English Men of Letters
EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY
VOL. X

GIBBON
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CHAPTER I.

GIBBON'S EARLY LIFE UP TO THE TIME OF HIS LEAVING OXFORD.

Edward Gibbon was born at Putney, near London, on 27th April in the year 1737. After the reformation of the calendar his birthday became the 8th of May. He was the eldest of a family of seven children; but his five brothers and only sister all died in early infancy, and he could remember in after life his sister alone, whom he also regretted.

He is at some pains in his Memoirs to show the length and quality of his pedigree, which he traces back to the times of the Second and Third Edwards. Noting the fact, we pass on to a nearer ancestor, his grand-

1 Gibbon's Memoirs and Letters are of such easy access that I have not deemed it necessary to encumber these pages with references to them. Any one who wishes to control my statements will have no difficulty in doing so with the Miscellaneous Works, edited by Lord Sheffield, in his hand. Whenever I advance anything that seems to require corroboration, I have been careful to give my authority.
father, who seems to have been a person of considerable energy of character and business talent. He made a large fortune, which he lost in the South-Sea Scheme, and then made another before his death. He was one of the Commissioners of Customs, and sat at the Board with the poet Prior; Bolingbroke was heard to declare that no man knew better than Mr. Edward Gibbon the commerce and finances of England. His son, the historian’s father, was a person of very inferior stamp. He was educated at Westminster and Cambridge, travelled on the Continent, sat in Parliament, lived beyond his means as a country gentleman, and here his achievements came to an end. He seems to have been a kindly but a weak and impulsive man, who however had the merit of obtaining and deserving his son’s affection by genial sympathy and kindly treatment.

Gibbon’s childhood was passed in chronic illness, debility, and disease. All attempts to give him a regular education were frustrated by his precarious health. The longest period he ever passed at school were two years at Westminster, but he was constantly moved from one school to another. This even his delicacy can hardly explain, and it must have been fatal to all sustained study. Two facts he mentions of his school life, which paint the manners of the age. In the year 1746 such was the strength of party spirit that he, a child of nine years of age, “was reviled and buffeted for the sins of his Tory ancestors.” Secondly, the worthy pedagogues of that day found no readier way of leading the most studious of boys to a love of science than corporal punishment. “At the expense of many tears and some blood I purchased the knowledge of the Latin syntax.” Whether all love of study would
have been flogged out of him if he had remained at school, it is difficult to say, but it is not an improbable supposition that this would have happened. The risk was removed by his complete failure of health. "A strange nervous affection, which alternately contracted his legs and produced, without any visible symptom, the most excruciating pain," was his chief affliction, followed by intervals of languor and debility. The saving of his life during these dangerous years Gibbon unhesitatingly ascribes to the more than maternal care of his aunt, Catherine Porten, on writing whose name for the first time in his Memoirs, "he felt a tear of gratitude trickling down his cheek." "If there be any," he continues, "as I trust there are some, who rejoice that I live, to that dear and excellent woman they must hold themselves indebted. Many anxious and solitary hours and days did she consume in the patient trial of relief and amusement; many wakeful nights did she sit by my bedside in trembling expectation that every hour would be my last." Gibbon is rather anxious to get over these details, and declares he has no wish to expatiating on a "disgusting topic." This is quite in the style of the ancien régime. There was no blame attached to any one for being ill in those days, but people were expected to keep their infirmities to themselves. "People knew how to live and die in those days, and kept their infirmities out of sight. You might have the gout, but you must walk about all the same without making grimaces. It was a point of good breeding to hide one's sufferings." 1 Similarly Walpole was much offended by a too faithful publication of Madame de Sévigné's Letters. "Heaven

1 George Sand, quoted in Taine's Ancien Régime, p. 181.
forbid," he says, "that I should say that the letters of Madame de Sévigné were bad. I only meant that they were full of family details and mortal distempers, to which the most immortal of us are subject." But Gibbon was above all things a veracious historian, and fortunately has not refrained from giving us a truthful picture of his childhood.

Of his studies, or rather his reading—his early and invincible love of reading, which he would not exchange for the treasures of India—he gives us a full account, and we notice at once the interesting fact that a considerable portion of the historical field afterwards occupied by his great work had been already gone over by Gibbon before he was well in his teens.

