The painters had not completed their work, and the smell was insupportable when Carlyle got home in the middle of October. He was in no condition to face any more annoyances, and he and his wife took refuge for three weeks at the Grange with the ever hospitable Ashburtons. There, too, the sulphurous mood was still predominant, and things did not go well with him. It was not till November that he was fairly re-established in his own quarters, and in a condition to so much as think of seriously beginning his work. A preliminary skirmish became necessary, to put to silence his neighbour's cocks. Mr. Remington, who then lived near him, and was the owner of the offenders, has kindly sent me the correspondence which passed on the occasion; very gracious and humble on Carlyle's part, requesting only that the cocks in question should be made inaudible from midnight till breakfast time; Mr. Remington, though they were favourites which he had brought from Northumberland, instantly consenting to suppress them altogether. This accomplished, Carlyle proceeded as it were to clear the stage by recovering his own mental condition, and took himself severely to task for what he found amiss. Much that he says will seem exaggerated, but it will be remembered that he was not speaking to the world but to himself. It is idle to judge him by common rules. His nerves were abnormally sensitive. He lived habitually, unless he violently struggled against it, in what he had described as "an element of black streaked with lightning."
To begin Frederick then! It was easier to propose than to do. When a writer sets to work again after a long pause, his faculties have, as it were, to be caught in the field and brought in and harnessed. There was anxiety about his wife too, who was worn out by her summer discipline, and was never "thinner these seven years."²

He would have got underway in some shape, but, before starting, any distraction is enough to check the first step, and there were distractions in plenty; among the rest the Duke of Wellington’s funeral. The Duke had died in September. He was now to be laid in his tomb in the midst of a mourning nation; and Carlyle did not like the display. The body lay in state at Chelsea, "all the empty fools of creation" running to look at it. One day two women were trampled to death in the throng at the hospital close by; and the whole thing, except for that dreadful accident, was, in his eyes, "a big bag of wind and nothingness." "It is indeed," he said,

a sad and solemn fact for England, that such a man has been called away: the last perfectly honest and perfectly brave Public Man they had; and they ought, in reverence, to reflect on that, and sincerely testify that (if they could), while they commit him to his resting place. But alas for the "sincerity!" It is even professedly all hypocrisy, noise, and expensive upholstery; from which a serious mind turns away with sorrow and abhorrence.³

[Early in 1853] he began at last to write something—but it was wrongly pitched. It would not do, and he threw it aside. In March he was off to the Grange again—off there always when the Ashburtons invited him—but always, or almost so, to no purpose. "Worse than useless to me," he said when the visit was over. The party at the Grange was in itself brilliant enough. Venables was there, whom he liked better than most men; and Azeglio and other notabilities.⁴ But even Venables, on this occasion, he found "full of dogmatic convictions," and to Azeglio he was rude. Azeglio had been talking contemptuously of Mazzini. "‘Monsieur,’" said Carlyle to him, "‘vous ne le connaissez pas du tout, du tout,’ and turned abruptly away, and sat down to a Newspaper." I "cannot ever get a word of sense talked to me except by accident."⁵ A week at the Grange was as much as he could bear, and it did not seem to have done very much for him.

To try to work Carlyle was determined enough. He went
nowhere in the summer, but remained at Chelsea chained to Frederick, and, moving ahead at last, leaving his wife to take a holiday. His brother John, who was now married, had taken a house at Moffat, and Mrs. Carlyle, needing change, went off to stay with him there. Paint was wanted in Cheyne Row again, and Carlyle was exquisitely sensitive to the smell of it. Other cocks—not, it is to be hoped, Mr. Remington’s—set up their pipes in the summer mornings. A “vile yellow Italian” came grinding under his windows. He had a terrible time of it; but he set his teeth and determined to bear his fate.

“Greater than man, less than woman,” as Essex said of Queen Elizabeth. The cocks were locked up next door, and the fireworks at Cremorne were silent, and the rain fell and cooled the July air; and Carlyle slept, and the universe became once more tolerable.

A real calamity, sad but inevitable and long foreseen, was now approaching. Signs began to show that his old mother at Scotsbrig was drawing near the end of her pilgrimage. She was reported to be ill, and even dangerously ill. Mrs. Carlyle hurried over from Moffat to assist in nursing her, meeting, when she arrived there, the never-forgotten but humbly offered birthday present of July 14 from her poor husband. Her mother-in-law, while she was there, sank into the long, death-like trance which she so vividly describes. Contrary to all expectations, the strong resolute woman rallied from it, and Carlyle, always hopeful, persuaded himself that for the time the stroke had passed over.

