubts which he had entertained of the sincerity of their regard, that Carlyle learned that Basil Montagu had a situation in view for him which, if he liked it, he might have—a situation, he was told, which would secure him a sufficient income, and would leave him time besides for his own writing. The particulars were reserved to be explained at a personal interview. Carlyle had been so eager, chiefly for his wife's sake, to find something to hold on to, that he would not let the smallest plank drift by without examining it. He had a vague misgiving, but he blamed himself for his distrust. The interview took place, and the contempt with which he describes Mr. Montagu's proposition is actually savage.

Basil Montagu had within the last six months a Life-benefaction all cut and dried for me; needing little but acceptance,—no, it depended on the measure of gratitude, whether it was to be ready for me or for another: a Clerkship under him at the rate of £200 a-year; whereby a man, lecturing also in Mechanics' Institutes in the evening, and doing etceteras, might live! I listened with grave fixed eyes to the Sovereign of Quacks as he mewed out all the fine sentimentalities he had stuffed into this beggarly account of empty boxes (for which
too I had been sent trotting many miles of pavement, tho' I knew from the beginning it could be only moonshine): and with grave thanks, for this potentiality of a Clerkship, took my leave that night; and next morning, all still in the potential mood, sent an indicative Threepenny... One other thing I could not but remark: the faith of Montagu—wishing me for his Clerk; thinking the Polar Bear, reduced to a state of dyspeptic dejection, might be safely trusted tending Rabbits! Greater faith I have not found in Israel.—Let us leave these people: they shall hardly again cost me even an "exchange of Threepennies." 25

The "Polar Bear," it might have occurred to Carlyle, is a difficult beast to find accommodation for. People do not eagerly open their doors to such an inmate. Basil Montagu, doubtless, was not a wise man, and was unaware of the relative values of himself and the person that he thought of for a clerk. But, after all, situations suited for polar bears are not easily found outside the Zoological Gardens. It was not Basil Montagu's fault that he was not a person of superior quality. He knew that Carlyle was looking anxiously for employment with a fixed salary, and a clerkship in his office had, in his eyes, nothing degrading in it. Except in a country like Prussia, where a discerning government is on the look-out always for men of superior intellect, and knows what to do with them, the most gifted genius must begin upon the lowest step of the ladder. 26 The proposal was of course an absurd one, and the scorn with which it was received was only too natural; but this small incident shows only how impossible it was at this time to do anything for Carlyle except what was actually done, to leave him to climb the precipices of life by his own unassisted strength.

Thus, throughout this year 1836, he remained fixed at his work in Cheyne Row. He wrote all the morning. In the afternoon he walked, sometimes with Mill or Sterling, more often alone, making his own reflections.

Mrs. Carlyle was confined through the winter and spring with a dangerous cough. He himself, though he complained, was fairly well; nothing was essentially the matter, but he slept badly from overwork, "gaeing stavering [stumbling] aboot the hoose at night," as the Scotch maid said, restless alike in mind and body. When he paused from his book to write a letter or a note in his Journal, it was to discover a state of nerves irritated by the contrast between his actual
performance and the sense of what he was trying to accomplish. The ease which he expected when the lost volume was recovered had not been found. The toil was severe as ever.

At the back of Carlyle’s house in Cheyne Row is a strip of garden, a grass plot, a few trees and flowerbeds along the walls, where are (or were) some bits of jessamine and a gooseberry-bush or two, transported from Haddington and Craigenputtoch. Here, when spring came on, Carlyle used to dig and plant and keep the grass trim and tidy. Sterling must have seen him with his spade there when he drew the picture of Collins in “The Onyx Ring,” which is evidently designed for Carlyle.\(^27\) The digging must have been more of a relaxation for him than the walks, where the thinking and talking went on without interruption. Very welcome and a real relief was the arrival of his brother John at last in the middle of April. Lady Clare could not part with him in the autumn, but she had come now herself, bringing the doctor with her, and had allowed him three months’ leave of absence. Half his holiday was to be spent in Cheyne Row. The second volume of *The French Revolution* was finished, and Carlyle gave himself up to the full enjoyment of his brother’s company. He had six weeks of real rest and pleasure; for his curiosity was insatiable, and John, just from Italy, could tell him infinite things which he wanted to know. Scotsbrig, of course, had claims which were to be respected. When these weeks were over, John had to go north, and Carlyle attended him down the river to the Hull steamer.

