1846–1849


Ireland had long been an anxious subject of Carlyle's meditations. It was the weak point of English constitutional government. The Constitution was the natural growth of the English mind and character. We had imposed it upon the Irish in the confident belief that a system which answered among ourselves must be excellent in itself, and be equally suited for every other country and people. Carlyle's conviction was that even for England it was something temporary in itself, an historical phenomenon which in time would cease to answer its purpose even where it originated, and that Ireland was the weak spot, where the failure was first becoming evident. He had wished to see the unfortunate island with his own eyes, now particularly when its normal wretchedness was accentuated by the potato blight and famine. He had no present leisure for a detailed survey, but he had resolved at least to look at it if only for a few days.

On the last of August he left Scotsbrig, went to Dumfries, and thence made a hasty visit to Craigenputtoch, which was now his own property, and where there was business to be attended to. From Dumfries he went by coach to Ayr and Ardrossan, from which a steamer carried him at night to Belfast. Gavan Duffy and John Mitchel had arranged to meet him at Drogheda. The drive thither from Belfast was full of instruction; the scene all new to him; the story of the country written in ruined cabins and uncultivated fields, the air poisoned with the fatal smell of the
poisoned potato. He had an agreeable companion on the coach in a clever young Dublin man, who pleased him well. Drogheda must have had impressive associations for him. There is no finer passage in his *Cromwell* than his description of the stern business once enacted there. But he did not stay to look for traces of Oliver. He missed his two friends through a mistake at the Post Office, and hurried on by railway to Dublin, where he stopped at the Imperial Hotel in Sackville Street. Here for a day or two he was alone. He had come for a glance at Ireland, and that was all which he got.

The Young Irelanders had waited at Drogheda, and only discovered their guest at last at Dundrum, to which he had gone to some address which Mr. Duffy had given him. There he was entertained at a large dinner-party. "Young Ireland almost in mass." The novelist Carleton was there, "a genuine bit of Ould Ireland." They "talked, and dined, and drank liquids of various strength." Carlyle was scornful. The Young Irelanders fought fiercely with him for their own views; but they liked him and he liked them, wild and unhopeful as he knew their projects to be. He could not see even the surface of Ireland without recognising that there was a curse upon it of some kind, and these young enthusiasts were at least conscious of the fact, and were not crying "Peace" when there was none. The next day he dined with one of them; then, perhaps, the most notorious. "Poor Mitchell!" Carlyle said afterwards, "I told him he would most likely be hanged, but I told him too they could not hang the immortal part of him."

On the last day of his stay he was taken for a drive, one of the most beautiful in the world, by the Dargle and Powderscourt, and round through the Glen of the Downs to Bray. Before entering the Dublin mountains, they crossed the low rich meadows of the old Pale, the longest in English occupation, a fertile oasis in the general wretchedness. I have heard that he said, looking over the thick green grass and well-trimmed fences and the herds of cattle fattening there, "Ah, Duffy, there you see the hoof of the bloody Saxon." This was his final excursion, a pleasant taste in the mouth to end with. The same evening his friends saw him on board the steamer at Kingstown; and in the early
morning of September 9 he was sitting smoking a cigar before the door of his wife's uncle's house in Liverpool till the household should awake and let him in.

He had looked on Ireland, and that was all; but he had seen enough to make intelligible to him all that followed. When he came again, three years later, the bubble had burst. Europe was in revolution; the dry Irish tinder had kindled, and a rebellion which was a blaze of straw had ended in a cabbage garden. Duffy, Mitchel, and others of that bright Dundrum party had stood at the bar to be tried for treason. Duffy narrowly escaped. The rest were exiled, scattered over the world, and lost to Ireland for ever. Mitchel has lately died in America. The "immortal part" of him still works in the Phoenix Park and in dynamite conspiracies; what will come of it has yet to be seen.

In London, when he was again settled there, he had nothing of importance to attend to. No fresh work had risen upon him. There had been trouble with servants. The establishment at Cheyne Row consisted of a single maid-of-all-work, and to find a woman who would take such a place, and yet satisfy a master and mistress so sensitive to disorder, material or moral, was no easy matter. Mrs. Carlyle has related her afflictions on this score; just then they had been particularly severe, and she had been worried into illness. The "fame" from Cromwell had made Carlyle himself a greater object of curiosity than ever. He did not like being an object of curiosity. "Yesternight there came a bevy of Americans from Emerson; one Margaret Fuller the chief figure of them: a strange lilting lean old-maid, not nearly such a bore as I expected."

Margaret Fuller, then on her way to Italy to be married to a Count Ossoli there, and to be afterwards tragically drowned, has left an account of this meeting with Carlyle, and being an external view of him and by a clever woman, it deserves a place here. Her first evening at Cheyne Row, she says, "delighted" her. Carlyle "was in a very sweet humour,—full of wit and pathos, without being overbearing and oppressive." She was "carried away with the rich flow of his discourse; and the hearty, noble earnestness of his personal being brought back the charm which once was upon his writing, before she wearied of it." She ad-
mired his Scotch dialect, "his way of singing his great full sentences, so that each one was like the stanza of a narrative ballad." "He talked of the present state of things in England, giving light, witty sketches of the men of the day . . . and some sweet, homely stories he told of things he had known among the Scotch peasantry. . . . There never was anything so witty as his description of ——— ————." It was enough to kill one with laughing." Carlyle "is not ashamed to laugh, when he is amused, but goes on in a cordial human fashion."

