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Carlyle’s Remorse. Governor Eyre Affair.
Menton. Disraeli and the Tories.
“Shooting Niagara.” Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle

The installation at Edinburgh had drawn the world’s eyes on Carlyle. His address had been in everyone’s hands, had been admired by the wise, and had been the fashion of the moment with the multitude. The death of his wife following immediately, in so sudden and startling a manner, had given him the genuine sympathy of the entire nation. His enemies, if enemies remained, had been respectfully silent. The Queen represented her whole subjects and the whole English-speaking race when she conveyed to Cheyne Row, through Lady Augusta Stanley, a message delicate, graceful, and even affectionate.

Personally Carlyle was unknown to the Queen. He had never been presented, had never sought admission within the charmed circle which surrounds the constitutional crown. Perhaps, in reading Lady Augusta’s words, he thought more of the sympathy of the “bereaved widow” than of the notice of his sovereign.¹

What he was to do next, how he was to live for the future, who was to live with him and take care of him, were questions which his friends were anxiously asking among themselves. Somewhere about in the first week in May, Carlyle, who had hitherto desired to be left alone, sent me a message that he would like to see me. He came down to me into the library in his dressing gown, haggard and as if turned to stone. He had scarcely slept, he said, since the funeral. He could not “cry.” He was stunned and stupefied. He had never realised the possibility of losing her. He had
settled that he would die first, and now she was gone. From this time and onwards, as long as he was in town, I saw him almost daily. He was looking through her papers, her notebooks and journals; and old scenes came mercilessly back to him in vistas of mournful memory. In his long sleepless nights, he recognised too late what she had felt and suffered under his childish irritabilities. His faults rose up in remorseless judgement, and as he had thought too little of them before, so now he exaggerated them to himself in his helpless repentance. For such faults an atonement was due, and to her no atonement could now be made. He remembered, however, Johnson's penance at Uttoxeter; not once, but many times, he told me that something like that was required from him, if he could see his way to it. "Oh!" he cried, again and again, "if I could but see her once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I always loved her through all that! She never did know it, never." "If he could but see her again!" His heart seemed breaking as he said it, and through these weeks and months he was often mournfully reverting to the subject, and speculating whether such future meeting might be looked for or not. He would not let himself be deluded by emotion. His intellect was vigorous as ever, as much as ever on its guard against superstition. The truth about the matter was, he admitted, absolutely hidden from us; we could not know, we were not meant to know. It would be as God willed. "In my Father's house are many mansions." "Yes," he said, "if you are God, you may have a right to say so; if you are man, what do you know more than I or any of us?" Yet then and afterwards when he grew calm, and was in full possession of himself, he spoke always of a life to come, and the meeting of friends in it as a thing not impossible. In spite of science he had a clear conviction that everything in this universe, to the smallest detail, was ordered with a conscious purpose. Nothing happened to any man which was not ordained to happen. No accident, no bullet on battlefield, or sickness at home, could kill a man till the work for which he was appointed was done, and if this was so, we were free to hope that there was a purpose in our individual existence which was not exhausted in our earthly condition. The spirit, the soul of man, was not an accident or mere result of the organisation of protoplasm.
Intellect and moral sense were not put into man by a being which had none of its own. At no time of Carlyle's life had such a conclusion as this been credible to him. Again it was unlike nature so to waste its energies as to spend seventy years in training and disciplining a character, and to fling it away when complete, as a child flings away a plaything. It is possible that his present and anguished longing lent more weight to these arguments than he would otherwise have been able to allow them. At any rate it was round this hope and round his own recollections and remorse that our conversations chiefly turned when we took up our walks again; the walks themselves tending usually to the spot where Mrs. Carlyle was last seen alive; where, in rain or sunshine, he reverently bared his head.

By degrees he roused himself to think of trying some work again. He could still do something. Politics, philosophy, literature, were rushing on faster than ever in the direction which he most disliked. He sketched a scheme for a journal in which there was to be a running fire of opposition to all that. I and Ruskin were to contribute, and it might have come to something if all three of us had been willing, which it appears we were not.

John Carlyle stayed on in Cheyne Row, with no fixed arrangement, but as an experiment to see how it would answer. We all hoped it might continue; but struck down as Carlyle had been he was still himself, and his self-knowledge made him amusingly cautious. John, good-natured though he might be, had his own ways and humours, and his own plainness of speech; and to live easily with Carlyle required that one must be prepared to take stormy weather when it came in silence. He would be penitent afterwards; he knew his brother's merits and his own faults. "Your readiness," he said, "and eagerness at all times to be of help to me,—this, you may depend on it, is a thing I am always well aware of, at the bottom of all my impatiences and discontents." But the impatiences and discontents were there, and had to be calculated upon. John was willing to go on, and Carlyle did not absolutely refuse, but both, after some months' trial, doubted if the plan would answer.

