chapter nineteen

1838–1840


Carlyle's annual migrations were like those of Mrs. Primrose from the blue room to the brown—from London to Scotland. Thither almost always, seldom anywhere else. He had meant to stay all through the summer in Chelsea, but an invitation from his friends, the Ferguses at Kirkcaldy, tempted him, and in the middle of August he went by Leith steamer to the old place where he had taught little boys, and fallen in love with Miss Gordon, and rambled with Edward Irving. It was "melodiously interesting," he said. He bathed on the old sands. He had a horse which carried him through the old familiar scenes. While at Kirkcaldy he crossed to Edinburgh and called on Jeffrey.

After a week or two in Fife he made for Scotsbrig, where news met him that £50 had been sent from America as a royalty on the edition of The French Revolution, and that more would follow. "What a touching thing is that!" he said. "One prays that the blessing of him that was rather ill off may be with them, these good friends of mine. Courage, my Goody! I begin to feel as if one might grow to be moderately content with a Lot like mine."

[When he returned to London] evidences were waiting for him that he was becoming a person of consequence notwithstanding. Presents had been sent by various admirers. There was good news from America. The English edition of The French Revolution was almost sold, and another would be called for, while there were numberless applications from review editors for articles if he would please to supply them.
Another £50 had come from Boston, and he had been meditating an indulgence for himself out of all this prosperity in the shape of a horse, nothing keeping him in health so much as riding.

Out of the suggestions made by editors for articles one especially had attracted Carlyle. Mill had asked him to write on Cromwell for the *London and Westminster*. There is nothing in his journals or letters to show that Cromwell had been
hitherto an interesting figure to him. An allusion in one of his Craigenputtoch papers shows that he then shared the popular prevailing opinions on the subject. He agreed, however, to Mill’s proposal, and was preparing to begin with it when the negotiation was broken off in a manner specially affronting. Mill had gone abroad, leaving Mr. Robertson to manage the Review. Robertson, whom Carlyle had hitherto liked, wrote to him coolly to say that he need not go on, for “he meant to do Cromwell himself.” Carlyle was very angry. It was this incident which determined him to throw himself seriously into the history of the Commonwealth, and to expose himself no more to cavalier treatment from “able editors.” His connection with the London and Westminster at once ended. From this moment he began to think seriously of a life of Oliver Cromwell as his next important undertaking, whatever he might have to do meanwhile in the way of lectures or shorter papers.

Want of books was his great difficulty, with such a subject on hand as the Commonwealth. His Cambridge friends had come to his help by giving him the use of the books in the University Library, and sending them up for him to read. Very kind on their part, as he felt, “considering what a sulky [fel]low I am.” But he needed resources of which he could avail himself more freely. The British Museum was, of course, open to him; but he required to have his authorities at hand, where his own writing-tackle lay round him, where he could refer to them at any moment, and for this purpose the circulating libraries were useless. New novels, travels, biographies, the annual growth of literature which today was and tomorrow was cast into the oven—these he could get; but the records of genuine knowledge, where the permanent thoughts and doings of mankind lay embalmed, were to be found for the most part only on the shelves of great institutions, could be read only there, and could not be taken out. Long before, when at Craigenputtoch, it had occurred to him that a county town like Dumfries, which maintained a gaol, might equally maintain a public library. He was once at Oxford in the library of All Souls’ College, one of the best in England, and one (in my day at least) so little used that, if a book was missed from its place, the whole college was in consternation. Carlyle, looking wistfully at the ranged folios,
exclaimed: "Ah books, books! you will have a poor account to give of yourselves at the day of judgment. Here have you been kept warm and dry, with good coats on your backs, and a good roof over your heads; and whom have ye made any better or any wiser than he was before?" Cambridge, more liberal than Oxford, did lend out volumes with fit securities for their safety, and from this source Carlyle obtained his Clarendon and Rushworth; but he determined to try whether a public lending library of authentic worth could not be instituted in London. He has been talked of vaguely as "unpractical." No one living had a more practical business talent when he had an object in view for which such a faculty was required. He set on foot an agitation. The end was recognised as good. Influential men took up the question, and it was carried through, and the result was the infinitely valuable institution known as the "London Library" in St. James's Square. Let the tens of thousands who, it is to be hoped, are "made better and wiser" by the books collected there remember that they owe the privilege entirely to Carlyle. The germ of it lay in that original reflection of his on the presence of a gaol and the absence of a library in Dumfries. His successful effort to realise it in London began in this winter of 1839.

Meanwhile a third remittance from America on the Revolution brought the whole sum which he had received from his Boston friends to £150. He felt it deeply, for as yet "not a sixpence could be realised here in one's own country." In acknowledging the receipt, he said that he had never received money of which he was more proud, "sent me . . . almost by miracle." He showed the draft to Fraser, his English publisher, and told him he ought to blush.