“Very cheering to me, poor Jack,” he writes when alone at home again; “I feel without him ‘quite orphaned and alone.’ ”\(^28\) Alone, and at the mercy again of the evil spirits whom “Jack’s” round face had kept at a distance.

The old, old story: genius, the divine gift which men so envy and admire, which is supposed to lift its possessor to a throne among the gods, gives him, with the intensity of insight, intensity of spiritual suffering. His laurel wreath is a crown of thorns. To all men Carlyle preached the duty of “consuming their own smoke,” and faithfully he fulfilled his own injunction. He wrote no *Leiden des jungen Werthers*, no musical *Childe Harold*, to relieve his own heart by inviting the world to weep with him. So far as the world was concerned, he bore his pains in silence, and only in his
THE GARDEN. When the Carlyles first moved to then unfashionable Chelsea, they could see the spires of the London churches across the intervening fields. "The garden," wrote Carlyle, "is of admirable comfort to me, in the smoking way: I can wander about in dressing gown and straw hat in it, as of old, and take my pipe in peace." Mrs. Carlyle's dog Nero, frequently mentioned in her letters, is buried at the far end. (A Gordon Fraser card, published for the National Trust.)
Journal left any written record of them. At home, however, he could not always be reticent; and his sick wife, whose spirits needed raising, missed John's companionship as much as her husband. The household economics became so pressing that the book had to be suspended for a couple of weeks while Carlyle wrote the article on Mirabeau, now printed among the Miscellanies, for Mill's Review. Some fifty pounds was made by this; but by the time the article was finished, Mrs. Carlyle became so ill that she felt that unless she could get away to her mother "she would surely die." Carlyle himself could not think of moving, unless for a day or two to a friend in the neighborhood of London; but everything was done that circumstances permitted. She went first to her uncle at Liverpool, meaning to proceed (for economy) by the Annan steamer, though in her weak state she dreaded a sea voyage. She was sent forward by the coach. John Carlyle met her and carried her on to her mother at Templand, who had a "purse . . . filled with sovereigns" ready for her as a birthday present (July 14). Carlyle himself wrote to her daily, making the best of his condition that she might have as little anxiety as possible on his account.

It has pleased Carlyle to admit the world behind the scenes of his domestic life. He has allowed us to see that all was not as well there as it might have been, and in his own generous remorse he has taken the blame upon himself. No one, however, can read these letters, or ten thousand others like them, without recognising the affectionate tenderness which lay at the bottom of his nature. No one also can read between the lines without observing that poverty and dispiritment and the burden of a task too heavy for him was not all that Carlyle had to bear. She on her part, no doubt, had much to put up with. It was not easy to live with a husband subject to strange fits of passion and depression; often as unreasonable as a child, and with a Titanesque power of making mountains out of molehills. But she might have seen more clearly than she did, in these deliberate expressions of his feeling, the soundness of his judgement, and the genuine simple truth and loyalty of his heart. Let those married pairs who never knew a quarrel, whose days run on unruffled by a breeze, be grateful that their lot has
been cast in pleasant circumstances, for otherwise their experience will have been different. Let them be grateful that they are not persons of "genius" or blessed or cursed with sarcastic tongues. The disorder which had driven Mrs. Carlyle to Scotland was mental as well as bodily. The best remedy for it lay, after all, at home; and she came back, as she said after two months' absence, "a sadder and a wiser woman." 32