The wish to live together was evidently more on John's part than on Carlyle's. Carlyle was perhaps right. The two
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“beasts” were both too old to change their natures, and they would agree best if they did not see each other too often. John went back to Scotland; Carlyle was left alone: and other friends now claimed the privilege of being of use to him, especially Miss Davenport Bromley, the “flight of skylarks,” and Lady Ashburton. They had been both her friends also, and were, therefore, in his present mood, especially dear to him.

The affair of Governor Eyre had blown into white heat. In submission to general clamour Eyre had been recalled in disgrace. He had applied for other employment and had been refused. He had several children, and was irretrievably ruined. It was, Carlyle said to me, as if a ship had been on fire; the captain, by immediate and bold exertion, had put the fire out, and had been called to account for having flung a bucket or two of water into the hold beyond what was necessary. He had damaged some of the cargo, perhaps, but he had saved the ship. The action of the Government, in Carlyle’s opinion, was base and ungenerous, and when the recall was not sufficient, but Eyre was threatened with prosecution, beaten as he himself was to the ground, he took weapon in hand again, and stood forward, with such feeble support as he could find for an unpopular cause, in defence of a grossly injured man. “Yesterday, in spite of the rain,” he wrote to Miss Davenport Bromley,

I got up to the Eyre Committee, and even let myself be voted into the chair, such being the post of danger on the occasion, and truly something of a forlorn hope, and place for *enfans perdus*. . . . Poor Eyre! I am heartily sorry for him, and for the English nation, which makes such a dismal fool of itself. Eyre, it seems, has fallen suddenly from £6,000 a year into almost zero, and has a large family and needy kindred dependent on him. Such his reward for saving the West Indies, and hanging one incendiary mulatto, well worth the gallows, if I can judge.

I was myself one of the cowards. I pleaded that I did not understand the matter, that I was editor of *Fraser*, and should disturb the proprietors; mere paltry excuses to escape doing what I knew to be right. Ruskin was braver far, and spoke out like a man. “While all the world stands tremulous, shilly-shallying from the gutter,” Carlyle wrote Miss Bromley, “impetuous Ruskin plunges his rapier up to
the very hilt in the abominable belly of the vast blockhead-
ism, and leaves it staring very considerably.” 8

The monster, alas! was an enchanted monster, and, “as
the air, invulnerable.”9 Its hour had not come, and has not
yet, in spite of Ruskin’s rapier. Carlyle gave his money and
his name, but he was in no condition for rough struggling
with the “blatant beast.” He soon saw that he could make
no impression upon the Government, and that Eyre was in
no personal danger from the prosecution. He wrote a few
words to one of the newspapers, expressing briefly his own
feeling about the matter, and so left it.

Country very base and mad, so far as I survey its proceedings;
Bright Beales, Gladstone, Mill, & Co. busy on the “Suffrage
Question” (kindling up the slow canaille what they can): this and
“Oh, make the Nigger happy!” seem to be the two things needful
with these sad people. Sometimes [I] think the tug of revolution-
struggle may be even near for poor England, much nearer than I
once judged? Very questionable to me whether England won’t go
quite to smash under it, perhaps better than it do, having reached
such a pitch of spiritual beggary.10

The world was going its way, and not Carlyle’s. He was
finding a more congenial occupation for himself, in reviving
the history of his own young days, of the life at Ecclefechan
and Mainhill, with the old scenes and the old companions.
He had begun “languidly,” as he said, to write the “Reminiscences of Edward Irving,” which were more about
himself than his friend; and to recall and write down frag-
ments of his mother’s talk.

He allowed me to see as much of him as I liked. He did
not tell me what he was doing, but talked much on the sub-
ject of it. He often said—the wish no doubt suggesting the
expectation—that he thought his own end was near. He was
endeavouring to preserve the most precious parts of his rec-
collections, before they and he should pass away together.
The Irving memories were dear to him, but there was
something else that was still dearer. Putting these aside for
the time, he set himself to write a memoir of the beautiful
existence which had gone at the side of his own, a record of
what his wife had been to him, and a testimony of his own
appreciation. At their first acquaintance, it was she who
was to make a name in literature, and he was to have sup-
ported and stood by her. It was a consolation to him to de-
scribe the nature and the capabilities which had been sacrificed to himself, that the portrait of her might still survive. He was not writing it for the world. He finished it just before he went abroad, when he was expecting that in all probability he would never see England again. He left it sealed up, with directions to those into whose hands it might fall, that it was not to be published, no one being capable of properly editing it after he should be gone.