Few men cared less about such things than Carlyle did as long as penury was kept from his door. Apart from his business with the London Library, he was wholly occupied with the records of the Commonwealth, and here are the first impressions which he formed.

I have read a good many volumes about Cromwell and his time; I have a good many more to read. Whether a book will come of it or not, still more when such will come, are questions as yet. The pabulum this subject yields me is not very great; I find it far inferior in interest to my French subject: but on the whole I want to get
acquainted with England (a great secret to me always hitherto), and I may as well begin here as elsewhere. There are but two very remarkable men in the Period visible as yet: Cromwell and Mon­trose. The rest verge towards wearisomeness; indeed the whole sub­ject is Dutch-built, heavy-bottomed; with an internal fire and signif­icance indeed, but extremely wrapt in buckram and lead. We shall see.9

Seldom had Carlyle seemed in better spirits than now. For once his outer world was going well with him. He had occasional fits of dyspepsia, which, indeed, seemed to afflict him most when he had least that was real to complain of. He was disappointed about Montrose for one thing. He had intended, naturally enough as a Scotchman, to make a principal figure of Montrose, and had found that he could not, that it was impossible to discover what Montrose was really like.10 But the dyspepsia was the main evil—dyspepsia and London society, which interested him more than he would allow, and was the cause of the disorder.

Monckton Milnes had made his acquaintance, and invited him to breakfast. He used to say that, if Christ was again on earth, Milnes would ask Him to breakfast, and the Clubs would all be talking of the “good things” that Christ had said. But Milnes, then as always, had open eyes for genius, and reverence for it truer and deeper than most of his con­temporaries.

More important by far to Carlyle was the “certain Baring” with whom he was to dine at Bath House.11 It is the first notice of his introduction to the brilliant circle in which he was afterwards to be so intimate. Mr. Baring, later known as Lord Ashburton, became the closest friend that he had. Lady Harriet became his Gloriana, or Queen of Fairy Land, and exercised a strange influence over him for good and evil.12 But this lay undreamed of in the future, when he wrote his account of the dinner.

It was one of the most elevated things I had ever seen; Lords, Ladyships and other the like high personages, several of them auditors of mine in the last Lecturing season. The Lady of the House, one Lady Harriet Baring, I had to sit and talk with specially for a long long while; one of the cleverest creatures I have met with, full of mirth and spirit,—not very beautiful to look upon.13

And again, in another letter: “The Lady . . . kept me talk­ing an hour or more up stairs, ‘a cleva’ devil,’ belle-laide,
full of wit, and the most like a dame of quality of all I have yet seen."

The lectures had to be provided for, but the subject chosen, the Revolutions of Modern Europe, was one on which Carlyle could speak without special preparation. An English edition of the *Miscellany* was coming out at last, and money was to be paid for it. He was thus able to lie upon his oars till Cromwell or some other topic took active possession.
CARLYLE IN 1839. This left profile lithograph was made from a sketch done by D'Orsay in Lady Blessington's drawing room in May 1839. Carlyle described it as "a fine portrait . . . dashed off in some twenty minutes." D'Orsay's original sketch, dated May 1839, is now in the attic study of the Carlyle House. (Drawn by Alfred D'Orsay and engraved by J. Sartain; from a copy of the engraving in the editor's possession.)

May brought the lectures at the old rooms in Edwardes Street. They did not please Carlyle, and, perhaps, were not really among his fine utterances. In _The French Revolution_ he had given his best thoughts on the subject in his best manner. He could now only repeat himself, more or less rhetorically, with a varying text. Mrs. Carlyle herself did not
think that her husband was doing justice to himself. He was unwell for one thing. But the success was distinct as ever; the audience bursting into ejaculations of surprise and pleasure. The "Splendid!" "Devilish fines!" "Most trues!" all indicating that on their side there was no disappointment. His own account of the matter indicates far less satisfaction.

The Lectures . . . are over; with tolerable éclat, with a clear gain of very nearly £200, which latter is the only altogether comfortable part of the business. My audience was visibly more numerous than ever, and of more distinguished people; my sorrow in delivery was less, my remorse after delivery was much greater. I gave one very bad lecture (as I thought), the last but one; it was on the French Revolution. I was dispirited, in miserable health, my audience mainly Tory could not be expected to sympathize with me; in short, I felt, after it was over, "like a man that had been robbing henroosts." In which circumstance I, the day before my finale,—hired a swift horse, galloped out to Harrow and back again, went in [a] kind of rage to the room next day, and made, on Sansculottism itself, very considerably the nearest approach to a good Lecture they ever got out of me; carried the whole business glowing after me, and ended half an hour beyond my time with universal decisive applause, sufficient for the occasion.15