"My indiscriminate appetite subsided by degrees into the historic line, and since philosophy has exploded all innate ideas and natural propensities, I must ascribe the choice to the assiduous perusal of the *Universal History* as the octavo volumes successively appeared. This unequal work referred and introduced me to the Greek and Roman historians, to as many at least as were accessible to an English reader. All that I could find were greedily devoured, from Littlebury's lame *Herodotus* to Spelman's valuable *Xenophon*, to the pompous folios of Gordon's *Tacitus*, and a ragged *Procopius* of the beginning of the last century." Referring to an accident which threw the continuation of Echard's *Roman History* in his way, he says, "To me the reigns of the successors of Constantine were absolutely new, and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast. . . . I procured the second and
third volumes of Howell's *History of the World*, which exhibit the Byzantine period on a larger scale. Mahomet and his Saracens soon fixed my attention, and some instinct of criticism directed me to the genuine sources. Simon Ockley first opened my eyes, and I was led from one book to another till I had ranged round the circle of Oriental history. Before I was sixteen I had exhausted all that could be learned in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks, and the same ardour urged me to guess at the French of D'Herbelot and to construe the barbarous Latin of Pocock's *Abulfaragius.* Here is in rough outline a large portion at least of the *Decline and Fall* already surveyed. The fact shows how deep was the sympathy that Gibbon had for his subject, and that there was a sort of pre-established harmony between his mind and the historical period he afterwards illustrated.

Up to the age of fourteen it seemed that Gibbon, as he says, was destined to remain through life an illiterate cripple. But as he approached his sixteenth year, a great change took place in his constitution, and his diseases, instead of growing with his growth and strengthening with his strength, wonderfully vanished. This unexpected recovery was not seized by his father in a rational spirit, as affording a welcome opportunity of repairing the defects of a hitherto imperfect education. Instead of using the occasion thus presented of recovering some of the precious time lost, of laying a sound foundation of scholarship and learning on which a superstructure at the university or elsewhere could be ultimately built, he carried the lad off in an impulse of perplexity and impatience, and entered him as a gentleman commoner at Magdalen College just before he
had completed his fifteenth year (1752, April 3). This was perhaps the most unwise step he could have taken under the circumstances. Gibbon was too young and too ignorant to profit by the advantages offered by Oxford to a more mature student, and his status as a gentleman commoner seemed intended to class him among the idle and dissipated who are only expected to waste their money and their time. A good education is generally considered as reflecting no small credit on its possessor; but in the majority of cases it reflects credit on the wise solicitude of his parents or guardians rather than on himself. If Gibbon escaped the peril of being an ignorant and frivolous lounging, the merit was his own.

At no period in their history had the English universities sunk to a lower condition as places of education than at the time when Gibbon went up to Oxford. To speak of them as seats of learning seems like irony; they were seats of nothing but coarse living and clownish manners, the centres where all the faction, party spirit, and bigotry of the country were gathered to a head. In this evil pre-eminence both of the universities and all the colleges appear to have been upon a level, though Lincoln College, Oxford, is mentioned as a bright exception in John Wesley's day to the prevalent degeneracy. The strange thing is that, with all their neglect of learning and morality, the colleges were not the resorts of jovial if unseemly boon companionship; they were collections of quarrelsome and spiteful litigants, who spent their time in angry lawsuits. The indecent contentions between Bentley and the Fellows of Trinity were no isolated scandal. They are best known and remembered on account of the eminence of the chief disputants, and of the melancholy waste of Bentley's
genius which they occasioned. Hearne writes of Oxford in 1726, "There are such differences now in the University of Oxford (hardly one college but where all the members are busied in law business and quarrels not at all relating to the promotion of learning), that good letters decay every day, insomuch that this ordination on Trinity Sunday at Oxford there were no fewer (as I am informed) than fifteen denied orders for insufficiency, which is the more to be noted because our bishops, and those employed by them, are themselves illiterate men."¹ The state of things had not much improved twenty or thirty years later when Gibbon went up, but perhaps it had improved a little. He does not mention lawsuits as a favourite pastime of the Fellows. "The Fellows or monks of my time," he says, "were decent, easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder: their days were filled by a series of uniform employments—the chapel, the hall, the coffee-house, and the common room—till they retired weary and well satisfied to a long slumber. From the toil of reading, writing, or thinking they had absolved their consciences. Their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes, and private scandal. Their dull and deep potations excused the brisk intemperance of youth, and their constitutional toasts were not expressive of the most lively loyalty to the House of Hanover." Some Oxonians perhaps could still partly realise the truth of this original picture by their recollections of faint and feeble copies of it drawn from their experience in youthful days. It seems to be certain that the universities, far from setting a model of