He had decided that he would try Menton. Lady Ashburton had entreated. His friends believed that change would be good for him. He himself, languid, indifferent, but having nothing of special consequence to retain him in England, had agreed to go. He was not equal to the journey alone. The same friend who had taken charge of him to Edinburgh undertook to place him safely under Lady Ashburton's roof, an act of respectful attention which Carlyle never forgot, “so chivalrous it was.” For Tyndall was not an idle gentleman, with time on his hands. He had his own hard work to attend to in London, and would be obliged to return on the instant. But he was accustomed to travelling. He was as good a courier as Neuberg, and to sacrifice a few days to Carlyle was an honour and a pleasure. They started on the 22nd of December, and in two days were transported from the London fogs to the sunny shores of the Mediterranean.

Carlyle was left in a new environment; nothing save the face of his hostess not utterly strange to him, among olive groves and palms and oranges, the mountains rising behind into the eternal snow, and the sea before his windows—Homer's violet sea at last under his eyes. Here he got his papers about him. Lady Ashburton left him to himself. He went on with his “Reminiscences,” and in the intervals wandered as he pleased. Everyone feels well on first reaching the Riviera. Carlyle slept soundly, discovered “real improvement” in himself, and was almost sorry to discover it.

Distinguished visitors called in passing on their way to or from Italy; among others, Mr. Gladstone, “on return from Rome & the Man of Sin,” “intending for Paris, and an interview with M. Fould.”

Gladstone, en route homewards, had called on Monday; and sat a
long time, talking,—principally waiting for Madame Bunsen his old friend, whom it was his one chance of seeing, as he had to leave for Paris next day—talk copious, ingenious, but of no worth or sincerity (pictures, literature, finance—prosperities, greatness of outlook for Italy, for &c.) a man ponderous, copious, of evident faculty, but all gone irrevocably into House of Commons shape; man once of some wisdom (or possibility of it), but now all as if possessed by the Prince or many Princes of the Power of the Air!15

His chief pleasure at Menton was in long walks about the neighbourhood. He was the best of literary landscape painters, and his Journal, with his letters to myself and others, are full of exquisite little sketches, like the pictures of the old masters, where you have not merely a natural scene before you, but the soul of the man who looks upon it. Shadows of the great sorrow, however, clung to him.

The party at Menton broke up in the second week in March. Lady Ashburton went to Rome and Naples, having tried in vain to induce Carlyle to accompany her. He prepared for home again, and, shrinking from the solitude waiting him in Cheyne Row, he wrote, before leaving, to ask his brother to meet him there, with some consciousness that he had not received, as graciously as he might have done, his brother’s attempts to live with him.

Tyndall’s escort was not needed a second time. He found his way back to Chelsea without misadventure. John Carlyle was waiting as he desired, and he settled in with more composure than he had felt since his bereavement. The “intrusions” had to be dealt with, but were not easily disposed of. Mrs. Carlyle once said she had the faculty of attracting all miserable people that wanted consolation. Carlyle seemed to attract everyone who wanted help for body or soul, or advice on the conduct of life. The number of people who worried him on such matters, most of them without a form of introduction, is hardly to be believed. Each post brought its pile of letters. One admirer wanted a situation under Government, another sent a manuscript to be read and recommended to a publisher, another complained that Nature had given him a hideous face; he had cursed his life, and cursed his mother for bearing him; what was he to do? All asked for interviews. Let them but see him, and they would convince him of their deserts. He was marvellously patient. He answered most of the letters, he saw most of the applicants.
He gave advice. He gave money, infinitely too much. Sometimes, when it was beyond endurance, he would order the servant to admit no strange face at all. In such cases men would watch in the street, and pounce upon him when he came out for his walk. I have been with him on such occasions, and have been astonished at the efforts which he would make to be kind. Once I recollect a girl, an entire stranger, wrote to him to say that in order to get books she had pawned some plate of her grandmother’s. She was in danger of discovery and ruin. Would Carlyle help her to redeem it? He consulted me. A relation of mine, who lived in the neighbourhood, made inquiry, saw the girl, and found that the story was true. He replied to her letter as the kindest of fathers might have done, paid the money, and saved her from shame. Sometimes the homage was more disinterested. I had just left his door one day, when a bright eager lass of seventeen or eighteen stopped me in the Row, and asked me if Thomas Carlyle lived there. I showed her the house, and her large eyes glowed as if she was looking upon a saint’s shrine. This pleased him when I mentioned it. The feeling was good and honest and deserved recognition. But altogether he was terribly worried. Intruders worried him. Public affairs worried him. Disraeli was bringing in his scandalous Reform Bill “to dish the Whigs.” Worse than all, there was no work cut out for him, and he could make none for himself.