The "remorse" was genuine, for Carlyle in his heart disapproved of these displays and detested them. Yet he, too, had become aware of the strange sensation of seeing a crowd of people hanging upon his words, and yielding themselves like an instrument for him to play upon. There is an irresistible feeling of proud delight in such situations. If not intoxicated, he was excited; and Emerson writing at the same moment to press him to show himself in Boston, he did think for a second or two of going over for the autumn "to learn the business of extempore speaking."16 Had he gone it might have been the ruin of him, for he had all the qualities which with practice would have made him a splendid orator. But he was wise in time, and set himself to a worthier enterprise—not yet Cromwell, but something which stood in the way of Cromwell—and insisted on being dealt with before he could settle upon history. All his life he had been meditating on the problem of the working-man's existence in this country at the present epoch; how wealth was growing, but the human toilers grew none the better, mentally or bodily—not better, only more numerous, and liable, on any check to
trade, to sink into squalor and famine. He had seen the Glasgow riots in 1819. He had heard his father talk of the poor masons, dining silently upon water and water-cresses. His letters are full of reflections on such things, sad or indignant, as the humour might be. He was himself a working-man's son. He had been bred in a peasant home, and all his sympathies were with his own class. He was not a revolutionist; he knew well that violence would be no remedy; that there lay only madness and deeper misery. But the fact remained, portending frightful issues. The Reform Bill was to have mended matters, but the Reform Bill had gone by and the poor were none the happier. The power of the State had been shifted from the aristocracy to the mill-owners, and merchants, and shopkeepers. That was all. The handicraftsman remained where he was, or was sinking, rather, into an unowned Arab, to whom "freedom" meant freedom to work if the employer had work to offer him conveniently to himself, or else freedom to starve. The fruit of such a state of society as this was the Sansculottism on which he had been lecturing, and he felt that he must put his thoughts upon it in a permanent form. He had no faith in political remedies, in extended suffrages, recognition of "the rights of man," etc.—absolutely none. That was the road on which the French had gone; and, if tried in England, it would end as it ended with them—in anarchy, and hunger, and fury. The root of the mischief was the forgetfulness on the part of the upper classes, increasing now to flat denial, that they owed any duty to those under them beyond the payment of contract wages at the market price. The Liberal theory, as formulated in Political Economy, was that everyone should attend exclusively to his own interests, and that the best of all possible worlds would be the certain result. His own conviction was that the result would be the worst of all possible worlds, a world in which human life, such a life as human beings ought to live, would become impossible. People talked of Progress. To him there was no progress except "moral progress," a clearer recognition of the duties which stood face to face with every man at each moment of his life, and the neglect of which would be his destruction. He was appalled at the contrast between the principles on which men practically acted and those which on Sundays
they professed to believe; at the ever-increasing luxury in rich men's palaces, and the wretchedness, without hope of escape, of the millions without whom that luxury could not have been. Such a state of things, he thought, might continue for a time among a people naturally well disposed and accustomed to submission; but it could not last for ever. The Maker of the world would not allow it. The angry slaves of toil would rise and burn the palaces, as the French peasantry had burnt the châteaux. The only remedy was the old one—to touch the conscience or the fears of those whom he regarded as responsible. He felt that he must write something about all that, though it was not easy to see how or where. Such a message as he had to give would be welcome neither to Liberals nor Conservatives. The Political Economists believed that since the Reform Bill all was going as it should go, and required only to be let alone; the more the rich enjoyed themselves, the more employment there would be, and high and low would be benefited alike. The Noble Lords and gentry were happy in their hounds and their game-preservation, and had lost the sense that rank and wealth meant anything save privilege for idle amusement. Not to either of these, nor to their organs in the press, could Carlyle be welcome. He was called a Radical, and Radical he was, if to require a change in the souls, and hearts, and habits of life of men was to be a Radical. But perhaps no one in England more entirely disbelieved every single article of the orthodox Radical creed. He had more in common with the Tories than with their rivals, and was prepared, if such a strange ally pleased them, to let it so appear. "Guess what immediate project I am on," he wrote to his brother, when the lectures were over:

that of writing an Article on the working classes for the Quarterly! It is verily so: I offered to do the thing for Mill about a year ago; he durst not; I felt a kind of call and monition of duty to do it, wrote to Lockhart accordingly, was altogether invitingly answered, had a long interview with the man yesterday, found him a person of sense, goodbreeding, even kindness, and great consentaneity of opinion with myself on this matter, am to get books from him tomorrow; and so shall forthwith set about telling Conservatives a thing or two about the claims [,] condition, rights and mights of the working orders of men! Jane is very glad; partly from a kind of spite at the Blödsinnigkeit [idiocy] of Mill and his wooden set. The Radicals, as
they stand now, are dead and gone, I apprehend,—owing to their heartless stupidity on that very matter. . . . It is not to be out till Autumn[,] that being the time for "things requiring thought," as Lockhart says; I shall have much to read and inquire, but in fine I shall get the thing off my hands, and have my heart clear about it.