¹ Social Life at the English Universities. By Christopher Wordsworth. Page 57.
good living, were really below the average standard of the morals and manners of the age, and the standard was not high. Such a satire as the *Terra Filius* of Amhurst cannot be accepted without large deductions; but the caricaturist is compelled by the conditions of his craft to aim at the *true seeming*, if he neglects the true, and with the benefit of this limitation the *Terra Filius* reveals a deplorable and revolting picture of vulgarity, insolence, and licence. The universities are spoken of in terms of disparagement by men of all classes. Lord Chesterfield speaks of the "rust" of Cambridge as something of which a polished man should promptly rid himself. Adam Smith showed his sense of the defects of Oxford in a stern section of the *Wealth of Nations*, written twenty years after he had left the place. Even youths like Gray and West, fresh from Eton, express themselves with contempt for their respective universities. "Consider me," says the latter, writing from Christ Church, "very seriously, here is a strange country, inhabited by things that call themselves Doctors and Masters of Arts, a country flowing with syllogisms and ale; where Horace and Virgil are equally unknown." Gray, answering from Peterhouse, can only do justice to his feelings by quoting the words of the Hebrew prophet, and insists that Isaiah had Cambridge equally with Babylon in view when he spoke of the wild beasts and wild asses, of the satyrs that dance, of an inhabitation of dragons and a court for owls.

Into such untoward company was Gibbon thrust by his careless father at the age of fifteen. That he succumbed to the unwholesome atmosphere cannot surprise us. He does not conceal, perhaps he rather exaggerates,
in his Memoirs, the depth of his fall. As Bunyan in a state of grace accused himself of dreadful sins which in all likelihood he never committed, so it is probable that Gibbon, in his old age, when study and learning were the only passions he knew, reflected with too much severity on the boyish freaks of his university life. Moreover there appears to have been nothing coarse or unworthy in his dissipation; he was simply idle. He justly lays much of the blame on the authorities. To say that the discipline was lax would be to pay it an unmerited compliment. There was no discipline at all. He lived in Magdalen as he might have lived at the Angel or the Mitre Tavern. He not only left his college, but he left the university, whenever he liked. In one winter he made a tour to Bath, another to Buckinghamshire, and he made four excursions to London, “without once hearing the voice of admonition, without once feeling the hand of control.” Of study he had just as much and as little as he pleased.

“As soon as my tutor had sounded the insufficiency of his disciple in school learning, he proposed that we should read every morning from ten to eleven the comedies of Terence. During the first weeks I constantly attended these lessons in my tutor’s room; but as they appeared equally devoid of profit and pleasure, I was once tempted to try the experiment of a formal apology. The apology was accepted with a smile. I repeated the offence with less ceremony: the excuse was admitted with the same indulgence; the slightest motive of laziness or indisposition, the most trifling avocation at home or abroad was allowed as a worthy impediment, nor did my tutor appear conscious of my absence or
neglect." No wonder he spoke with indignation of such scandalous neglect. "To the University of Oxford," he says, "I acknowledge no obligation, and she will as readily renounce me for a son, as I am willing to disclaim her for a mother. I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College; they proved the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life. The reader will pronounce between the school and the scholar." This is only just and fully merited by the abuses denounced. One appreciates the anguish of the true scholar mourning over lost time as a miser over lost gold. There was another side of the question which naturally did not occur to Gibbon, but which may properly occur to us. Did Gibbon lose as much as he thought in missing the scholastic drill of the regular public school and university man? Something he undoubtedly lost: he was never a finished scholar, up to the standard even of his own day. If he had been, is it certain that the accomplishment would have been all gain? It may be doubted. At a later period Gibbon read the classics with the free and eager curiosity of a thoughtful mind. It was a labour of love, of passionate ardour, similar to the manly zeal of the great scholars of the Renaissance. This appetite had not been blunted by enforced toil in a prescribed groove. How much of that zest for antiquity, of that keen relish for the classic writers which he afterwards acquired and retained through life, might have been quenched if he had first made their acquaintance as school-books? Above all, would he have looked on the ancient world with such freedom and originality as he afterwards gained, if he had worn through youth the harness of academical study? These questions do not suggest an answer, but they may furnish a doubt.
Oxford and Cambridge for nearly a century have been turning out crowds of thorough-paced scholars of the orthodox pattern. It is odd that the two greatest historians who have been scholars as well—Gibbon and Grote—were not university-bred men.

As if to prove by experiment where the fault lay, in “the school or the scholar,” Gibbon had no sooner left Oxford for the long vacation, than his taste for study returned, and, not content with reading, he attempted original composition. The subject he selected was a curious one for a youth in his sixteenth year. It was an attempt to settle the chronology of the age of Sesostiris, and shows how soon the austere side of history had attracted his attention. “In my childish balance,” he says, “I presumed to weigh the systems of Scaliger and Petavius, of Marsham and of Newton; and my sleep has been disturbed by the difficulty of reconciling the Septuagint with the Hebrew computation.” Of course his essay had the usual value of such juvenile productions; that is, none at all, except as an indication of early bias to serious study of history. On his return to Oxford, the age of Sesostiris was wisely relinquished. He indeed soon commenced a line of study which was destined to have a lasting influence on the remainder of his course through life.