In this tragic state Carlyle found one little thing to do which gave him a certain consolation. By his wife’s death he had become the absolute owner of the old estate of the Welshes at Craigenputtoch. An unrelenting fatality had carried off one by one all her relations on the father’s side, and there was not a single person left of the old line to whom it could be bequeathed. He thought that it ought not to lapse to his own family; and he determined to leave it to his country, not in his own name, but as far as possible in hers. With this intention he had a deed drawn, by which Craigenputtoch, after his death, was to become the property of the University of Edinburgh, the rents of it to be laid out in supporting poor and meritorious students there, under the title of “the John Welsh Bursaries.” Her name he could not give, because she had taken his own. Therefore he gave her father's.14
He remembered his wife's pensioners: but he had as long or a longer list of his own. No donation of his ever appeared in printed lists; what he gave he gave in secret, anonymously as here, or else with his own hand as one human being to another; and of him it may be truly said that the left hand did not know what the right was doing. The undeserving were seldom wholly refused. The deserving were never forgotten. I recollect an old man, past eighty, in Chelsea, who had refused parish help, and as long as he could move earned his living by wheeling cheap crockery about the streets. Carlyle had a genuine respect for him, and never missed a chance of showing it. Money was plentiful enough now, as he would mournfully observe. Edition followed edition of the completed works. He had more thousands now than he had hundreds when he published *Cromwell*—but he never altered his thrifty habits, never, even in extreme age, allowed himself any fresh indulgence. His one expensive luxury was charity.

The shadow of his lost wife seemed to rise between him and every other object on which he tried to fix his thoughts. If anything like duty called to him, however, he could still respond—and the political state of England did at this time demand a few words from him. Throughout his life he had been studying the social and political problems of modern Europe. For all disorders modern Europe had but one remedy, to abolish the subordination of man to man, to set every individual free, and give him a voice in the government, that he might look after his own interests. This once secured, with free room and no favour, all would compete on equal terms, and might be expected to fall into the places which naturally belonged to them. None at any rate could then complain of injustice; and peace, prosperity, and universal content would follow. Such was and is the theory; and if the human race, or the English race, were all wise and all good, and had unbounded territorial room over which to spread, something might be said for it. As the European world actually was, in the actual moral and material condition of European mankind, with no spiritual convictions, no sincere care for anything save money and what money could buy, this notion of universal liberty in Carlyle's opinion
could end in nothing save universal wreck. If the English nation had needed governing when they had a real religious belief, now, when their belief had become conventional, they needed it, he thought, infinitely more. They could bear the degree of freedom which they had already, only in virtue of ancient habits, contracted under wiser arrangements. They would need the very best men they had among them if they were to escape the cataracts of which he heard the approaching thunder. Yet it was quite certain to him that, with each extension of the franchise, those whom they would elect as their rulers would not be fitter men, but steadily inferior and more unfit. Under any conceivable franchise the persons chosen would represent the level of character and intelligence in those who chose them, neither more nor less, and therefore the lower the general average the worse the government would be. It had long been evident to him how things were going; but every descent has a bottom, and he had hoped up to this time that the lowest point had been reached. He knew how many fine qualities the English still possessed. He did not believe that the majority were bent of themselves on these destructive courses. If the wisest and ablest would come forward with a clear and honourable profession of their true convictions, he had considered it at least possible that the best part of the nation would respond before it was too late. The Tories had just come into office. He had small confidence in them, but they at least repudiated the new creed, and represented the old national traditions. They had an opportunity, if they would use it, of insisting that the poor should no longer be robbed by false weights and measures and adulterated goods, that the eternal war should cease between employers and employed, and the profits of labour should be apportioned by some rule of equity; that the splendid colonial inheritance which their forefathers had won should be opened to the millions who were suffocating in the fetid alleys of our towns; that these poor people should be enabled to go where they could lead human lives again. Here, and not by ballot-boxes and anarchic liberty, lay the road to salvation. Statesmen who dared to try it would have Nature and her laws fighting for them. They might be thrown out,
but they would come back again—come in stronger and stronger, for the good sense of England would be on their side.

With a languid contempt, for he half-felt that he had been indulging in a dream, Carlyle in this year found the Tories preparing to outbid their rivals, in their own arts or their own folly, courting the votes of the mob by the longest plunge yet ventured into the democratic whirlpool; and in the midst of his own grief he was sorry for his country.