The alarm at Scotsbrig having passed off, minor evils became again important. The great cock question revived in formidable proportions. Mrs. Carlyle had gone to her cousin’s at Liverpool, but her presence was needed urgently in Cheyne Row to deal with it. A room was to be constructed at the top of the house, where neither cockcrows nor other sound could penetrate; but until it was completed the “unprotected Male,” as Carlyle called himself, was suffering dismally. Morning after morning the horrid clarions blew. “Those Cocks must either withdraw or die,” he cried. “That is a fixed point;—and I must do it myself if no one will help.” For some cause there was a respite for a night or two, but now the owner of the cocks, one Ronca, was heard
The Soundproof Room. Built on to the Chelsea home in 1853 at considerable cost, Carlyle describes it as 'a dreadful enterprise, that proved the chanotic element throughout—a true Sathan's Invisible World Displayed... And Jane Carlyle: 'Alas! and the silent apartment has turned out the noisiest apartment in the house.' Here Carlyle labored for many years over his six-volume History of Frederick II. of Prussia, called Frederick the Great. After the work's completion in 1885, he rarely used the upstairs study. (A Gordon Fraser card, published for the National Trust.)
coughing at half-past eight in the morning, and this—but this could hardly be made a crime. "Poor Devil," he said to himself, with a tinge of remorse, "a bad cough indeed, as I said to myself; and I am to be annoyed at the mere noise of it! Selfish mortal indeed!" Lady Ashburton, hearing of his forlorn condition, made over the now vacant Addiscombe to him. His wife came back. The cocks were for a time disposed of, and the new room was set about. The new room was the final hope. Till it was finished there could be no surety of peace. "Ach Gott!" he said, "I am wretched, and (in silence) nearly mad!"

To great evils one must oppose great virtues;—and also to small; which is the harder task of the two. Masons (who have already killed a year of my life, in a too sad manner), are again upon the roof of the house,—after a dreadful bout of resolution on my part,—building me a soundless room! "The world, which can do me no good, shall at least not torment me with its street and backyard noises."

. . . Alas, alas, my dear old Mother seems to be fading fast away from me: my thoughts are dark and sad continually with that idea, inexorabile fatum; the great the eternal is there; and also the paltriest and smallest, to load me down. I seem to be sinking inextricably into Chaos.

Of the two extreme trials of which Carlyle spoke, the greatest, the one which really and truly was to shake his whole nature, was approaching its culmination. Although his mother had rallied remarkably from her attack in the summer, and was able to read and converse as usual, there had been no essential recovery; there was to be and there could be none. His mother, whom he had regarded with an affection "passing the love of sons," with whom, in spite of, or perhaps in consequence of, her profound Christian piety, he had found more in common, as he often said, than with any other mortal—was now evidently about to be taken away from him. A feeling peculiarly tender had united these two. . . . Carlyle, as his letters show, had been haunted from his earliest days by the terror that he must one day lose her. She had watched over the workings of his mind with passionate soliciitude: proud of his genius, and alternately alarmed for his soul. In the long evenings when they had sate together over the fire with their pipes at Mainhill, he had half-satisfied her that he and she were one in heart and in essentials. His first earnings, when a school usher, were spent in con-
tributing to her comforts. When money came from Boston for *The French Revolution*, the “Kitlin” instantly sent “the auld cat” an “American mouse.” If she gloriied in his fame and greatness, he gloriied more in being the son of the hum­ble Margaret Carlyle—and while she lived, she, and only she, stood between him and the loneliness of which he so often and so passionately complained. No one else, perhaps, ever completely understood his character; and of all his letters none are more tenderly beautiful than those which he sent to Scotsbrig.

It could not have been with any pleasure that, at a moment when his mother was so manifestly sinking, Carlyle felt himself called on to go again to the Grange. He had been at home only a month since he last left. But there was to be a grand gathering of great London people there. The Ashbur­tons were pressing, and he was under too many obligations to refuse. They went, both of them, into the midst of London intellect and social magnificence. Mrs. Carlyle was able to stay a few days only, for the cock problem had reached a crisis. In his despair, Carlyle had thought of actually buying the lease of the house where the dreadful creatures were nourished, turning the people out and leaving it empty. The “Demon Fowls” were a standing joke at the witty Grange. Either he or his wife was required upon the spot to make an arrangement. He says that she proposed to go; she indicates that the pressure was on his side, and that she thought it a “wildgoose enterprize.” At any rate, the visit which was to have improved her health was cut short on this account, and she was packed off to Chelsea. He continued on in the shin­ing circle till, on December 20, news came from Scotsbrig that his mother was distinctly worse and could not long sur­vive. It was not quite clear that the danger was immediate. He tried to hope, but to no purpose. He felt that he ought to go down to her, at any rate that he ought not to continue where he was. His hostess consented to his going; he writes as if he had been obliged to apply for permission. Lady Ash­burton, he says in one place, gave him leave. He hurried to Scotsbrig, stopping only a night in London, and was in time to see his mother once more alive. He has left several accounts of the end of this admirable woman. That in his *Journal* is the most concise.
The stroke has fallen; my dear old Mother is gone from me; and in the winter of the year, confusedly under darkness of weather and of mind, the stern final epoch, epoch of old age, is beginning to unfold itself for me. . . . It is matter of perennial thankfulness to me, and beyond my desert in that matter by far, that I found my dear old Mother still alive, able to recognise me with a faint joy, her former self still strangely visible there in all its lineaments, tho' worn to the uttermost thread. The brave old Mother, and the good,—whom to lose had been my fear ever since intelligence awoke in me in this world;—arrived now at the final bourne. . . . I came into the room where John was now watching: “Here is Tom come to bid you goodnight, Mother,” said he; she smiled assent, took leave of me as usual (tho' I kissed her lips, which was not usual): as I turned to go, she said . . . “I'm muckle obleeged t' ye.” Those were her last voluntary words in this world. . . . After that she spoke no more; slept ever deeper. Her sleep lasted almost 16 hours; she lay on her back, stirred no muscle; the face was as that of a statue, with slight changes of expression (“infinite astonishment” was what one might have fancied to read on it at one time); the breathing not very hard nor quick, yet evidently difficult, and not changing sensibly in character,—till 4 p.m. when it suddenly fell lower; paused, again paused, perhaps still again,—and our good and dear old Mother was gone from her sorrows and from us. I did not weep much, or at all except for moments; but the sight, too, and the look backwards and forwards was one that a far harder heart might have melted under. Farewell, farewell.— She was about 84 years of age; and could not with advantage to any side, remain with us longer. Surely it was a good Power that gave us such a Mother; and good tho' stern, that took her away, from amid such “grief and labour,” by a death beautiful to our thoughts. “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come,” this they often heard her muttering, amid many other less-frequent pious texts and passages. Amen, Amen— Sunday, 25 december. It was on Christmas day, 1853; a day henceforth memorable to me.\footnote{17}