On a second visit the humour was less sweet, though "more brilliant," and Miss Fuller was obliged to disagree with everything that he said.

The worst of hearing Carlyle [she says, and she is very correct in this] is that you cannot interrupt him. I understand the habit and power of haranguing have increased very much upon him, so that you are a perfect prisoner when he has once got hold of you. To interrupt him is a physical impossibility. If you get a chance to remonstrate for a moment, he raises his voice and bears you down. True, he does you no injustice, and, with his admirable penetration, sees the disclaimer in your mind, so that you are not morally delinquent; but it is not pleasant to be unable to utter it.

This was not the last meeting, for the Carlyles in turn spent an evening with their new American acquaintances. Mazzini was there, whom Miss Fuller admired especially, and had perceived also to be "a dear friend of Mrs. C."

Mazzini's presence, she writes, "gave the conversation a turn to 'progress' and ideal subjects, and C. was fluent in invectives on all our 'rose-water imbecilities.' . . . Mazzini, after some vain efforts to remonstrate, became very sad. Mrs. C. said to me, 'These are but opinions to Carlyle; but to Mazzini, who has given his all, and helped bring his friends to the scaffold, in pursuit of such subjects, it is a matter of life and death.'"

All Carlyle's talk, that evening, was a defence of mere force,—success the test of right;—if people would not behave well, put collars round their necks;—find a hero, and let them be his slaves, &c. It was very Titanic, and anti-celestial. I wish the last evening had been more melodious. However, I bid Carlyle farewell with feelings of the warmest friendship and admiration. We cannot feel otherwise to a great and noble nature, whether it harmonize with our own or not. I never appreciated the work he has done for
his age till I saw England. I could not. You must stand in the shadow of that mountain of shams, to know how hard it is to cast light across it.\textsuperscript{5}

Cheyne Row being made uncomfortable by change of servants, an invitation to Carlyle and his wife to stay at the Grange was accepted without objection on either side. Objections on that score were not to be raised any more. Mrs. Carlyle liked old Lord and Lady Ashburton well, and the Grange was one of the pleasantest houses in England. But it proved to be one of the great autumn gatherings which were a mere reproduction of London society. The visit lasted a fortnight, and gave little pleasure to either of them. The men were shooting all day; the women dispersed to their rooms in the forenoon, met at luncheon, strolled or rode in the afternoon; none of them \textit{did} anything, and Carlyle was a fish out of water.

The Grange was Lord Ashburton's, his son, Mr. Baring, and Lady Harriet living (as has been seen), when not in London or Addiscombe, at Bay House, near Alverstoke. Mrs. Carlyle, after the Grange visit, became very ill, confined to bed for three weeks with cough and incessant headache. The new servant did not understand her business. Carlyle himself was "very \textit{idle}, reading nothing but wearisome trivialities, and not writing at all."\textsuperscript{6} Lady Harriet, when Mrs. Carlyle became able to move, proposed that she and her husband should spend a month with her at Bay House for change of air. Mr. Baring had many engagements, and for part of the time she would be alone. Carlyle, writing to his brother about it, said that he did not regard this scheme "as quite unquestionable," and so had rather held back, but "Jane, having engaged for it, will go thro' with the affair."\textsuperscript{7} Lady Harriet was most attentive; she secured them a separate compartment on the railway. Her carriage was waiting at the station with rugs, wrappings, and hot-water bottles. They went in the middle of January.

February brought other visitors, Buller, Milnes, etc. Lady Anne Charteris, who lived near Bay House, came often to sit with Mrs. Carlyle and play chess with her. On the 15th, when the month was near out, he could send a good account to his mother. "Jane has greatly improved in
health; indeed she is now about as well as usual; and we hope may now do well henceforth.”

Ireland weighed heavily on his thoughts. Each post brought news this spring of a land stricken with death. He had seen the place, and could realise what was passing there. Tens of thousands were perishing, and the wretched people, having lost their potatoes, were refusing even to plough. “They say, ‘Why should we raise a crop? Our Landlords will come and take it all; we shall get fed by the Government any way! . . . ’ On the whole, I think there never was seen such a scene as that of Ireland.” He longed to write something on it, but felt that he did not yet see through the problem. Nay, he believed an equal catastrophe lay over England herself, if she did not mend her ways. It was to this that he must next direct himself, when he could determine how; but there was no longer any immediate need to write anything. He would pause and consider. Frederick was still far off, nearer subjects were more pressing.