What came of this project will be seen. One result of it, however, was a singular relation which grew up between Carlyle and Lockhart. They lived in different circles; they did not meet often, or correspond often; but Carlyle ever after spoke of Lockhart as he seldom spoke of any man; and such letters of Lockhart’s to Carlyle as survive show a trusting confidence extremely remarkable in a man who was so chary of his esteem.

In general society Carlyle was mixing more and more, important persons seeking his acquaintance. He met Webster, the famous American, at breakfast one morning, and has left a portrait of this noticeable politician. “I will warrant him,” he says,

one of the stiffest logic-buffers and Parliamentary athletes anywhere to be met with in our world at present. A grim, tall broad-bottomed, yellow-skinned man, with brows like precipitous cliffs, and huge black dull weariest unweariable-looking eyes under them; amorphous projecting nose; and the angriest shut mou[th] I have anywhere seen;—a droop on the sides of the upper lip is quite mastiff-like, magnificen[t] to look upon, it is so quiet withal. I guess [I] should like ill to be that man’s nigger! However, he is a right clever man in his way; and has a husky sort of fun in him too;—drawls, [in] a handfast didactic manner, about “our republican institutions” &c &c, and so plays his p[art.]"

Another memorable notability Carlyle came across at this time, who struck him much, and the attraction was mutual—Connop Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. David’s, then under a cloud in the ecclesiastic world, as “suspect” of heresy. Of this great man more will be heard hereafter. Their first meeting was at James Spedding’s rooms in Lincoln’s Inn Fields; “very pleasant; free and easy; with windows flung up, and tobacco ad libitum.” He found the future bishop “a most sarcastic, sceptical, but strongheaded, strong-hearted man, whom I have a real liking for.” The orthodox side of the conversation was maintained, it seems, by Milnes, who “gave us dilettante Catholicism, and endured Thirlwall’s tobacco.”
One more pleasant incident befell Carlyle before the dog-days and the annual migration. He was known to wish for a horse, and yet to hesitate whether such an indulgence was permissible to a person financially situated as he was. Mr. Marshall, of Leeds, whose name has been already mentioned, heard of it; and Mr. Marshall's son appeared one day in Cheyne Row, with a message that his father had a mare for which he had no use, and would be pleased if Carlyle would accept her. The offer was made with the utmost delicacy. If he was leaving town, and did not immediately need such an article, they would keep her at grass till he returned. It was represented, in fact, as a convenience to them, as well as a possible pleasure to him. The gift was nothing in itself, for Mr. Marshall was a man of vast wealth; but it was a handsome sign of consideration and good-feeling, and was gratefully recognised as such. The mare became Carlyle's. She was called "Citoyenne," after The French Revolution. The expense would be something, but would be repaid by increase of health. Mrs. Carlyle said "it is ... like my 'buying a laying hen, and giving it to some deserving person;—accept it, dear!""

A still nearer friend had also been taking thought for his comfort. He was going to Scotland, and this year his wife was going with him. The faithful, thoughtful John had sent £30 privately to his brother Alick at Ecclefechan, to provide a horse and gig, that Carlyle and she might drive about together as with the old clatch at Craigenputtoch—a beautiful action on the part of John. They went north in the middle of July, going first to Nithsdale to stay with Mrs. Welsh at Templand. Mrs. Welsh, too, had been considering what she could do to gratify her son-in-law, and had invited his mother over from Scotsbrig to meet him. Mrs. Carlyle was not well at Templand, and could not much enjoy herself; but Carlyle was like a boy out of school. He and his old mother drove about in John's gig together, or wandered through the shrubberies, smoking their pipes together, like a pair of lovers—as indeed they were. Later on, when he grew impatient again, he called the life which he was leading "sluggish ignoble solitude," but it was as near an approach as he ever knew to what is meant by happiness. This summer nothing went wrong with him. When the Templand visit

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was over, he removed to Scotsbrig and there stayed, turning over his intended article.

The holiday lasted two months only. *Wilhelm Meister* was now to be republished, and he was wanted at home. The railway had just been opened from Preston to London; and on this return journey he made his first experience of the new mode of locomotion.