In London, when settled there again, he lived for many weeks in strictest seclusion, working at his task or trying to work, but his mind dwelling too constantly on his irreparable loss to allow him to make progress. His Journal shows a gradual but slow, very slow recovery out of his long prostration.

The year 1854 was spent almost entirely in London. Neither Carlyle nor his wife was absent for more than a day or two; she in indifferent health, to which she was stoically resigning herself; he “in dismal continual wrestle” with Frederick, “the inexecutable book,” and rather “in bilious condition,” which meant what we know. The work which he
had undertaken was immense; desperate as that of the girl in
the fairy tale with the pile of tangled silks before her; and no
beneficent godmother to help him through with it; and the
gea [wane] of life, the spring and fire of earlier years, gone
out of him. He allowed what was going on in the world to
distract him as little as possible; but the sounds of such
things broke in upon him, and were as unwelcome as the cocks had been. The Crimean war was in prospect, and the newspapers were crowing as loud as the Demon Fowls.

The French alliance, into which we were drawn by the Crimean affair, was not, in Carlyle’s opinion, a compensating circumstance—very much the reverse. The Revolution of 1848, a weak repetition of 1793, had been followed by a corresponding Napoleonic Empire, a parody on the first. Carlyle had known Louis Napoleon in England. He had watched him stepping to the throne through perjury and massacre, and had been indignant and ashamed for the nation who could choose or tolerate at its head an adventurer unrecommended by a single virtue. From the first, he was certain that for such a man no good end was to be looked for. It was with a feeling of disgust that he found the English newspapers now hailing the “scandalous Copper Captain,” as he called him, as the saviour of European order, and a fit ally for England. It was with something more than disgust that he heard of this person paying a visit to the Queen of England, and being welcomed by her as a friend and brother sovereign. The war and its consequences and circumstances he thrust out of his mind, to the utmost possible distance, and thought of other things.

At Cheyne Row the great feature was the completion of the “sound-proof” room, into which he was “whirled by angry elements.” It was built above the highest story, the roof being, as it were, lifted over it, and was equal in size to the whole area on which the house stood. A second wall was constructed inside the outer one, with a space between to deaden external noise. There were doors in the inner wall, and windows in the outer, which could be opened for ventilation, but the room itself was lighted from above. It had no outlook except to the sky. Here Carlyle spent his working hours, cut off from everyone—“whirled” aloft, as he said; angry at the fate which had driven him into such a refuge, and finding in it, when finished, the faults inseparable from all human contrivances. But he did admit that the “light” was “perfectly superb,” and all “softer” sounds were “all killed in their road” to him, and that of “sharp sound” scarce “the 20th or 30th part” could penetrate. The cocks had been finally abolished, purchased out of existence by
CARLYLE IN 1854. Photograph almost in profile by Robert Tait taken 31 July 1854, a few days before Carlyle ceased shaving as a result of a wager with Lord Ashburton. With the return of the army from the Crimean War, beards came into fashion. Every subsequent photograph or painting of Carlyle shows him with a beard. “Carlyle in 1869 described this as the best likeness known to him, and, discounting something immobile in the expression and set in the pose, as if he were holding himself in position, it seems a very true record of his features if not a very profound index of his mind” (James L. Caw, “A Commentary on Carlyle’s Portraits”). (Courtesy of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.)
a £5 note and Mrs. Carlyle's diplomacy. Thus they "were quiet as mice," he working with all his might, dining out nowhere, save once with the Procters, to meet Dickens, and finding it "the most hideous evening I have had for years." Under these conditions, Frederick ought to have made progress, if it could progress at all. But it seemed as if it could not.

Advancing years have one inseparable accompaniment, painful if we like to make it so, or soft and sad, as an ordinance of nature—a thing which has to be, and must be so accepted. Each season takes away with it more and more of the friends whom we have known and loved, cutting one by one the strings which attach us to our present lives, and lightening the reluctance with which we recognise our own time approaching. Anyone at all that we have personally known has a friendly aspect when we hear that he is dead. Even if he has done us an ill turn, he cannot do it again. We forget the injuries we have received, because, after all, they did not seriously hurt us; we remember the injuries which we have done, because they are past remedy. With the dead, whatever they were, we only desire to be at peace. Between John Wilson and Carlyle there had never been any cordial relation. They had met in Edinburgh in the old days; on Carlyle's part there had been no backwardness, and Wilson was not unconscious of Carlyle's extraordinary powers. But he had been shy of Carlyle, and Carlyle had resented it, and now this April the news came that Wilson was gone, and Carlyle had to write his epitaph.