With the hot weather came a visit to Addiscombe—visits to the Barings, at one place or another, continually recurring, in which Mrs. Carlyle was as often as possible included. There is nothing to be said, save that Lady Harriet’s attentions to her were unremitting. Carlyle himself was still what he called idle, i.e., incessantly reading all kinds of books, and watching the signs of the times. At the end of July he took his wife to Matlock for change of air. At Matlock they were joined by the now famous W. E. Forster, then one of his ardent admirers, and accompanied him to his house at Rawdon, whence Carlyle sent his mother, as usual, an account of his adventures.

He might now have had his choice among the great houses of the land if he had cared to visit them, but he steadily reserved every available autumn for his mother. The week at Rawdon being over, his wife went home, and [in August] he made for Scotsbrig, pausing at Manchester with Miss Jewsbury and her brother Frank to see iron works and cotton mills; to talk with some of the leaders of the working men, who were studying his writings with passionate interest, and himself to be stared at in the Jewsbury drawing-room by the idle and curious. The most in-
teresting of his Manchester adventures was a day at Rochdale, when he made acquaintance with Mr. Jacob Bright and his distinguished brother.

The Mills, O the fetid fuzzy, deafening ill-ventilated mills! And, in Sharp's cyclopean Smithy, do you remember the poor "Grinders"? Sitting underground, in a damp dark place, some dozen of them: over their screeching stone-cylinders; from every cylinder a sheet of yellow fire issuing, the principal light of the place;—and the men, I was told, and they themselves knew it, and "did not mind it," were all or mostly killed before their time, the lungs being ruined by the metal and stone dust! Those poor fellows, in their paper caps, with their roaring grindstones and their yellow crie flammes of fire, all grinding themselves so quickly to death, will never go out of my memory.—In signing my name, as I was made to do, on quitting that Sharp Establishment, whose name, think you, stood next, to be succeeded by mine? In a fine flowing character, JENNY LIND'S! Dickens and the other Player Squadron (wanting Forster, I think) stood on the same page. Adieu to Manchester, and its poor grinders and spinners! I will tell you about Bright and Brightdom and the Rochdale Bright Mill, some other day. Jacob Bright, the younger man, and actual manager at Rochdale, rather pleased me: a kind of delicacy in his heavy features when you saw them by daylight,—at all events, a decided element of "hero-worship," which of course went for much! But John Bright, the Anti-cornlaw Member, who had come across to meet me, with his squat stout body, with his cock-nose and pugnacious eyes, and Barclay-Fox Quaker collar,—John and I discorded in our views not a little! And in fact the result was that I got to talking, occasionally in the Annandale accent, and communicated large masses of my views to the Brights and Brightesses, and shook peaceable Brightdom as with a passing earthquake,—and I doubt left a very questionable impression of myself there! The poor young ladies (Quaker or Ex-Quaker), with their "abolition of Capital Punishment"—Ach Gott! I had a great remorse of it all that evening; but now begin almost to think I served them right. Any way, we cannot help it. So there it, and Lancashire in general, may lie, for the present.¹¹

At Scotsbrig, when he reached it, he sank into what he called "stagnation and magnetic sleep." "Grey hazy dispiritment, fit for nothing but tobacco and silence." "In my own country I am as solitary as in a foreign land; and have more than ever, in looking over it, the feelings of a ghost!" Even with his mother he could talk less freely than usual, for he found her "terribly sensitive on the Semitic side of things,"¹² and he was beginning to think that he must write something about that—the "Exodus from Hounds-
JOHN BRIGHT. Victorian reformer, manufacturer, and M.P. Carlyle visited the Rochdale mill owned by Bright and his brother Jacob in 1847. Sparks flew at this encounter between two of the most self-willed of contemporaries. "But John Bright, the Anti-cornlaw Member," Carlyle wrote to Jane in Chelsea on 13 September, "who had come across to meet me, with his squat stout body, with his cock-nose and pugnacious eyes, and Barclay-Fox Quaker collar,—John and I discorded in our views not a little! And in fact the result was that I got to talking, occasionally in the Annandale accent, and communicated large masses of my views to the Brights and Brightesses, and shook peaceable Brightdom as with a passing earthquake,—and I doubt left a very questionable impression of myself there!" (Photograph by W. and D. Downey, courtesy of the Columbia University Libraries.)
ditch,” as he termed it, being a first essential step towards all improvement. The news from Ireland disgusted him, “Meagher of the Sword” talking open treason.

He wandered about the moors at night, “the driving clouds and moaning winds my only company.” Even these were not impressive, “for my heart is shrunk into its cell, and refuses to be impressed.” He “said silently to the muddy universe, however, ‘Yes, thou art true, then; the fact is no better than so; let me recognise the fact, and admit it and adopt it.’”