She had returned mended in spirits. John had gone two days before, and was on his way to Italy again, but the effects remained of his cheery presence, and all things were looking better. The article on Mirabeau was printed, and had given satisfaction. "The Diamond Necklace" was to come out in parts in Fraser's and bring in a little money. Carlyle had never written anything more beautiful; and it speaks indifferently for English criticism that about this, when it appeared, the newspapers were as scornful as they had been about Sartor—a bad omen for The French Revolution, for "The Diamond Necklace" was a preliminary chapter of the same drama. But the opinions of the newspapers had long become matters of indifference. The financial pressure would be relieved at any rate, and the air in Cheyne Row, within doors and without, was like a still autumn afternoon, when the equinoctials have done blowing.

As the end of the book came in view, the question—what next? began to present itself. It was as morning twilight after a long night, and surrounding objects showed in their natural form. Evidently Carlyle did not expect that it would bring him money or directly better his fortunes. All that he looked for was to have acquitted his conscience by writing it: he would then quit literature and seek other work. The alternative, indeed, did not seem to be left to him—literature as a profession, followed with a sacred sense of responsibility (and without such a sense he could have nothing to do with it), refused a living to himself and his wife. For her sake as well as his own, he must try something else. He was in no hurry to choose. His plan, so far as he could form one, was that, as soon as the book was published, his wife should return for a while to her mother. He, like his own Teufelsdröckh, would take staff in hand, travel on foot about the world like a mediaeval monk, look about him, and then decide.
Ten years before, he had formed large hopes of what he might do and become as a man of letters. He concluded now that he had failed.

So the year wore out, and in this humour The French Revolution was finished. The last sentence was written on the 12th of January, 1837, on a damp evening, just as light was failing. Carlyle gave the manuscript to his wife to read, and went out to walk. Before leaving the house he said to her: "I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo, or entirely forbear to do (as is likeliest), but this I could tell the world: You have not had for a hundred years any book that came more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man; do with it what you like, you——." Five days later he announced the event to Sterling, who was spending the winter at Bordeaux.

Five days ago I finished, about ten o'clock at night; and really was ready both to weep and to pray,—but did not do either, at least not visibly or audibly. The Bookseller has it, and the Printer has it; I expect the first sheet tomorrow: in not many weeks more, I can hope to wash my hands of it forever and a day. It is a thing disgusting to me by the faults of it; the merits of which, for it is not without merits, will not be seen for a long time. It is a wild savage Book, itself a kind of French Revolution;—which perhaps, if Providence have so ordered it, the world had better not accept when offered it? With all my heart! What I do know of it is that it has come hot out of my own soul; born in blackness whirlwind and sorrow; that no man, for a long while, has stood speaking so completely alone under the Eternal Azure, in the character of man only; or is likely for a long while so to stand:—finally that it has come as near to choking the life out of me as any task I should like to undertake for some years to come; which also is an immense comfort, indeed the greatest of all. . . .

I will repeat you again the little Song that goes humming thro' my head, very frequently in these times; the only modern Psalm I have met with for long:

The Future hides in it
Gladness and sorrow;
We press still thorow,
Nought that abides in it
Daunting us,—onward.

And solemn before us,
Veiled, the dark Portal,
Goal of all mortal:—
Stars silent rest o'er us,
Graves under us silent!
But heard are the Voices,—
Heard are the Sages,
The Worlds and the Ages:
"Choose well; your choice is
Brief and yet endless:
Here eyes do regard you,
In Eternity's stillness;
Here is all fulness,
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work, and despair not."

Is it not a piece of Psalmody that? It seems to me like a piece of marching-music of the great brave Teutonic Kindred as they march through the waste of Time,—through that section of Eternity they were appointed for; oben die Sterne and unten die Gräber, with the Stimmen der Geister, the Stimmen der Meister! Let us all sing it, and march on cheerful of heart. "We bid you hope"; so say the voices. Do they not? 353