John Wilson dead at Edinburgh about 10 days ago: apoplexy had gradually cut him out of the lists of the active, years ago, and for 6 months had quite broken his memory, &c., and rendered recovery hopeless. I knew his figure well; remember well first seeing him on Princes Street, on a bright April afternoon probably 1814 (exactly forty years ago!). . . . The broad shouldered stately bulk of the man struck me; his flashing eyes, copious dishevelled head of hair, and rapid unconcerned progress (like that of a plough thro' stubble): I really liked him, but only from the distance, and thought no more of him. It must have been 14 years later before I once saw his figure again, and began to have some distant straggling acquaintance of a personal kind with him. Glad could I have been to be better and more familiarly acquainted; but tho' I liked much in him, and he somewhat in me, it would not do. He was always very kind to me; but seemed to have a feeling I should (could) not be-
come wholly his (in which he was right), and that on other terms he could not have me. So we let it so remain; and for many years (indeed, ever after quitting Edinburgh), I had no acquaintance with him,—occasionally got symptoms of his ill-humour with me (ink-spruits in Blackwood, read or heard of), which I in a surly silent manner strove to consider flattering rather. . . . In London, indeed, I seldom or never heard any talk of him; I never read his blustering, drunken Noctes (after Gordon in Edinburgh ceased to bring them to me): we lived apart, as if in different centuries.—tho’, to say the truth, I always loved Wilson (really rather loved him), and could have fancied a most strict and very profitable friendship between us in different, happier circumstances. But it was not to be. . . . Wilson seemed to me always by far the most gifted of all our literary men, either then or still; and yet intrinsically he has written nothing that can endure: the central gift was wanting! Adieu, adieu! o, noble, ill-starred brother. . . . I know not if among all his “friends” he has left one who feels more recognisingly what he was, and how tragical his life when seemingly most successful, than I now. Adieu to him, good grand ruined soul, that never could be great, or indeed be anything. 22

Carlyle’s own special work at this time was confined almost to reading books. The little that he composed was unsatisfactory, and the entries in his Journal, which were unusually numerous in the period of forced inactivity, were at once an occupation and a relief. When once he was launched upon his enterprise, he had little leisure for self-reflection.

Miss Jewsbury says that no one who visited the Carlyles could tell whether they were poor or rich. 23 There were no signs of extravagance, but also none of poverty. The drawing-room arrangements were exceptionally elegant. The furniture was simple, but solid and handsome; everything was scrupulously clean; everything good of its kind; and there was an air of ease, as of a household living within its means. Mrs. Carlyle was well dressed always. Her admirable taste would make the most of inexpensive materials; but the materials themselves were of the very best. Carlyle himself generally kept a horse. They travelled, they visited, they were always generous and open-handed. They had their house on easy terms. The rent, which when they came first was £30 a year, 24 I think was never raised—out of respect for Carlyle’s character; but it had many rooms in it, which, because they could not bear to have them otherwise, were maintained in the best condition. There was much
The Drawing Room. On the first floor front, this room was Carlyle’s study in which he wrote *The French Revolution*. After 1843 it was used as a drawing room; in it the Carlyles entertained their many distinguished guests. Mrs. Carlyle, whose portrait by Gambardella is on the right, followed a Victorian fashion in covering the screen with prints. The armchair, with its swing reading desk, was given to Carlyle on his eightieth birthday by his friend John Forster. The fine three-quarter figure portrait by Robert Tait (1855) hangs above the mantle. (A Gordon Fraser card, published for the National Trust.)
curiosity among their friends to know how their establishment was supported. Mrs. Carlyle had £150 a year from Craigenputtoch. He himself, in a late calculation, had set down his average income from his books at another £150. For several years before the time at which we have now arrived he had published little which materially added to this. There was a fixed annual demand for his works, but not a large one. The *Cromwell* was a large book, and had gone through three editions. I do not know precisely how much he had received from it; perhaps £1,500. The *Latter-Day Pamphlets* had produced little beyond paying their expenses. The *Life of Sterling* was popular, but that too only in a limited circle. Carlyle was thrifty, but never penurious; he gave away profusely in his own family, and was liberal beyond his means elsewhere. He had saved, I think, about £2,000 in all, which was lying at interest in Dumfries bank, and this was all. Thus his entire income at this time could not have exceeded £400, if it was as much. His German tour had been expensive. The new room had cost £170. The cost of living was increasing through the rise in prices, which no economy could guard against, and though they had but one servant the household books mounted disagreeably. Mrs. Carlyle, not wishing to add to her husband’s troubles, had as far as possible kept her anxieties to herself. Indeed, Carlyle was like most husbands in this matter, and was inclined to be irritable when spoken to about it. But an explanation at last became necessary, and the humorous acidity of tone with which she entered on it shows that she had borne much before she presented her statement. It is dated 12 February, 1855, and is endorsed by Carlyle “Jane’s Missive on the Budget,” with a note appended.

The inclosed was read with great laughter (had been found lying on my table, as I returned out of the frosty garden from smoking);—“debt” is already paid off; quarterly income to be £55 [?—MS torn] henceforth; and all is settled to poor Goody’s heart’s content. The Piece is so clever, that I cannot just yet, find in my heart to burn it, as perhaps I ought to do.— T.C.