He had reasons for uneasiness besides the state of the universe. His wife had been ill again. Lady Harriet Baring, hearing she was alone in Cheyne Row, had carried her off to Addiscombe, and little guessing the state of her mind, and under the impression that she was hypochondriacal, had put her under a course of bracing. She wanted wine when she was exhausted; Lady Harriet thought wine unwholesome. She was not allowed to go to bed when tortured with headache. She suffered from cold, and lighted a fire in her bedroom. Fires were not allowed at Addiscombe so early in the autumn, and the housemaid removed the coals. Lady Harriet meant only to be kind, but was herself heaping fuel on a fire of a more dangerous sort. Carlyle himself was relieved when he heard that she was “home again, out of that constrained lodging.” “My mother’s rage,” he wrote, “has been considerable, ever since she heard of it, ‘That the puir craitur could na get a bit fire! Not so much as a bit of fire, ‘for a’ their grandeur!’ Money, if it exclude but things which are apt to go with the want of it, is of small value,—to the possessor or to others.” True enough! but one asks with wonder why he could not tell Lady Harriet plainly that, if she wished for his wife’s friendship, she must treat her differently; why he insisted on the continuance of an intimacy which could never become an affectionate one, instead of accepting and adopting the facts, as a condition of the mud in the universe. His mother was full of tenderness for her forlorn daughter-in-law. She insisted, when Carlyle was going home, on sending her “a pair of coarse knit stockings (tho’ I said you could never wear them), and two missionary Narratives, which even I could not have be[en] persuaded
FROUDE'S LIFE OF CARLYLE

to read!'" He was to write his wife's name in them at Chel­
sea, and say, "from her old withered Mother."16

Two bad nights before his departure sent him off in a
dreary condition. "Ah me!" he exclaimed. "My poor old
Mother; poor old Annandale, poor old Life in general!
And in that shattered state of the nerves all stands before
one with such a glaring ghastliness of hideous reality."17

It is curious that a man with such powerful practical
sense should have indulged such feelings. It was "the na­
ture of the beast," as he often said, but he was evidently
much disturbed. He was at home by the second week in
October, where an unexpected pleasure was waiting for
him. His friend Emerson had arrived from Boston. Be­
tween Emerson and him there had been affectionate cor­
respondence ever since they had met at Craigenputtoch.
Emerson had arranged for the publication of his books in
the United States, and had made his rights respected there.
He in turn had introduced Emerson's Essays to the English
world by a preface, and now Emerson had come in person
to show himself as a lecturer on English platforms. I re­
member this visit. I already knew Emerson by his writings;
I then learnt to know him personally, for he came to see us
at Oxford, and his conversation, perhaps unknown to him­
self, had an influence on my after life. On his first landing
he was a guest at Cheyne Row, and then went away to
Manchester. "I rather think," Carlyle wrote shortly after,
"his popularity is not very great hitherto; his doctrines are
too airy and thin for the solid practical heads of the Lan­
cashire region. We had immense talking with him here; but
found he did not give us much to chew the cud upon,—found
in fact that he came with the rake rather than the shovel.
He is a pure high-minded man, but I think his talent is not
quite so high as I had anticipated."18

A far more important thing was what Carlyle was next
to do himself, for as long as he was idle he was certain to
be miserable—and he had been idle now for more than a
year. He brought out another edition of his Miscellanies
this autumn. The French Revolution was going into an­
other edition also. For this and the Miscellanies he was
paid £600. So that he could say "I am pretty well in funds
at present,—not chased about, as I used to be, by the hag-
gard shade of Beggary; which is a great relief to me, now when I am growing old! I am very thankful for my poverty; and for my deliverance from it in good time."  

In January came an indispensable visit to the Barings. Mrs. Carlyle was to have gone, and they were to have stayed four weeks; but the winter was cold; she was feeble, and afraid of a chill. Wish to go she of course had none; and though Lady Harriet wrote warmly pressing letters, she insisted on remaining at home. Carlyle went, but if he describes his condition correctly, he could hardly have been an agreeable guest. For him there was no peace but in work, and life in such houses was organised idleness. To his mother he speaks of himself as wandering disconsolately on the shore watching the gangs of Portsmouth convicts; to his wife as "unslept, dyspeptic, bewildered." He was worried, he said, with "the idleness, the folly, the cackling and noise." Milnes was his best resource. Milnes had come, and the Taylors and Bullers and Bear Ellice, and the usual circle; but it would not do. He was sickly, dispirited, unwell. "We are a pretty society, but a distracted one. Ten days of such, with a cold to help, is about enough, I guess!"

Enough it proved; he could stand no more of it, and fled home. But it is impossible not to ask "What was Carlyle doing in such a galley?" Why was he there at all? It is with real relief that I approach the end of the half-enchanted state into which he had fallen after Cromwell. It had been a trying time, both for his wife and for him.

Some time while the Jew Bill was before Parliament, and the fate of it doubtful, Baron Rothschild wrote to ask him to write a pamphlet in its favour, and intimated that he might name any sum which he liked to ask as payment. I inquired how he had answered. "Well," he said, "I had to tell him it couldn't be; but I observed, too, that I could not conceive why he and his friends, who were supposed to be looking out for the coming of Shiloh, should be seeking seats in a Gentile legislature." I asked what Baron Rothschild had said to that. "Why," Carlyle said, "he seemed to think the coming of Shiloh was a dubious business, and that meanwhile, &c. &c."