Disraeli had given the word, and his party had submitted to be educated. Political emancipation was to be the road for them—not practical administration and war against lies and roguery. Carlyle saw that we were in the rapids, and could not any more get out of them; but he wished to relieve his own soul, and he put together the pamphlet which he called “Shooting Niagara: and After?” When Frederick Maurice published his heresies about Tartarus, intimating that it was not a place, but a condition, and that the wicked are in Tartarus already, James Spedding observed to me that “one was relieved to know that it was no worse.” Carlyle’s Niagara, now that we are in the middle of it, seems to us for the present nothing very dreadful, and we are preparing with much equanimity, at this moment, to go down the second cataract. The broken water, so far, lies on the other side of St. George’s Channel. The first and immediate effect of the Reform Bill of 1867 was the overthrow of Protestant ascendency in Ireland. After five centuries of failure in that country, the English Protestants succeeded in planting an adequate number of loyal colonists in the midst of an incurably hostile population, and thus did contrive to exercise some peaceful influence there, and make constitutional government in that island not wholly impossible. The English Democracy, as soon as they were in possession of power, destroyed that influence. The result we have partly seen, and we shall see more fully hereafter. Carlyle, however, did not anticipate, as the consequence of the Niagara shooting, any immediate catastrophe; not even this in Ireland. He meant by it merely the complete development of the present tendency to regard money-making as the business of life, and the more rapid degradation of the popular moral character—at the end of which perhaps,
but still a long way off, would be found some "scandalous Copper Captaincy." The believers in progress on these lines, therefore, may breathe freely, and, like Spedding, be "glad that it is no worse."

"Shooting Niagara" appeared first in *Macmillan's Magazine* for August 1867. It was corrected and republished as a pamphlet in September, and was Carlyle's last public utterance on English politics. He thought but little of it, and was aware how useless it would prove.

A stereotyped edition of the "Collected Works" was now to be issued, and, conscientious as ever, Carlyle set himself to revise and correct the whole series. He worked hard on the "revising" business, but felt no enthusiasm about the interest which "his works" were exciting; "nothing but languor, contempt, and indifference for said works—or at least for their readers and them." "The works had indeed cost him his life, and were in some measure from the heart, and all he could do. But the readers of them were and had been—what should he say?" and in fact "no man's work in this world could demand for itself the smallest doit of wages, or were intrinsically better than zero. That was the fact, when one had arrived where he had arrived." The money which was now coming in was actually painful.

The persecution of General Eyre had been protracted with singular virulence. He had been recalled from Jamaica. His pension was withheld, and he was financially a ruined man. The Eyre Committee continued, doing what it could for him. Carlyle was anxious as ever. I never knew him more anxious about anything. It had been resolved to present a petition in Eyre's behalf to the Government. Carlyle drew a sketch of one "tolerably to his own mind," and sent it to the Committee. It appeared, however, not to be to their minds. They thanked him, found what he said "fine and true"; but, in short, they did not like it, and he acquiesced.

Proof-sheets of the new edition of his works were waiting for him [in the spring of 1868]. He found himself "willing to read those Books &c, and follow the Printer thro' them,—as almost the one thing I am good for, in those final down-pressed empty & desolate years." The demand for them was "mainly indifferent" to him. "What are my bits of 'Works,'
what are anybody's 'Works'? Those whom I wish to please are sunk into the grave: the work & its praises & 'successes' are to me, more and more, a reminiscence merely.' On the other hand, "the thought of a selection from Her Letters &c (could I but execute it well, and leave it legible behind me, 'to be printed after 20 years'?]) has not yet quitted me;—nor should."\textsuperscript{19} The selection and the copying was taken in hand.

Meantime his life fell back into something like its old routine. While his strength lasted he went annually to Scotland; never so happy as among his own kindred. Yet even among them he was less happy than sadly peaceful.

An incident befell him in the beginning of 1869 of a pleasing kind. He received an intimation from Dean Stanley that her Majesty would like to become personally acquainted with a man of whom she had heard so much, and in whose late sorrows she had been so interested. He was not a courtier; no one could suspect him of seeking the favour of the great of this world, royal or noble. But for the Queen throughout his life he had entertained always a loyal respect and pity, wishing only that she could be less enslaved by "the talking apparatus" at Westminster. He had felt for her in her bereavement, as she had remembered him in his own.

The meeting was at the Westminster Deanery:

The Queen was really very gracious and pretty in her demeanour thro'out; rose gently in my esteem, by everything that happened, did not fall in any point incorrect & tho' well-meaning, worthless. — The "Interview" was quietly very mournful to me; the one point of real interest, a sombre thought, "Alas, how would it have cheered Her bright soul (for my sake), had she been here!'\textsuperscript{20}

The "Letters," however, and his own occupation with them, were the absorbing interest, although to me at this time he never mentioned the subject. Though I was aware that he was engaged in some way with his autobiography, I had no conjecture as to what it was. Finished in a sort the collection was, but it needed close revision, and there was an introductory narrative still to be written. Carlyle, however, could then touch it no further, nor did a time ever come when he felt himself equal to taking it up again. It was tied together and laid aside for the present, and no
Mary Aitken Carlyle. The daughter of Carlyle's sister Jean, Mary Aitken Carlyle came to Cheyne Row to take care of her uncle in 1868 and stayed with him until his death. In 1879 she married her first cousin A. Carlyle. After Carlyle's death she became involved in an acrimonious quarrel with Froude over the disposition of Carlyle's papers. (Courtesy of the Columbia University Libraries.)
resolution was then formed as to what was to be done with it.