Chelsea . . . 17 February 1855—25

[Entitling her statement “Budget of a Femme Incomprise,” Jane listed in detail and with much irony the rising costs that necessitated a raise in her household allow-
The years 1852-1858

Mrs. Carlyle, it must be admitted, knew how to administer a "shrewing." Her poor husband, it must be admitted, also knew how to bear one. He, perhaps, bore it too well, for there were parts of what she said which he might with advantage have laid to heart seriously. At any rate, he recognized instantly and without the least resentment the truth of a statement to which he had been too impatient to listen. The cleverness of it delighted him, in spite of the mockery of himself and his utterances.

No man ever behaved better under such a chastisement. Not a trace is visible of resentment or impatience, though also less regret than a perfect husband ought to have felt that he had to a certain extent deserved it. Unfortunately, knowing that he had meant no harm and had done all that he was asked to do the instant that the facts were before him, he never could take a lesson of this kind properly to heart, and could be just as inconsiderate and just as provoking on the next occasion that arose. Poor Carlyle! Well he might complain of his loneliness! though he was himself in part the cause of it. Both he and she were noble and generous, but his was the soft heart, and hers the stern one.

Frederick meanwhile, in spite of lamentations over failure, was at last moving. Carlyle had stood steadily to it for eighteen months, and when August came he required rest and change. Many friends were eager for the honour of entertaining him. There was no longer any mother to call him down to Scotsbrig. He selected among them Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, who had been useful to him in the Cromwell days, investigating Naseby field, and whose fine gifts of intellect and character he heartily loved and admired. Mr. Fitzgerald lived at Woodbridge, near Farlingay, in Suffolk, an old-fashioned mansion-house of his own, in which he occupied a few rooms, the rest being a farm-house. The scene was new to him. A Suffolk farmer, "with a dialect almost equal to that of Nithsdale," was a fresh experience. The farm cookery was simple and wholesome, the air perfect, the sea, with a beach where he could bathe, at no great distance; his host ready to be the pleasantest of companions if his society was wished for, and as willing "to efface himself" when not wanted. Under these conditions, a "retreat" for a few days to Woodbridge was altogether agreeable. The love which all persons who really knew him...
felt for Carlyle made it a delight to minister to his comfort. His humours were part of himself. They took him as he was, knowing well how amply his conversation would pay for his entertainment. He, for his part, enjoyed himself exceptionally; he complained of nothing. Place, lodging, company were equally to his mind. "Fitz has been the best of Landlords, and has discharged the sacred rites really with a kind of Irish zeal and piety. A man not to be forgotten. . . . Fitz has done everything, except 'leave me well alone':—that he has not quite done; and to say truth, I shall not care to be off, and lie down in my own corner again, even with the sputter of Cremorne in the distance." 29

Restless spirit! for "in his own corner," when "he did lie down in it," he grew "sleepless, disconsolate & good for little or nothing:" 30 The Ashburtons, knowing his condition, offered him Addiscombe again for the short remains of the summer, and there he and Mrs. Carlyle tried to make a brief holiday together. It did not answer. She preferred Chelsea and solitude, and left him to wander about the Surrey lanes alone.

I had not yet settled in London; but I came up occasionally to read books in the Museum, etc. I called as often as I ventured in Cheyne Row, and was always made welcome there. But I was a mere outward acquaintance, and had no right to expect such a man as Carlyle to exert himself for me. I had, however, from the time when I became acquainted with his writings, looked on him as my own guide and master—so absolutely that I could have said: "errare malo cum Platone . . . quam cum istis vera sentire" [I would rather be wrong with Plato than right with such men as these]. 31 or, in Goethe's words, which I often indeed did repeat to myself: "Mit deinem Meister zu irren ist dein Gewinn" [To err with your Master is your reward]. 32 The practice of submission to the authority of one whom one recognises as greater than one's self outweighs the chance of occasional mistake. If I wrote anything, I fancied myself writing it to him, reflecting at each word on what he would think of it, as a check on affectations. I was busy then on the first volume of my History of England. I had set the first two chapters in print that I might take counsel with friends upon them. I sent a copy to Carlyle, which must have reached him about
the time of this Addiscombe sojourn, and it came back to me with pencil criticisms which, though not wanting in severity, consoled me for the censures which fell so heavily on those chapters when the book was published.\textsuperscript{33}

Autumn passed on, and winter and spring, and Carlyle was still at his desk. At Christmas [1855] there was another visit to the Grange. "Company at first aristocratic and select (Lord Lansdowne and Robert Lowe); then miscellaneous, shifting, chiefly of the scientific kind,"\textsuperscript{34} and moderately interesting. But his stay was short, and he was absorbed again at his work in the garret room. With Mrs. Carlyle, unfortunately, it was a period of ill-health, loneliness, and dispiritment. At the end of 1855 she had commenced the diary, from which her husband first learnt, after her death, how miserable she had been, and learnt also that he himself had been in part the cause.\textsuperscript{35} It was continued on into the next spring and summer, in the same sad, stoically indignant tone; the consummation of ten years of resentment at an intimacy which, under happier circumstances, should have been equally a delight to herself, yet was ill-managed by all parties concerned, and steeped in gall and bitterness her own married life. It is impossible to suppose that Lady Ashburton was not aware of Mrs. Carlyle's feelings towards her. She had a right perhaps to think them ridiculous, but for Carlyle's own sake she ought to have been careful how she behaved to her. If nine-tenths of Mrs. Carlyle's injuries were imaginary, if her proud and sensitive disposition saw affronts where there had been only a great lady's negligence, there was a real something of which she had a right to complain; only her husband's want of perception in such matters could have prevented him from seeing how unfit it was that she should have to go and come at Lady Ashburton's bidding, under fear of her husband's displeasure.