The Journal had remained almost a blank for four years,
The Carlyles frequently met "Bear" Ellice, Whig politician and M.P., at the Ashburtons'. The nickname of "Bear" derives not from his ferocity but from his connection with the Northwest fur trade. Carlyle termed this photograph "very like." (Courtesy of the Columbia University Libraries.)
THE YEARS 1846–1849

only a few trifling notes having been jotted down in it, but it now contains a long and extremely interesting entry. The real Carlyle is to be especially looked for in this book, for it contains his dialogues with his own heart.

Schemes of Books (to be now set about? alas!)

Exodus from Houndsditch. That, alas! is impossible as yet; tho' it is the gist of all writings and wise books, I sometimes think; the goal to be wisely aimed at, as the first of all for us. Out of Houndsditch, indeed:—ah were we but out, and had our own along with us! But they that come out hitherto, come in a state of brutal nakedness; scandalous mutilation; and impartial bystanders say sorrowfully, "Return, rather; it is better even to return!"23

The Exodus from Houndsditch Carlyle saw to be then impossible—impossible; and yet the essential preliminary of true spiritual recovery. The "Hebrew old clothes"24 were attached so closely to pious natures that to tear off the wrapping would be to leave their souls to perish in spiritual nakedness; and were so bound up with the national moral convictions that the sense of duty could not be separated from a belief in the technical inspiration of the Bible. And yet Carlyle knew that it could do no good to anyone to believe what was untrue; and he knew also that since science had made known to us the real relation between this globe of ours and the stupendous universe, no man whose mind and heart were sound could any longer sincerely believe in the Christian creed. The most that such a man could arrive at was to persuade himself by refined reasonings that it might perhaps be true, that it could not be proved false, and that therefore he might profess it openly from the lips outwards with a clear conscience. But the convictions which govern the practical lives of men are not remote possibilities, but concrete certainties. As long as the "Holy Place" in their souls is left in possession of powerless opinions, they are practically without God in this world. The "wealth of nations" comes to mean material abundance, and individual duty an obligation to make money; while intellect, not caring to waste itself on shadows, constructs philosophies to show that God is no necessity at all. Carlyle's faith, on the other hand, was that without a spiritual belief—a belief in a Divine Being, in the knowledge of whom and obedience to whom mortal welfare alone con-
sisted—the human race must degenerate into brutes. He longed, therefore, that the windows of the shrine should be washed clean, and the light of heaven let into it. The longer the acknowledgment of the facts regarding inspiration, etc., was delayed, the more hollow grew the established creeds, the falser the professional advocates of the creeds, the more ungodly the life and philosophy of the world.

Why, then, did he find it impossible to speak plainly on this momentous subject? Because, as he had said of the poor priests at Bruges, because, false as they were, there was nothing to take their places if they were cast out by the Gospel of Progress, which was falser even than they. God Himself would in due time build a new temple for Himself above the ruins of the old beliefs. He himself, meanwhile, would do ill to wound simple hearts like that of his poor old mother. His resolution was often hardly tested. Often he would exclaim fiercely against “detestable idolatries.” Often, on the appearance of some more than usually insincere episcopal manifesto, he would wish the Bishops and all their works dead as Etruscan soothsayers. But the other mood was the more prevalent. He spoke to me once with loathing of Renan’s *Vie de Jésus*. I asked if he thought a true life could be written. He said, “Yes, certainly, if it were right to do it; but it is not.”

The Exodus, nevertheless, always lay before him as a thing that would have to be, if men were ever to recover their spiritual stature. “The ancient mythologies (religions),” he says in his Journal, “were merely religious readings of the Histories of Antiquity,—genial apprehensions and genial (that is always divine) representations of the Events of Earthly Life,—such as occur yet, only that we have no ‘geniality’ to take them up with, nothing but stupidity to take them up with! . . . Exodus from Hounds-ditch I believe to be the first beginning of such deliverance.”

Almost forty years have passed since these words were written, and we still wait to be delivered. Nay, some think that we need no deliverance—“upward and back to their fountains the sacred rivers are stealing.” The water of life is again flowing in the old fountains. It may be so.
Ark of the Church has been repainted and gilded and decorated, and with architecture and coloured windows, and choral services, and incense, and candlesticks, and symbolic uniforms for mystic officiators, seemingly the dying body has been electrified into a semblance of animation. Is this life or merely galvanism? There are other signs not favourable to the pretensions of the Church revivalists. The air has cleared. It is no longer a sin to say what one thinks, and power no longer weights the scale in favour of orthodoxy. Forty years ago the law said to a clergyman, "You shall teach what the formulas prescribe, whether you believe it or not, and you shall stay at your post, even though you know that you disbelieve it; for you shall enter no other profession; you shall teach this, or you shall starve." That is gone, and much else is gone. Men are allowed to think and speak as they will without being punished by social ostracism. Truth must stand henceforth by its own strength, and what is really incredible will cease to be believed. Very much of the change in this happy direction is due to Carlyle's influence; in this direction, and perhaps also in the other, for every serious man, of every shade of opinion, had to thank him for the loud trumpet notes which had awakened the age out of its sleep.