The whirl thro' the confused darkness on those steam wings was one of the strangest things I have experienced. Hissing and dashing on, one knew not whither, we saw the gleam of towns in the distance, unknown towns; we went over the tops of towns (one town or village I saw clearly with its chimney heads vainly stretching up towards us); *under* the stars, not *under* the clouds but among them; out of one vehicle then into another, snorting, roaring we flew;—the likeliest thing to a Faust's flight on the Devil's mantle[; or] as if some huge steam nightbird had flung you on its back, and were sweeping thro' unknown space with you, most probably towards London!  

A pleasant surprise waited for Carlyle on his return to London—an article upon him by Sterling in the *Westminster Review*. Sterling's admiration was steadily growing—admiration alike for his friend's intellect and character. It was the first public acknowledgment of Carlyle's "magnitude" which had been made. Sterling's appreciation, when read now, rather seems to fall short of the truth than to exceed it. But now is now, and then was then—and a man's heart beats when he learns, for the first time, that a brother man admires and loves him. If Carlyle was proud, he had no vanity, and he allowed no vanity to grow in him. He set himself to his article for Lockhart.

Under these conditions, and riding every day, Carlyle contrived to finish without fret or fume the hypothetical article for the *Quarterly*—for the *Quarterly* as had been proposed, yet, as it grew under his hand, he felt but too surely that in those pages it could find no place. Could the Tory party five-and-forty years ago have accepted Carlyle for their prophet, they would not be where they are now. Heat and motion, the men of science tell us, are modes of the same force, which may take one form or the other, but not both at once. So it is with social greatness. The Noble Lord may live in idleness and luxury, or he may have political power, but he must choose between them. If he prefer the first, he
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will not keep the second. Carlyle saw too plainly that for him in that quarter there would be no willing audience.

It proved as he expected with the Quarterly. Lockhart probably agreed with every word that Carlyle had written, but to admit a lighted rocket of that kind into the Conservative arsenal might have shattered the whole concern. "The Tory Quarterly Review people kept it for a week; and then, seemingly not without reluctance, sent it back, saying, 'We dare not.' "24 It was then shown to Mill, who was unexpectedly delighted with it. The Westminster Review was coming to an end. Mill was now willing to publish Chartism "in his final Number, as a kind of final shout; that he might sink like a Vengeur battle-ship, with a broadside at the water's-edge!"25 Carlyle might have consented; but his wife, and his brother John, who was in England, insisted that the thing was too good for a fate so ignoble. The Westminster Review was nothing to him, that he should sink along with it. This was his own opinion too, which for Mill's sake he had been ready to waive. "In short, I think of publishing this piece, which I have called 'Chartism,' which is all about the Poor and their rights and wrongs, as a little separate Book. . . . Fraser will print it; 'halving' the profits. It may be out, probably, by the end of this month."26

The book was not long, the printers were expeditious, and before the year was out Chartism was added to the list of Carlyle's published works. The sale was rapid, an edition of a thousand copies being sold immediately—and the large lump of leaven was thrown into the general trough to ferment there and work as it could. Meister, the most unlike it of all imaginable creations, was republished at the same time. The collected Miscellanies were also passing through the press.

Chartism was loudly noticed; "considerable reviewing . . . but very daft reviewing."27 Men wondered; how could they choose but wonder, when a writer of evident power stripped bare the social disease, told them that their remedies were quack remedies, and their progress was progress to dissolution? The Liberal journals, finding their "formulas" disbelieved in, clamoured that Carlyle was unorthodox; no Radical, but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Yet what he said was true, and could not be denied to be true. "They
approve generally . . . ,” he said, “but regret very much that I am—a Tory! Stranger Tory, in my opinion, has not been fallen in with in these latter generations.”28 Again a few weeks later (February 11): “The people are beginning to discover (wise men as they are!) that I am not a ‘Tory,’ ah no; but one of the deepest tho’ perhaps the quietest of all the radicals now extant in the world; a thing productive of small comfort to several persons! ‘They have said, and they will say, and let them say’ &c. &c.”29