A small incident in the summer of 1856, though a mere trifle in itself, may serve as an illustration of what she had to undergo. The Carlyles were going for a holiday to Scotland. Lady Ashburton was going also. She had engaged a palatial carriage, which had been made for the Queen and her suite, and she proposed to take the Carlyles down with her. The carriage consisted of a spacious saloon, to which, communi-
eating with it, an ordinary compartment with the usual six seats in it was attached. Lady Ashburton occupied the saloon alone. Mrs. Carlyle, though in bad health and needing rest as much as Lady Ashburton, was placed in the compartment with her husband, the family doctor, and Lady Ashburton's maid, a position perfectly proper for her if she was a dependent, but in which no lady could have been placed whom Lady Ashburton regarded as her own equal in rank. It may be that Mrs. Carlyle chose to have it so herself. But Lady Ashburton ought not to have allowed it, and Carlyle ought not to have allowed it, for it was a thing wrong in itself. One is not surprised to find that when Lady Ashburton offered to take her home in the same way she refused to go. "If there were any companionship in the matter," she said bitterly, when Carlyle communicated Lady Ashburton's proposal, "it would be different; and if you go back with the Ashburtons it would be different, as then I should be going merely as part of your luggage—without self responsibility." Carlyle regarded the Ashburtons as "great people," to whom he was under obligations: who had been very good to him: and of whose train he in a sense formed a part. Mrs. Carlyle, with her proud, independent, Scotch republican spirit, imperfectly recognised these social distinctions. This it may be said was a trifle, and ought not to have been made much of. But there is no sign that Mrs. Carlyle did make much of what was but a small instance of her general lot. It happens to stand out by being mentioned incidentally. That is all. But enough has been said of this sad matter, which was now drawing near its end.

On reaching Scotland the party separated. Lady Ashburton went to the Highlands, where Carlyle was to follow in September. Mrs. Carlyle went to her cousins in Fife and he to Scotsbrig, which he had left last after his mother's funeral. All his family were delighted to see him once more amongst them. His brother James was waiting for him at the station. His sister-in-law had provided a long new pipe of the right Glasgow manufacture: he would smoke nothing else. His mother—she, alas! was not there: only the chair in which she had sate, now vacant.

He had not come to Scotsbrig to be idle; he had his work with him, at which he toiled on steadily. He had expected his
wife to join him there, but she showed no intention that way. He wrote to her regularly with his usual quiet affection. Her answers he found "sombre and distrustful perhaps beyond need," but "kind and good"; he begged her to "know, if you can, that in my own way none loves you so well, nor feels that he has better cause to do so." From Scotsbrig he moved to his sister’s at the Gill, by Annan—happy among his own kindred, longing to be "out of London, never to return," and to spend the rest of his days in a scene where health of mind and body would not be impossible.

There is one remedy for all evils. The occasion of the "rifts" in Carlyle's life was to be removed for ever in the ensuing spring.

Monday, 4th May, 4 1/2 p.m., at Paris, died Lady Ashburton: a great and irreparable sorrow to me; yet with some beautiful consolations in it too. A thing that fills all my mind, since yesterday afternoon that Milnes came to me with the sad news,—which I had never once anticipated, tho' warned sometimes vaguely to do so. "God sanctify my sorrow," as the old pious phrase went! To her I believe it is a great gain, and the exit has in it much of noble beauty as well as pure sadness,—worthy of such a woman. Adieu, ... adieu! Her work, call it her grand and noble Endurance of want of work—is all done! He was present at the funeral, at Lord Ashburton’s particular entreaty. It seemed like taking leave of the most precious possession which had belonged to him in the world. A few days after, the 22nd of May, he writes to his brother John: “I have indeed lost such a friend as I never had, nor am again in the least likelihood to have, in this stranger world: a magnanimous and beautiful soul, which had furnished the English Earth and made it homelike to me in many ways, is not now here. ... Not since our Mother’s [death] has there been to me anything resembling it.”

After this the days went on with sombre uniformity, Mrs. Carlyle still feeble and growing indeed yearly weaker, Carlyle toiling on in his “mud element,” driving his way through it, hardly seeing anyone, and riding for three hours every afternoon. He had called his horse Fritz. “He was a very clever fellow,” he said of him to me; “was much attached to me, and understood my ways. He caught sight in Palace Yard of King Richard’s horse, clearly perceived that it was a horse, and was greatly interested in it. “Ah, Fritz,” he once
apostrophised him, "you don’t know all your good fortune. You were well brought up to know and do your duty. Nobody ever told you any lies about some one else that had done it for you."