This subject being off his mind, he was able to think more calmly of ordinary things. Ruskin was becoming more and more interesting to him. Ruskin seemed to be catching the fiery cross from his hand, as his own strength was failing. Writing this autumn to myself, he said, "One day, by express desire on both sides, I had Ruskin for some hours. Really interesting & entertaining... He is full of projects, of generous prospective activities, some of which, I opined to him, would prove chimerical. There is (in singular environment) a ray of real Heaven in poor Ruskin;—passages of that last book (Queen of the Air) went into my heart like arrows." 21

Among the infirmities of age, a tremulous motion began to show itself in his right hand, which made writing difficult and threatened to make it impossible. It was a twitching of the muscles, an involuntary lateral jerk of the arm when he tried to use it. And no misfortune more serious could have befallen him, for "it came," he said, "as a sentence not to do any more work while thou livest"—a very hard one, for he had felt a return of his energy. "In brighter hours he saw many things which he might write, were the mechanical means still there." He could expand the thoughts which lay scattered in his Journal. He could occupy himself at any rate, in itself so necessary to so restless a spirit. He tried "dictation," but it resulted only in "diluted moonshine." 22 Letters he could dictate, but nothing else, and the case was cruel.

The finer forces of nature were not sleeping everywhere, and Europe witnessed this summer [1870], in the French and German war, an exhibition of Divine judgement which was after Carlyle's own heart. So suddenly too it came; the whole sky growing black with storm, and the air ablaze with lightning, "in an hour when no man looked for it." France he had long known was travelling on a bad road, as bad as England's, or worse. The literature there was "a new astonishing Phallus-Worship," "with Balzac, Sue and Company for Evangelists, and Madame Sand for Virgin." 23 The Church getting on its feet again, with its Pope's infallibility, etc., was the re-establishment of exploded lies. As the peo-
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ple were, such was their government. The "Copper Captain," in his eyes, was the abomination of desolation, a mean and perjured adventurer. He had known him personally in his old London days, and had measured his nature. Prince Napoleon had once spent an evening in Cheyne Row. Carlyle had spoken his mind freely, as he always did, and the Prince had gone away inquiring "if that man was mad."24 Carlyle's madness was clearer-sighted than Imperial cunning. He regarded the Emperor's presence on a throne which he had won by so evil means as a moral indignity, and had never doubted that in the end Providence would in some way set its mark upon him. When war was declared, he felt that the end was coming. He had prophesied, in the Life of Frederick, that Prussia would become the leading State of Germany, perhaps of Europe. Half that prophecy had been fulfilled already through the war of 1866. The issue of the war with France was never for a moment doubtful to him, though neither he nor any one could foresee how complete the German victory would be.

France had so clearly been the aggressor in the war with Germany that the feeling in England at the outset had been on the German side. The general belief, too, had been that France would win. Sympathy, however, grew with her defeats. The English are always restive when other nations are fighting, and fancy that they ought to have a voice in the settlement of every quarrel. There is a generous disposition in us, too, to take the weaker side; to assume that the stronger party is in the wrong, especially if he takes advantage of his superiority. When Germany began to formulate her terms of peace, when it became clear that she meant, as Carlyle foretold, to take back Alsace and Lorraine, there was a cry of spoliation, sanctioned unfortunately in high Liberal quarters where the truth ought to have been better known. A sore feeling began to show itself, aggravated perhaps by the Russian business,25 which, if it did not threaten to take active form, encouraged France to prolong its resistance. The past history of the relations between France and Germany was little understood in England. Carlyle perhaps alone among us knew completely how France had come by those essentially German provinces, or how the bill was now
being presented for payment which had been running for centuries. To allay the outcry which was rising he reluctantly buckled on his armour again. With his niece's help he dictated a long letter to the *Times*, telling his story simply and clearly, without a trace of mannerism or exaggeration.  

It appeared in the middle of November, and at once cooled the water which might otherwise have boiled over. We think little of dangers escaped; but wise men everywhere felt that in writing it he had rendered a service of the highest kind to European order and justice. His own allusions to what he had done are slight and brief. As usual he thought but little of his own performance.

Carlyle's letter most effectually answered its purpose. There was no more talk of English interposition. M. Thiers came over to beg for help; if not material, at least moral. We had to decline to interfere, and France was left to its fate—a fate terrible beyond Carlyle's expectation, for Paris, after being taken by the Germans, had to be recovered again out of the hands of the French Commune amidst the ashes of the Tuileries, and a second "September" massacre, to be avenged by a massacre in turn.