One or other of the subjects for a new book on which we saw Carlyle to be meditating would probably have been now selected, when suddenly, like a bolt out of the sky, came the Revolution of February 24 at Paris. The other nations of Europe followed suit, the kings, as Carlyle expressed it, "running about like a gang of coiners when the police had come among them." Ireland blazed out. English Chartists talked of "physical force." The air seemed charged with lightning, threatening the foundations of modern society. So extraordinary a phenomenon surprised Carlyle less than it surprised most of his contemporaries. It confirmed what he had been saying for many years. The universal dungheap had caught fire again. Imposture was bankrupt once more, and "shams" this time, it was to be hoped, would be finished off in earnest. He did not believe in immediate convulsion in England; but he did believe that, unless England took warning and mended her ways, her turn would come.
The state of Europe was too interesting and too obscure to permit composure for writing. For the four months of that spring, the papers each morning announced some fresh convulsion, and the coolest thinkers could only look on and watch. When the Young Ireland deputation went to Paris to ask the Provisional Government to give a lift to the Irish Republic, war with France was at one moment on the cards.

London parties in an "era of revolutions" were excited and exciting. The leading men came out with their opinions with less reserve. Carlyle had frequently met Macaulay in drawing-rooms; but they had rather avoided each other. He had been much struck, many years before, with the "Essay on Milton"; indeed to the last he always spoke respectfully of Macaulay; but when two men of positive temperament hold views diametrically opposite, and neither can entertain even a suspicion that the other may accidentally be right, conversation between them is usually disagreeable. Thus they had not sought for any closer acquaintance, and common friends had not tried to bring them together. It happened now and then, however, that they were guests at the same table.

Friday last at Lord Mahon's to breakfast: Macaulay, Lord and Lady Ashley &c. there. Niagara of eloquent commonplace talk from Macaulay: "very goodnatured man"; man cased in official mail of proof; stood my impatient fire-explosions with much patience, merely hissing a little steam up, and continued his Niagara —supply-and-demand, power ruinous to powerful himself, impossibility of Government doing more than keep the peace, suicidal distraction of new French Republic &c &c. Essentially irremediable commonplace nature of the man: all that ever was in him now gone to the tongue. A squat, thickset, low-browed, short, and now rather potbellied, grizzled little man of fifty: these be thy gods, O Israel! 28

A far more interesting meeting was with Sir Robert Peel, "one of the few men in England whom I have still any curiosity to see." 29 Peel had known him by sight since the present of Cromwell, and had given him looks of recognition when they met in the streets. The Barings brought about a personal acquaintance, which increased till Peel's death. It began at a dinner at Bath House.

Went also to the Peel enterprise; sat next Sir Robert;—an evening
THE YEARS 1846-1849

not unpleasant to remember. Peel is a finely made man; of strong, not heavy, rather of elegant, stature; stands straight, head slightly thrown back, and eyelids modestly drooping: every way mild and gentle, yet with less of that fixed smile than the portraits give him. He is towards sixty; and, tho' not broken at all, carries, especially in his complexion when you are near him, marks of that age. Clear strong blue eyes, which kindle on occasion. Voice extremely good; low-toned, something of cooing in it, rustic-affectionate, honest, mildly persuasive. Spoke about French Revolutions, new and old; well read in all that; had seen General Dumouriez &c. Reserved, seemingly by nature; obtrudes nothing of diplomatic reserve. On the contrary, a vein of mild fun in him; real sensibility to the ludicrous; which feature I liked best of all: nothing in that slight inspection, seemed to promise better in him than his laugh. . . . Shall I see the Premier again? I consider him by far our first Public Man, which indeed is saying little; and hope that England, in these frightful times, may still get some good of him.30

Not seeing his way to a book upon Democracy, Carlyle wrote a good many newspaper articles this spring; chiefly in the Examiner and the Spectator, to deliver his soul. Even Fonblanque and Rintoul (the editors), friendly though they were to him, could not allow him his full swing. "There is no established journal," he said, "that can stand my articles, no single one they would not blow the bottom out of." More than ever he wished to have some periodical of his own, which would belong to no party, and where he could hit out all around.

The theory that the title of governments in this world is "the consent of the governed" will lead by-and-by, if it lasts long enough, to very curious conclusions. As a theory it was held even in 1848 by speculative Liberal thinkers; but the old English temper was still dominant whenever there was necessity for action. Parliament was still able and willing to pass a Treason Felony Act through its three readings in one afternoon, and teach Chartists and Irish rebels that these islands were not to be swept into the Revolution. But that spirit, Carlyle saw, must abate with the development of Democracy. The will of the people, shifting and uncertain as the weather, would make an end of authoritative action. And yet such a government as he desired to see could be the product only of revolution of another kind. He said often that the Roman Republic was allowed so long a day because on emergencies the constitut-
tion was suspended by a dictatorship. Dictatorships might end as they ended at Rome, in becoming perpetual—and to this he would not have objected, if the right man could be found; but he was alone in his opinion, and for the time it was useless to speak of such a mighty transformation scene.