He, too, had had his say. The burden on his soul which lay between him and other work had been thrown off. Now was time to take up the Commonwealth in earnest; but other subjects were again rising between Carlyle and the Commonwealth. One more, and this the final, course of lectures was to be delivered this spring; and it was to contain something of more consequence than its predecessors, something which he could wish to preserve. By the side of laissez-faire and “democracy” in politics there was growing up a popular philosophy analogous to it. The civilisation of mankind, it was maintained (though Mr. Buckle had not yet risen to throw the theory into shape), expanded naturally with the growth of knowledge.30 Knowledge spread over the world like light, and though great men, as they were called, might be a few inches taller than their fellows, and so catch the rays a few days or years before the rest, yet the rays did not come from them, but from the common source of increasing illumination. Great men were not essentially superior to common men. They were the creatures of their age, not the creators of it, scarcely even its guides; and the course of things would have been very much the same if this or that person who had happened to become famous had never existed. Such a view was flattering to the millions who were to be invited to self-government. It was the natural corollary of the theory that all men were equal and possessed an equal right to have their opinions represented. It was the exact opposite of the opinion of Carlyle, who held that the welfare of mankind depended more on virtue than on scientific discoveries; and that scientific discoveries themselves which were worth the name were achievable only by truthfulness and manliness. The immense mass of men he believed to be poor creatures, poor in heart and poor in intel-
lect, incapable of making any progress at all if left to their own devices, though with a natural loyalty, if not distracted into self-conceit, to those who were wiser and better than themselves. Every advance which humanity had made was due to special individuals supremely gifted in mind and character, whom Providence sent among them at favoured epochs. It was not true, then or ever, that men were equal. They were infinitely unequal—unequal in intelligence, and still more unequal in moral purpose. So far from being able to guide or govern themselves, their one chance of improvement lay in their submitting to their natural superiors, either by their free will, or else by compulsion. This was the principle which he proposed to illustrate in a set of discourses upon "Heroes and Hero-Worship."

I am beginning seriously to meditate my Course of Lectures, and have even, or seem to have, the primordium of a subject in me,—tho' not nameable as yet. And the dinners, routs, callers, confusions; inevitable to a certain length in this mad summer quarter here! Ay de mi, I wish I were far from it: no health lies for me in that, for body or for soul; welfare, at least the absence of ill-fare and semi-delirium is possible for me in solitude only! Solitude is indeed sad as Golgotha; but it is not mad like Bedlam. "O, the Devil burn it, there is no pleasing of you, strike where one will."

"The Devil burn it, there is no pleasing of you!" was the saying of an Irish corporal who was flogging some ill-deserver. Whether he hit him high or hit him low, the victim was equally dissatisfied. Carlyle complained when alone, and complained when driven into the world; dinner parties cost him his sleep, damaged his digestion, damaged his temper. Yet when he went into society no one enjoyed it more or created more enjoyment. The record of adventures of this kind alternates with groans over the consequent sufferings. He was the keenest of observers; the game was not worth the candle to him, but he gathered out of it what he could. Here is an account of a dinner at the Stanleys' in Dover Street.

There at the dear cost of a shattered set of nerves, and head set whirling for the next eight and forty hours, I did see Lords and Lions. Lord Holland and Lady, Normanby &c; and then for soirée up stairs, Morpeth, Lansdown[e], French Guizot, the Queen of Beauty &c. Nay Pickwick too was of the dinner-party, I mean Dickens; tho' they did not seem to heed him over much. He is a fine little fellow, Boz, as I think; clear blue intelligent eyes, eyebrows
that he arches amazingly, large protrusive rather loose mouth,—a face of the most extreme mobility, which he shuttles about, eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all, in a very singular manner while speaking; surmount this with a loose coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed rather à la d’Orsay than well: this is Pickwick;—for the rest a quiet shrewd-looking little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is, and what others are.\(^\text{33}\)

Letters came to him from strangers low and high who were finding in his writings guidance through their own intellectual perplexities. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, wrote that “ever since I had read your History of the French Revolution, I have longed to become acquainted with you; because I found in that book an understanding of the true nature of history, such as it delighted my heart to meet with. . . . The wisdom of the book, as well as its singular eloquence and poetry, was such a treasure to me as I have rarely met with, and am not at all likely to meet with again.”\(^\text{34}\) A poor Paisley weaver thanked him, in a yet more welcome if ill-spelt missive, for having taught him that “man does not live by demonstration, but by faith. The world had been to him for a long time a deserted temple. Carlyle’s writings had restored the significance of things to him, and his voice had been as the voice of a beneficent spiritual father.”\(^\text{35}\) This was worthier homage than the flattering worship of London frivolity which injured health and temper. “I pass my days under the abominablest pressure of physical misery,—a man foiled[?]! I mean to ride diligently for three complete months, try faithfully whether in that way my insupportable burden and imprisonment cannot be alleviated into at least the old degree of endurance; and failing that,—I shall pray God to aid me in the requisite decisive measures; for positively my life is black and hateful to me.”\(^\text{36}\)

“Physical misery” was not the worst, for it was an old failing of Carlyle’s that when he was uncomfortable he could not keep it to himself, and made more of it than the reality justified. Long before, when with the Bullers at Kinnaird, he had terrified his family with accounts of his tortures from dyspepsia, and had told them afterwards they should have known that when he cried “murder” he was not always being killed.\(^\text{37}\) His wife suffered perhaps more than he from colds and pains and sleeplessness; when her husband was
dilating upon his own sorrows, he often forgot hers, or made them worse by worry. Charming, witty, brilliant, affectionately playful as she naturally was, she had “a hot temper,” as Carlyle had said, and a tongue, when she was angry, like a cat’s, which would take the skin off at a touch. Here is a brief entry in Carlyle’s Journal significant of much.38

April 23, 1840.—Work ruined for this day;—imprudently expressed complaints in the morning filled all the sky with clouds;—portending grave issues? or only inane ones? I am sick, and very miserable. I have kept riding for the last two months; my health seems hardly to improve. I have been throwing my Lectures upon paper; Lectures “On Heroes.” I know not what will come of them: in twelve days we shall see! Miscellanies out; and Chartism (second thousand). . . . If I were a little healthier, ah me, all were well!