It was Carlyle's deliberate conviction that a fate like that of Paris, and far worse than had yet befallen Paris, lay directly ahead of all great modern cities, if their affairs were allowed to drift on under *laissez-faire* and so-called Liberty.

But the world and its concerns, even Franco-German wars and Paris revolutions, could not abstract his mind, except fitfully, from the central thoughts which occupied his heart. His interest had essentially gone from the Present to the Past and Future, the Past so painfully beautiful, the Future with the veil over it which no hand had lifted or could lift. Could he but hope to see *her* once more, if only for five minutes? By the side of this the rest was nothing.

In the following spring there are the saddest notices of the failure of his hand, as if he was still eager to write something, but could not:

> Loss of my own right hand for writing with a terrible loss; never shall I learn to "write by dictation," I perceive. Alas, alas! for I might still work a little if I had my hand. And the *Night* cometh wherein no man can work! 

Carlyle's impatience with his inability to write perhaps arose from an eagerness to leave complete, with a fitting
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introduction, the letters and memorials of his wife, before making a final disposition of the manuscript. He could not do it. He was conscious that he would never be able to do it, and that he must decide on some other course. I was still his constant companion, but up to this time he had never mentioned these memoirs to me. Of her he spoke continually, always in the same remorseful tone, always with bitter self-reproach; but of the monument which he had raised to her memory he had never spoken at all. One day—the middle or end of June, 1871—he brought, himself, to my house a large parcel of papers. He put it in my hands. He told me to take it simply and absolutely as my own, without reference to any other person or persons, and to do with it as I pleased after he was gone. He explained, when he saw me surprised, that it was an account of his wife's history, that it was incomplete, that he could himself form no opinion whether it ought to be published or not, that he could do no more to it, and must pass it over to me. He wished never to hear of it again. I must judge. I must publish it, the whole, or part—or else destroy it all, if I thought that this would be the wiser thing to do. He said nothing of any limit of time. I was to wait only till he was dead, and he was then in constant expectation of his end. Of himself he desired that no biography should be written, and that this Memoir, if any, should be the authorised record of him. So extraordinary a mark of confidence touched me deeply, but the responsibility was not to be hastily accepted. I was then going into the country for the summer. I said that I would take the manuscript with me, and would either write to him or would give him an answer when we met in the autumn.

On examining the present which had been thus singularly made to me I found that it consisted of a transcript of the "Reminiscence" of Mrs. Carlyle, which he had written immediately after her death, with a copy of the old direction of 1866, that it was not to be published; two other fragmentary accounts of her family and herself; and an attempt at a preface, which had been abandoned. The rest was the collection of her own letters, etc.—almost twice as voluminous as that which has been since printed—with notes, commentaries, and introductory explanations of his own. The perusal was infinitely affecting. I saw at once the meaning of his passionate expressions of remorse, of his allusions to John-
son's penance, and of his repeated declaration that some­thing like it was due from himself. He had never properly understood till her death how much she had suffered, and how much he had himself to answer for. She, it appeared, in her young days had aspired after literary distinction. He had here built together, at once a memorial of the genius which had been sacrificed to himself, and of those faults in himself which, though they were faults merely of an irri­table temperament, and though he extravagantly exaggerated them, had saddened her married life. Something of this I had observed, but I had not known the extent of it; and this ac­tion of Carlyle's struck me as something so beautiful, so unexampled in the whole history of literature, that I could but admire it with all my heart. Faults there had been; yes, faults no doubt, but such faults as most married men commit daily and hourly, and never think them faults at all: yet to him his conduct seemed so heinous that he could intend deliberately that this record should be the only history that was to survive of himself. In his most heroic life there was nothing more heroic, more characteristic of him, more indic­ative at once of his humility and his intense truthfulness. He regarded it evidently as an expiation of his own conduct, all that he had now to offer, and something which removed the shadow between himself and her memory. The question before me was whether I was to say that the atonement ought not to be completed, and that the bravest action which I had ever heard of should be left unexecuted, or whether I was to bear the reproach, if the letters were given to the world, of having uncovered the errors of the best friend that I had ever had. Carlyle himself could not direct the publi­cation, from a feeling, I suppose, of delicacy, and dread of ostentation. I could not tell him that there was nothing in his conduct to be repented of, for there was much, and more than I had guessed; and I had again to reflect that, if I burnt the manuscript, Mrs. Carlyle had been a voluminous letter-writer, and had never been reticent about her griev­ances. Other letters of hers would infallibly in time come to light, telling the same story. I should then have done Car­lyle's memory irreparable wrong. He had himself been ready with a frank and noble confession, and the world, after its first astonishment, would have felt increased admiration for
the man who had the courage to make it. I should have stepped between him and the completion of a purpose which would have washed his reputation clear of the only reproach which could be brought against it. Had Carlyle been an ordinary man, his private life would have concerned no one but himself, and no one would have cared to inquire into it. But he belonged to the exceptional few of whom it was certain that everything that could be known would eventually be sifted out. Sooner or later the whole truth would be revealed. Should it be told voluntarily by himself, or maliciously by others hereafter? That was the question.