The spring wore on, and the early summer came, and all eyes were watching, sometimes France and sometimes Ireland. Events followed swiftly in Paris. The government fell into the hands of the Party of Order, the moderate Republicans; and the workmen, who had been struggling for the "organisation of labour," determined to fight for it. Out of this came the three tremendous days of June, the sternest battle ever fought in a modern city.

Emerson's curiosity had taken him to Paris in May, to see how Progress and Liberty were getting on. He had visited Oxford also, where he had been entertained at Oriel by my dear friend, Arthur Clough. He had breakfasted in Common Room, where several of us were struck by a likeness in his face to that of one once so familiar in the same spot, who had passed now into another fold—John Henry Newman. Figure and features were both like Newman's. He was like a ghost of Newman born into a new element. The Oxford visit over, Emerson went back to London to finish his lectures. I heard the last of them (at the Polytechnic, I think), and there first saw Carlyle, whom Clough pointed out to me. We were sitting close behind him, and I had no sight of his face; but I heard his loud, kindly, contemptuous laugh when the lecturer ended; for, indeed, what Emerson said was, in Carlyle's word, "rather moonshiny." He was to sail for Boston in the week following. Before he left, he and Carlyle went on a small expedition together into Wiltshire, to look at Stonehenge—they two, the latest products of modern thought, and Stonehenge, the silent monument of an age all trace of which, save that one circle of stone, has perished.

The sun of freedom which had risen so augustly on February 24 had been swiftly clouded. Carlyle had not expected definite good from it, and ought not to have been
disappointed; yet he had not looked for a collapse so swift and so complete. He had thought that something would have been gained for poor mankind from such a breakdown of sham governments. Europe had revolted against them, but the earthquake, alas! had been transient. The sham powers, temporal and spiritual, had been shaken in their seats; but the shock passed, and they had crept back again. Cant, insincerity, imposture, and practical injustice ruled once more in the name of order. He was not entirely cast down. He was still convinced that so wild a burst of passion must have meant something, and the "something" in time would be seen; but the fog had settled back thick as before, probably for another long interval. Before two years were over, France saw Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire, with the Catholic Church supporting. French bayonets again propped up the Pope, who, in the strength of them, was to declare himself infallible. England rested contented with Laissez-faire and the "Dismal Science." In Ireland were famine and famine-fever; for remedy an Encumbered Estates Act; whole villages unroofed by fire or crowbar; two millions of the miserable people flying across the Atlantic with curses on the Anglo-Saxon in their mouths; the Anglo-Saxons themselves blessing Providence for ridding them so cheaply of the Irish difficulty. He saw clearly enough that there was no cure here for the diseases of which modern society was sick. Behind an order so restored could grow only the elements of mischief to come, and he was sickened at the self-satisfied complaisance with which the upper classes in England and everywhere welcomed the victory of the reaction. The day of reckoning would come whether they believed it or not, and the longer judgement was delayed the heavier it would be. They had another chance allowed them, that was all.

What Carlyle could do or say it was not easy for him to decide. No advice of his would find attention in the existing humour. the turn which things were taking, the proved impotence of English Chartism especially, seemed to justify the impatience with which practical politicians had hitherto listened to him. It would be a waste of words to go
on denouncing "shams" when "shams" everywhere were receiving a new lease of life. He stayed in London through the summer, Mrs. Carlyle with him, but doing nothing.

In all humours, light or heavy, he could count on the unshaken affection of his friends the Barings. A change in this last year had passed over their worldly situation. The old Lord had died in May, and Mr. Baring was now Lord Ashburton.

In September there was to be a great gathering of distinguished persons at the Grange under its new ownership, and the Carlyles, as this year he had not gone to Scotland, were invited for a long autumn visit. He hesitated to join the brilliant circle. "There are Marquises of Landsdown Ministers &c &c talked of; but I have found by experience they do not differ from little people, except in the clothing and mounting." He went, however, and his wife went with him.

Charles Buller was at the party at the Grange, brilliant as usual. In this winter he suddenly died through the blundering of an unskilful surgeon. Buller was one of the few real friends that Carlyle had left in the world, and was cut off in this sudden way just when the highest political distinctions were coming within his reach. His witty humour had for a time made his prospects doubtful. The House of Commons likes to be amused, but does not raise its jesters into Cabinets. Buller said he owed his success to Peel. He had been going on in his usual way one night when Peel said, "If the honourable member for Liskeard will cease for a moment from making a buffoon of himself, I will, &c." For these sharp words Buller was forever grateful to Peel. He achieved afterwards the highest kind of Parliamentary reputation. A great career had opened before him, and now it was ended. Carlyle felt his loss deeply. He wrote a most beautiful elegy, which was published in the Examiner in time for Buller's poor mother to read it. Then she died, too, of pure grief. Her husband had gone before, and the family with whom Carlyle had once been so intimately connected came to an end together. It was a sad season altogether.

The winter went by with no work accomplished or begun, beyond the revising Cromwell for a third edition, as it
was still selling rapidly. "I find the Book is well liked," he could say, "and silently making its way into the heart of the country; which is a result I am very thankful for."