Among such elements as these grew the magnificent addresses on great men and their import in this world. Fine flowers will grow where the thorns are sharpest; and the cactus does not lose its prickles, though planted in the kindliest soil. London did not suit Carlyle, but would any other place have suited him better?

Of the delivery of this course of lectures we have a more particular account than of the rest, for he wrote regularly, while they were proceeding, to his mother. The first was on the Hero as God, Odin being the representative figure; Odin, and not Another, for obvious reasons; but in this, as in everything, Carlyle was Norse to the heart. [The second lecture was on the Hero as Prophet.]

It was on Mahomet; I had bishops and all kinds of people among my hearers; I gave them to know that the poor Arab had points about him which it were good for all of them to imitate; that probably they were more of quacks than he,—that, in short, it was altogether a new kind of thing they were hearing today! The people seemed greatly astonished, and greatly pleased; I vomited it forth on them like wild Annandale grapeshot.39

The third and fourth lectures were on the Hero as Poet, Dante and Shakespeare being the representatives; and the Hero as Priest, with Luther and Knox. [The fifth lecture was on the Hero as Man of Letters, with Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns taken as models; the sixth and last presented the Hero as King, and discussed Cromwell, Napoleon, and Modern Revolution.] This was Carlyle’s last appearance on the platform. He never spoke in public again till twenty-six
years after, when he addressed the students in Edinburgh. His better nature disapproved of these exhibitions.

He had thought, as has been seen, of repeating the experiment in America. He knew well enough that if he resolutely tried he could succeed. But to succeed he knew also that he would have to part with his natural modesty, the noblest part of him, as of every man. He must part, too, with his love of truth. The orator, in the rush and flow of words, cannot always speak truth, cannot even try to speak truth; for he speaks to an audience which reacts upon him, and he learns as he goes on to utter, not the facts as he knows them to be, but the facts shaped and twisted to please his hearers. He shut his ears therefore to the treacherous siren, and turned back to his proper function. The lectures on Heroes were to be written out and made into a book. This was the occupation which he had laid out for himself for the summer; and there was to be no change to the North till “this bit of work was accomplished.”

In the midst of his work he was still pushing forward the London Library. On June 24, a meeting was held at the Freemasons’ Tavern. Lord Eliot was in the chair; Lords Montague, Howick, and Lyttelton—Milman, Milnes, Cornwall Lewis, John Forster, Helps, Bulwer, Gladstone, James Spedding, George Venables—all men who were then in the first rank, or afterwards rose into it, were gathered together by Carlyle’s efforts. Thirlwall warmly interested himself. Carlyle represented that, of the innumerable evils of England, “there was no remediable worse one than its condition as to books,” “a condition worthier of Dahomey than of England.”

He could bear his mournful testimony that he never, in his whole life, had for one month complete access to books—such access as he would have had in Germany, in France, or anywhere else in the civilised earth. Books were written, not for rich men, but for all men. Every human being had by the nature of the case a right to hear what other wise human beings had spoken to him. It was one of the rights of man, and a cruel injustice if denied.

The defect grew out of the condition of the English mind. England hitherto had supposed that the Bible had contained everything which it was indispensable for man to know; and Bibles were within the reach of the humblest. But England
JOHN FORSTER. One of Carlyle’s closest friends, as well as one of Dickens’s, with whom he is more usually associated. Carlyle chose Forster to be, with his own brother John, one of the two original executors of his will. On this photograph Carlyle wrote: “John Forster (man of letters, &c &c),—very like.” (Courtesy of the Columbia University Libraries.)
was growing, growing it knew not into what, but visibly needing further help. The meeting agreed unanimously that a library should be established. Subscription lists were opened and swiftly filled. Competent persons were chosen to collect books; a house was purchased. The thing was done, and done most admirably, yet Carlyle himself remained miserable as ever. “Alas,” he wrote on July 3, “I get so dyspeptic, melancholic, half-mad in the London Summer, all courage to do anything but hold my peace fades away; I dwindle into the pusillanimity of the ninth part of a tailor; feel as I had nothing I could do but ‘die in my hole like a poisoned rat.’ ” It was true, indeed, that he had a special reason for lamentation at that particular moment. He had been summoned to serve as a special juryman at Westminster. He appealed to Buller to deliver him. Buller told him there was a way of escape if he liked to use it—“he could be registered as a Dissenting preacher.” He had to go, and the worst of it was he had to go for nothing, “neither of my cases coming on,” and the futility was a text for fresh indignation.