The Frederick work did not grow more easy. The story, as it expanded, became the history of contemporary Europe, and even of the world, while Carlyle, like a genuine craftsman as he was, never shirked a difficulty, never threw a false skin over hollow places, or wrote a sentence the truth of which he had not sifted. One day he described himself as "busy drawing water for many hours; & from the deep Brandenburg Well, comes nothing but a coil of wet rope." Still progress was made in July of this year 1857. The opening chapters were getting into print. He did not himself stir from London. The weather indoors had grown calmer after the occasion of difference was gone, and the gentle companionship of early days, never voluntarily impaired on his part, had partially returned. But change was necessary for her health. Her friends at Sunny Bank [Haddington] were really eager to have her, and he was glad to send her off.

The news of the Sepoy rebellion coming in this summer of course affected Carlyle, more, however, with sorrow than surprise. "Tongue cannot speak," he wrote, "the horrors that were done on the English by those mutinous hyaenas. Allow hyaenas to mutiny and strange things will follow." But he had long thought that "many British interests besides India were on a baddish road." The best that he could do was to get on with his own work, and not permit his attention to be drawn from it. Mrs. Carlyle greatly approved of the opening of Frederick. She recognised at once the superiority of it to any other work that he had done, and she told him so. He was greatly delighted; he called her remarks "the only bit of human criticism" which he had heard from anyone.

It would be worth while to write Books if mankind would read them as you do. . . . From the first discovery of me you have predicted good in a confident manner: all the same whether the world were singing chorus, or no part of the world dreaming of such a thing, but of much the reverse.

He was essentially peaceable the whole time of her absence; a flash might come now and then, but of summer sheet-lightning, which meant no harm. Even distant cocks
and wandering organ-grinders got nothing but a passing anathema.

[Early in September] she came home to him, and there was “joy in Nero and the Canaries, and in creatures more important here.” Work went on without interruption. Fritz gave increasing satisfaction, taking better care of his rider than his rider could have taken of himself, and showing fresh signs of the excellence of his education. Not only was the moral part of him what it should be, but he had escaped the special snare of London life. “He had not been brought up to think that the first duty of a horse was to say something witty.” The riding was late in the afternoon, and lasted long after dusk, along the suburban roads, amidst the glare of the red and green railway lamps at the bridges, and the shrieks and roars of the passing trains; Fritz never stumbling or starting, or showing the least sign of alarm.

The Scotch do not observe times and seasons, and Christmas in London to so true a Scot as Carlyle was a periodic nuisance. The printers suspended work, and proof-sheets hung fire. English holidays might have been beautiful things in old days, in country manors and farms; but in modern Chelsea they meant husbands staggering about the streets, and their miserable wives trying to drag them home before the last of the wages was spent on beer and gin.

Indoors, happily, the old affectionate days had come back—the old tone, the old confidences. It had really been as he had said in the summer: “Then, for the rest of our life, we will be more to another than we ever were,—if it please Heaven!” But Mrs. Carlyle suffered more than she had yet done from the winter cold, and a shadow of another kind now darkened the prospect.

She has a particular pain, about a handbreadth below the heart, rather sore to the touch (or the pressure), not sore at all if not stirred; nor seemingly connected with coughing otherwise than by the mere stir produced: this is now some 3 weeks old, and vexes her somewhat;—Tait yesterday (judicious kind man!) assured her he knew that; and it was an “inflammation of the pleura” just getting under way!—If you can form any guess about it by this description, you may tell me.”

House worries, with servants, etc., did not improve Mrs. Carlyle. Fritz had been left at the Grange. Carlyle, driven to
"A Chelsea Interior" (1857) by Robert Tait. Carlyle, in a long figured dressing gown, stands at the mantelpiece filling his clay pipe (called a "churchwarden"); Mrs. Carlyle sits in the armchair. The view is of the dining or sitting room, looking toward the breakfast room, seen through the open folding doors. Mrs. Carlyle wrote in a letter of "that weary artist who took the bright idea last spring that he would make a picture of our Sitting Room to be 'amazingly interesting to posterity a hundred years hence.' " This Victorian ensemble conveys an atmosphere of domesticity quite convincing in its way. The painting was done for Lord Ashburton. (Postcard photograph, courtesy of the National Trust.)
his feet again, had lost his own chief comfort, and Frederick had to be continued in more indifferent spirits.

In spite of anxieties and "sordid miseries," the two volumes of Frederick meanwhile drew to completion. Carlyle (for him) was amazingly patient, evidently for his wife's sake having laid strong constraint on himself. His complaints, when he did complain, were of a human reasonable kind. Neuberg was most assiduous, and another young intelligent admirer—Mr. Larkin, who lived next door to him—had volunteered his services, which were most gratefully recognised.

By the first of May the printers had their last "copy." By the end of May all was in type. In the second week in June the first instalment of the work on which he had been so busy toiling was complete and off his hands, waiting to be published in the autumn. For six years he had been labouring over it. In 1851 he had begun seriously to think about the subject. In 1852 he made his tour to Berlin and the battlefields. Ever since he had lain as in eclipse, withdrawn from all society save that of his most intimate friends. The effort had been enormous. He was sixty-three years old, and the furnace could be no longer heated to its old temperature. Yet he had thrown into the task all the strength he had left; and now, although the final verdict has long been pronounced on this book, in Germany especially, where the merits of it can be best appreciated, I must say a very few words myself about it, and on Carlyle's historical method generally.