The book had been too well liked, indeed; for it had created a set of enthusiastic admirers who wanted now to have a statue of the great Protector, or, at least, some public memorial of him. Carlyle was of Cato's opinion in that matter. He preferred that men should rather ask where Oliver's statue was than see it as one of the anomalous images which are scattered over the metropolis.

Ireland, of all the topics on which he had meditated writing, remained painfully fascinating. He had looked at the beggarly scene, he had seen the blighted fields, the ragged misery of the wretched race who were suffering for others' sins as well as for their own. Since that brief visit of his the famine had been followed by the famine-fever, and the flight of millions from a land which was smitten with a curse. Those ardent young men with whom he had dined at Dundrum were working as felons in the docks at Bermuda. Gavan Duffy, after a near escape from the same fate, had been a guest in Cheyne Row; and the story which he had to tell of cabins torn down by crowbars, and shivering families, turned out of their miserable homes, dying in the ditches by the roadside, had touched Carlyle to the very heart. He was furious at the economical commonplaces with which England was consoling itself. He regarded Ireland as "the breaking point of the huge suppuration which all British and all European society now is." He determined to see it again, look at it further and more fully, "that ragged body of a diseased soul," and then write something about it which might move his country into a better sense of its obligations. So earnest he was that he struggled seriously to find some plainer form of speech, better suited to the world's comprehension, which they might read, not to wonder at, but to take to their hearts for practical guidance.

It was while Carlyle was preparing for an Irish tour that I myself became first personally acquainted with him. He had heard of me from Arthur Clough, who left Oxford when I left it. We had felt, both of us, that, thinking as we did, we were out of place in an Article-signing
JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE. Froude read Carlyle's major works in the early 1840s, fell under his influence, but did not meet him until June 1849—a meeting graphically related in the biography. He became, with Ruskin, the most steadfast of Carlyle's disciples. Carlyle told Emerson in 1872 that Froude was "the valuablyest Friend I now have in England." (Courtesy of the Columbia University Libraries.)
University, and we had resigned our Fellowships. Of Clough Carlyle had formed the very highest opinion, as no one who knew him could fail to do. His pure beautiful character, his genial humour, his perfect truthfulness, alike of heart and intellect—an integrity which had led him to sacrifice a distinguished position and brilliant prospects, and had brought him to London to gather a living as he could from under the hoofs of the horses in the streets—these together had recommended Clough to Carlyle as a diamond sifted out of the general rubbish-heap. Of me, with good reason, he was inclined to think far less favourably. I had written something, not wisely, in which heterodoxy was flavoured with the sentimentalism which he so intensely detested. He had said of me that I ought to burn my own smoke, and not trouble other people’s nostrils with it. Nevertheless, he was willing to see what I was like. James Spedding took me down to Cheyne Row one evening in the middle of June. We found him sitting after dinner, with his pipe, in the small flagged court between the house and the garden. He was studying without much satisfaction the Life of St. Patrick by Jocelyn of Ferns in the Acta Sanctorum. He was trying to form a notion of what Ireland had been like before Danes or Saxons had meddled with it, when it was said to have been the chosen home of learning and piety, and had sent out missionaries to convert Northern Europe. His author was not assisting him. The Life of St. Patrick as given by Jocelyn is as much a biography of a real man as the story of Jack the Giant-killer. When we arrived Carlyle had just been reading how an Irish marauder had stolen a goat and eaten it, and the Saint had convicted him by making the goat bleat in his stomach. He spoke of it with rough disgust; and then we talked of Ireland generally, of which I had some local knowledge.

He was then fifty-four years old; tall (about five feet eleven), thin, but at that time upright with no signs of the later stoop. His body was angular, his face beardless, such as it is represented in Woolner’s medallion, which is by far the best likeness of him in the days of his strength. His head was extremely long, with the chin thrust forward; the neck was thin; the mouth firmly closed, the under lip
slightly projecting; the hair grizzled and thick and bushy. His eyes, which grew lighter with age, were then of a deep violet, with fire burning at the bottom of them, which flashed out at the least excitement. The face was altogether more striking, most impressive every way. And I did not admire him the less because he treated me—I cannot say unkindly, but shortly and sternly. I saw then what I saw ever after—that no one need look for conventional politeness from Carlyle—he would hear the exact truth from him, and nothing else.

We went afterwards into the dining-room, where Mrs.
Carlyle gave us tea. Her features were not regular, but I thought I had never seen a more interesting-looking woman. Her hair was raven black, her eyes dark, soft, sad, with dangerous light in them. Carlyle's talk was rich, full, and scornful; hers delicately mocking. She was fond of Spedding, and kept up a quick, sparkling conversation with him, telling stories at her husband's expense, at which he laughed himself as heartily as we did.

It struck me then, and I found always afterwards, that false sentiment, insincerity, cant of any kind would find no quarter, either from wife or husband; and that one must speak truth only, and, if possible, think truth only, if one wished to be admitted into that house on terms of friendship. They told me that I might come again. I did not then live in London, and had few opportunities; but if the chance offered, I never missed it.