He had an inborn taste for theology and the controversies which have arisen concerning religious dogma. “From my childhood,” he says, “I had been fond of religious disputation: my poor aunt has often been puzzled by the mysteries which she strove to believe.” How he carried the taste into mature life, his great chapters on the heresies and controversies of the Early Church are there to show. This inclination for
theology, coexisting with a very different temper towards religious sentiment, recalls the similar case of the author of the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, the illustrious Pierre Bayle, whom Gibbon resembled in more ways than one. At Oxford his religious education, like everything else connected with culture, had been entirely neglected. It seems hardly credible, yet we have his word for it, that he never subscribed or studied the Articles of the Church of England, and was never confirmed. When he first went up, he was judged to be too young, but the Vice-Chancellor directed him to return as soon as he had completed his fifteenth year, recommending him in the meantime to the instruction of his college. "My college forgot to instruct; I forgot to return, and was myself forgotten by the first magistrate of the university. Without a single lecture, either public or private, either Christian or Protestant, without any academical subscription, without any episcopal ordination, I was left by light of my catechism to grope my way to the chapel and communion table, where I was admitted without question how far or by what means I might be qualified to receive the sacrament. Such almost incredible neglect was productive of the worst mischiefs." What did Gibbon mean by this last sentence? Did he, when he wrote it, towards the end of his life, regret the want of early religious instruction? Nothing leads us to think so, or to suppose that his subsequent loss of faith was a heavy grief, supported, but painful to bear. His mind was by nature positive, or even pagan, and he had nothing of what the Germans call *religiosität* in him. Still there is a passage in his Memoirs where he oddly enough laments not having selected the *fat*
slumber of the Church as an eligible profession. Did he reflect that perhaps the neglect of his religious education at Oxford had deprived him of a bishopric or a good deanery, and the learned leisure which such positions at that time conferred on those who cared for it? He could not feel that he was morally, or even spiritually, unfit for an office filled in his own time by such men as Warburton and Hurd. He would not have disgraced the episcopal bench; he would have been dignified, courteous, and hospitable; a patron and promoter of learning, we may be sure. His literary labours would probably have consisted of an edition of a Greek play or two, and certainly some treatise on the Evidences of Christianity. But in that case we should not have had the Decline and Fall.

The "blind activity of idleness" to which he was exposed at Oxford, prevented any result of this kind. For want of anything better to do, he was led to read Middleton's Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are Supposed to have Subsisted in the Christian Church. Gibbon says that the effect of Middleton's "bold criticism" upon him was singular, and that instead of making him a sceptic, it made him more of a believer. He might have reflected that it is the commonest of occurrences for controversialists to produce exactly the opposite result to that which they intend, and that as many an apology for Christianity has sown the first seeds of infidelity, so an attack upon it might well intensify faith. What follows is very curious. "The elegance of style and freedom of argument were repelled by a shield of prejudice. I still revered the character, or rather the names of the saints and fathers whom Dr. Middleton exposes; nor could he
destroy my implicit belief that the gift of miraculous powers was continued in the Church during the first four or five centuries of Christianity. But I was unable to resist the weight of historical evidence, that within the same period most of the leading doctrines of Popery were already introduced in theory and practice. Nor was my conclusion absurd that miracles are the test of truth, and that the Church must be orthodox and pure which was so often approved by the visible interposition of the Deity. The marvellous tales which are boldly attested by the Basils and Chrysostoms, the Austins and Jeromes, compelled me to embrace the superior merits of celibacy, the institution of the monastic life, the use of the sign of the cross, of holy oil, and even of images, the invocation of saints, the worship of relics, the rudiments of purgatory in prayers for the dead, and the tremendous mystery of the sacrifice of the body and the blood of Christ, which insensibly swelled into the prodigy of transubstantiation." In this remarkable passage we have a distinct foreshadow of the Tractarian movement, which came seventy or eighty years afterwards. Gibbon in 1752, at the age of fifteen, took up a position practically the same as Froude and Newman took up about the year 1830. In other words, he reached the famous via media at a bound. But a second spring soon carried him clear of it, into the bosom of the Church of Rome.