If destiny in the shape of officials afflicted with one hand, it sometimes brought anodynes in the other. One evening, when he came home from his walk, he found Tennyson sitting with Mrs. Carlyle in the garden, smoking comfortably. He admired and almost loved Tennyson. He says:

A fine large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggyheaded man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free-and-easy: who swims, outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an inarticulate element of tranquil chaos and tobacco-smoke; great now and then when he does emerge: a most restful, brotherly, solidhearted man.

Such a visit was the best of medicine.

The summer number of the Edinburgh Review was announced. He had heard that he was to be “annihilated,” and that Macaulay was to be the executioner—the real writer was Herman Merivale—and it was under this false impression that he remarked on the article when he read it: “Macaulay’s Article is not so bad; on the whole rather interesting to me, and flattering rather than otherwise.”

He was undeceived about the authorship of this article. “I was glad to hear” this, he said; of Macaulay he had still considerable hopes. The Quarterly had also an article, the
writer being William Sewell, a High Church leader on his own account, and then a rising star in the Oxford world.\footnote{47} Merivale had been ponderous and politico-economic; Sewell was astonishing, as indeed the whole Oxford movement was, to Carlyle.

Reputation in America brought visitors to Cheyne Row from that country—a young, unnamed Boston lady, among others, whom he called a “diseased rosebud.”\footnote{48} Happily America yielded something else than “sweet sensibility.” It yielded handsome sums of money; and, before the summer was over, he had received from that quarter as much as £400. There was an honourable sense across the Atlantic that, although novelists etc. might be fair prey, Carlyle ought to be treated honestly. About money there was no more anxiety.

It was now August. The Lectures on Heroes were by this time nearly written out. He had taken no holiday; but, as the end was now in sight, he allowed himself a week’s riding tour in Sussex on “Citoyenne.” Herstmonceaux and Julius Hare’s parsonage was the furthest point which he reached, returning without misadventure by Tunbridge and Sevenoaks. He rode better than his loose seat seemed to promise. Mrs. Carlyle described to us, some years after, in her husband’s presence, his setting out on this expedition; she drew him in her finest style of mockery—his cloak, his knapsack, his broadbrimmed hat, his preparation of pipes, etc.—comparing him to Dr. Syntax.\footnote{49} He laughed as loud as any of us: it was impossible not to laugh; but it struck me, even then, that the wit, however brilliant, was rather untender.

On August 23, late in the afternoon, he had substantially finished his work, and he went out, as he always did on these occasions, to compose himself by a walk.

the tea was up before I would stir from the spot; it was towards sunset when I first got out into the air, with the feeling of a finished man. Finished . . . in more than one sense! Eviting crowds and highways, I went along Battersea Bridge, and thence by a wondrous path, across cow-fields, mud-ditches, river-embankments, over a waste expanse of what attempted to pass for country,—wondrous enough in the darkening dusk, especially as I had never been there before, and the very road was uncertain! I had left my watch and purse; I had a good stick in my hand. Boat-people sat drinking about the Red House; Steamers snorting about the river, each with a lantern at their nose; old women sat in strange old cottages, trim-
ming their evening fire; bewildered-looking mysterious coke furnaces (with a very bad smell) glowed, at one place, I knew not why; Windmills stood silent; blackguards, whores and Miscellanei sauntered; harmless all; Chelsea lights burnt many-hued bright, over water, in the distance,—under the great sky of silver, under the great still Twilight: so I wandered, full of thoughts, or of things that I could not think.50

Ruskin himself, when working most deliberately, never drew a more exquisite picture in words than this unstudied reflection of a passing experience. In such mood the lectures were completed, and, as usual, Carlyle was entirely dissatisfied with them.

The hope had clung to him of being still able to go to Scotland in the early autumn. John Carlyle was there at this time—an additional attraction. His plan had been “to take shipping, to find again there was an everlasting fresh sea water, rivers, mountains, simple peaceful men; that God’s universe was not an accursed, dusty, deafening distraction of a cockneydom.” But the weather broke up early this season, and he found that he must stay where he was.

When the winter set in, Carlyle was still at home, deep in Commonwealth tracts and history. It was stiff work; he did not find he could make “great progress in this new enterprise.” “My interest in it threatens sometimes to decline and die!” He found it “not tenth part such a subject as the French Revolution; nor can the art of man ever make such a Book out of it.”51