When I saw him again after the summer we talked the subject over with the fullest confidence. He was nervously anxious to know my resolution. I told him that, so far as I could then form an opinion, I thought that the letters might be published, provided the prohibition was withdrawn against publishing his own Memoir of Mrs. Carlyle. That would show what his feeling had really been, and what she had really been, which also might perhaps be misconstrued. It would have been hard on both of them if the sharp censures of Mrs. Carlyle's pen had been left unrelieved. To this Carlyle instantly assented. The copy of the Memoir had indeed been given to me among the other papers, that I might make use of it if I liked, and he had perhaps forgotten that any prohibition had been attached, but I required, and I received, a direct permission to print it. The next question was about the time of publication. On the last page of the manuscript was attached a pencil note naming, first, twenty years after his death. The "after my death" had been erased, but the twenty years remained. Though I was considerably younger than he was, I could not calculate on living twenty years, and the letters, if published at all, were to be published by me. When he had given them to me in June he had told me only that I was to wait till he was gone. He said now that ten years would be enough—ten years from that time. There were many allusions in the letters to people and things, anecdotes, criticisms, observations, written in the confidence of private correspondence, which ought not to be printed within so short a time. I mentioned some of these, which he directed me to omit.

On these conditions I accepted the charge, but still only
hypothetically. It had been entrusted to me alone, and I wished for further advice. He said that if I was in a difficulty I might consult John Forster, and he added afterwards his brother John. John Carlyle I had never an opportunity of consulting. I presumed that John Carlyle was acquainted with his brother's intentions, and would communicate with me on the subject if he wished to do so; but I sent the manuscript to Forster, that I might learn generally his opinion about it. Forster had been one of Mrs. Carlyle's dearest friends, much more intimate with her than I had been. He, if any one, could say whether so open a revelation of the life at Cheyne Row was one which ought to be made. Forster read the letters. I suppose that he felt as uncertain as I had done, the reasons against the publication being so obvious and so weighty. But he admired equally the integrity which had led Carlyle to lay bare his inner history. He felt as I did, that Carlyle was an exceptional person, whose character the world had a right to know, and he found it difficult to come to a conclusion. To me at any rate he gave no opinion at all. He merely said that he would talk to Carlyle himself, and would tell him that he must make my position perfectly clear in his will, or trouble would certainly arise about it. Nothing more passed between Forster and myself upon the subject. Carlyle, however, in the will which he made two years later bequeathed the manuscript to me specifically in terms of the tenderest confidence. He desired that I should consult Forster and his brother when the occasion came for a final resolution; but especially he gave the trust to me, charging me to do my best and wisest with it. He mentioned seven years or ten from that date (1873)\(^2\) as a term at which the manuscript might be published; but, that no possible question might be raised hereafter on that part of the matter, he left the determination of the time to myself, and requested others to accept my judgement as his own.

Under these conditions the Letters and Memorials remained in my hands. At the date of his will of 1873 he adhered to his old resolution, that of himself there should be no biography, and that these letters and these letters alone should be the future record of him. Within a few weeks or months, however, he discovered that various persons who had been admitted to partial intimacy with him were busy
upon his history. If he was to figure before the world at all after his death he preferred that there should be an authenti­c portrait of him; and therefore at the close of this same year (1873) again, without note or warning, he sent me his own and his wife's private papers, journals, correspondence, “reminiscences,” and other fragments, a collection overwhelming from its abundance, for of his letters from the earliest period of his life his family and friends had preserved every one that he had written, while he in turn seemed to have destroyed none of theirs. “Take them,” he said to me, “and do what you can with them. All I can say to you is, Burn freely. If you have any affection for me, the more you burn the better.”

I burnt nothing, and it was well that I did not, for a year before his death he desired me, when I had done with these manuscripts to give them to his niece. But indeed everything of his own which I found in these papers tended only to raise his character. They showed him, in all his outward conduct, the same noble, single-minded, simple-hearted, affectionate man which I myself had always known him to be; while his inner nature, with this fresh insight into it, seemed ever grander and more imposing.

The new task which had been laid upon me complicated the problem of the Letters and Memorials. My first hope was, that, in the absence of further definite instructions from himself, I might interweave parts of Mrs. Carlyle's letters with his own correspondence in an ordinary narrative, passing lightly over the rest, and touching the dangerous places only so far as was unavoidable. In this view I wrote at leisure the greatest part of “the first forty years” of his life. The evasion of the difficulty was perhaps cowardly, but it was not unnatural. I was forced back, however, into the straighter and better course.