History is the account of the actions of men; and in "actions" are comprehended the thoughts, opinions, motives, impulses of the actors and of the circumstances in which their work was executed. The actions without the motives are nothing, for they may be interpreted in many ways, and can only be understood in their causes. If Hamlet or Lear was exact to outward fact—were they and their fellow-actors on the stage exactly such as Shakespeare describes them, and if they did the acts which he assigns to them, that was perfect history; and what we call history is only valuable as it approaches to that pattern. To say that the characters of men cannot be thus completely known, that their inner nature is beyond our reach, that the dramatic portraiture of things is only possible to poetry, is to say that history ought
not to be written, for the inner nature of the persons of whom
it speaks is the essential thing about them; and, in fact, the
historian assumes that he does know it, for his work without
it is pointless and colourless. And yet to penetrate really into
the hearts and souls of men, to give each his due, to repre­
sent him as he appeared at his best, to himself and not to his
enemies, to sympathize in the collision of principles with
each party in turn; to feel as they felt, to think as they
thought, and to reproduce the various beliefs, the acquire­
ments, the intellectual atmosphere of another age, is a task
which requires gifts as great or greater than those of the
greatest dramatists; for all is required which is required of
the dramatist, with the obligation to truth of ascertained fact
besides. It is for this reason that historical works of the high­
est order are so scanty. The faculty itself, the imaginative
and reproductive insight, is among the rarest of human
qualities. The moral determination to use it for purposes of
truth only is rarer still—nay, it is but in particular ages of the
world that such work can be produced at all. The historians
of genius themselves, too, are creatures of their own time,
and it is only at periods when men of intellect have “swal­
lowed formulas,” when conventional and established ways
of thinking have ceased to satisfy, that, if they are serious
and conscientious, they are able “to sympathize with oppo­
site sides.”

It is said that history is not of individuals; that the proper
concern of it is with broad masses of facts, with tendencies
which can be analysed into laws, with the evolution of hu­
manity in general. Be it so—but a science can make progress
only when the facts are completely ascertained; and before
any facts of human life are available for philosophy we must
have those facts exactly as they were. You must have Ham­
let before you can have a theory of Hamlet, and it is to be
observed that the more completely we know the truth of any
incident, or group of incidents, the less it lends itself to
theory. We have our religious historians, our constitutional
historians, our philosophical historians; and they tell their
stories each in their own way, to point conclusions which
they have begun by assuming—but the conclusion seems
plausible only because they know their case imperfectly, or
because they state their case imperfectly. The writers of
books are Protestant or Catholic, religious or atheistic, despot or Liberal; but nature is neither one nor the other, but all in turn. Nature is not a partisan, but out of her ample treasure-house she produces children in infinite variety, of which she is equally the mother, and disowns none of them; and when, as in Shakespeare, nature is represented truly, the impressions left upon the mind do not adjust themselves to any philosophical system. The story of Hamlet in Saxo-Grammaticus might suggest excellent commonplace lessons on the danger of superstition, or the evils of uncertainty in the law of succession to the crown, or the absurdity of monarchical government when the crown can be the prize of murder. But reflections of this kind would suggest themselves only where the story was told imperfectly, and because it was told imperfectly. If Shakespeare's Hamlet be the true version of that Denmark catastrophe, the mind passes from commonplace moralising to the tragedy of humanity itself. And it is certain that if the thing did not occur as it stands in the play, yet it did occur in some similar way, and that the truth, if we knew it, would be equally affecting—equally unwilling to submit to any representation except the undoctrinal and dramatic.

What I mean is this, that whether the history of humanity can be treated philosophically or not, whether any evolutionary law of progress can be traced in it or not, the facts must be delineated first with the clearness and fulness which we demand in an epic poem or a tragedy. We must have the real thing before we can have a science of a thing. When that is given, those who like it may have their philosophy of history, though probably they will care less about it; just as wise men do not ask for theories of Hamlet, but are satisfied with Hamlet himself. But until the real thing is given, philosophical history is but an idle plaything to entertain grown children with.

And this was Carlyle's special gift—to bring dead things and dead people actually back to life; to make the past once more the present, and to show us men and women playing their parts on the mortal stage as real flesh-and-blood human creatures, with every feature which he ascribes to them authenticated, not the most trifling incident invented, and yet as a result with figures as completely alive as Shake-
Very few writers have possessed this double gift of accuracy and representative power. I could mention only two, Thucydides and Tacitus; and Carlyle’s power as an artist is greater than either of theirs. Lockhart said, when he read *Past and Present*, that, except Scott, in this particular function no one equalled Carlyle. I would go farther, and say that no writer in any age had equalled him. Dramatists, novelists have drawn characters with similar vividness, but it is the inimitable distinction of Carlyle to have painted actual persons with as much life in them as novelists have given to their own inventions, to which they might ascribe what traits they pleased. He worked in fetters—in the fetters of fact; yet, in this life of Frederick, the king himself, his father, his sister, his generals, his friends, Voltaire, and a hundred others, all the chief figures, large and small, of the eighteenth century, pass upon the stage once more, as breathing and moving men and women, and yet fixed and made visible eternally by the genius which has summoned them from their graves. A fine critic once said to me that Carlyle’s Friedrich Wilhelm was as peculiar and original as Sterne’s Walter Shandy; certainly as distinct a personality as exists in English fiction. It was no less an exact copy of the original Friedrich Wilhelm—his real self, discerned and reproduced by the insight of a nature which had much in common with him.