He had come to what are now called Church principles, by the energy of his own mind working on the scanty data furnished him by Middleton. By one of those accidents which usually happen in such cases, he made the acquaintance of a young gentleman who had already embraced Catholicism, and who was well
provided with controversial tracts in favour of Romanism. Among these were the two works of Bossuet, the *Exposition of Catholic Doctrine* and the *History of the Protestant Variations*. Gibbon says: "I read, I applauded, I believed, and surely I fell by a noble hand. I have since examined the originals with a more discerning eye, and shall not hesitate to pronounce that Bossuet is indeed a master of all the weapons of controversy. In the *Exposition*, a specious apology, the orator assumes with consummate art the tone of candour and simplicity, and the ten-horned monster is transformed at his magic touch into the milk-white hind, who must be loved as soon as she is seen. In the *History*, a bold and well-aimed attack, he displays, with a happy mixture of narrative and argument, the faults and follies, the changes and contradictions of our first Reformers, whose variations, as he dexterously contends, are the mark of historical error, while the perpetual unity of the Catholic Church is the sign and test of infallible truth. To my present feelings it seems incredible that I should ever believe that I believed in transubstantiation. But my conqueror oppressed me with the sacramental words, "*Hoc est corpus meum,"* and dashed against each other the figurative half meanings of the Protestant sects; every objection was resolved into omnipotence, and, after repeating at St. Mary's the Athanasian Creed, I humbly acquiesced in the mystery of the Real Presence."

Many reflections are suggested on the respective domains of reason and faith by these words, but they cannot be enlarged on here. No one, nowadays, one may hope, would think of making Gibbon's conversion a subject of reproach to him. The danger is rather that
it should be regarded with too much honour. It unquestionably shows the early and trenchant force of his intellect: he mastered the logical position in a moment; saw the necessity of a criterion of faith; and being told that it was to be found in the practice of antiquity, boldly went there, and abided by the result. But this praise to his head does not extend to his heart. A more tender and deep moral nature would not have moved so rapidly.

We must in fairness remember that it was not his fault that his religious education had been neglected at home, at school, and at college. But we have no reason to think that had it been attended to, the result would have been much otherwise. The root of spiritual life did not exist in him. It never withered, because it never shot up. Thus when he applied his acute mind to a religious problem, he contemplated it with the coolness and impartiality of a geometer or chess player, his intellect operated in vacuo so to speak, untrammeled by any bias of sentiment or early training. He had no profound associations to tear out of his heart. He merely altered the premisses of a syllogism. When Catholicism was presented to him in a logical form, it met with no inward bar and repugnance. The house was empty and ready for a new guest, or rather the first guest. If Gibbon anticipated the Tractarian movement intellectually, he was farther removed than the poles are asunder from the mystic reverent spirit which inspired that movement. If we read the Apologia of Dr. Newman, we perceive the likeness and unlikeness of the two cases. “As a matter of simple conscience,” says the latter, “I felt it to be a duty to protest against the Church of Rome.” At the time he refers to Dr. Newman was a Catholic to a degree Gibbon never
dreamed of. But in the one case conscience and heart-ties “strong as life, stronger almost than death,” arrested the conclusions of the intellect. Ground which Gibbon dashed over in a few months or weeks, the great Tractarian took ten years to traverse. So different is the mystic from the positive mind.

Gibbon had no sooner settled his new religion than he resolved with a frankness which did him all honour to profess it publicly. He wrote to his father, announcing his conversion, a letter which he afterwards described, when his sentiments had undergone a complete change, as written with all the pomp, dignity, and self-satisfaction of a martyr. A momentary glow of enthusiasm had raised him, as he said, above all worldly considerations. He had no difficulty, in an excursion to London, in finding a priest, who perceived in the first interview that persuasion was needless. “After sounding the motives and merits of my conversion, he consented to admit me into the pale of the Church, and at his feet on the 8th of June 1753, I solemnly, though privately, abjured the errors of heresy.” He was exactly fifteen years and one month old. Further details, which one would like to have, he does not give. The scene even of the solemn act is not mentioned, nor whether he was baptized again; but this may be taken for granted.

The fact of any one “going over to Rome” is too common an occurrence nowadays to attract notice. But in the eighteenth century it was a rare and startling phenomenon. Gibbon’s father, who was “neither a bigot nor a philosopher,” was shocked and astonished by his “son’s strange departure from the religion of his
country." He divulged the secret of young Gibbon's conversion, and "the gates of Magdalen College were for ever shut" against the latter's return. They really needed no shutting at all. By the fact of his conversion to Romanism he had ceased to be a member of the University.
CHAPTER II.

AT LAUSANNE.

The elder Gibbon showed a decision of character and prompt energy in dealing with his son's conversion to Romanism, which were by no means habitual with him. He swiftly determined to send him out of the country, far away from the influences and connections which had done such harm. Lausanne in Switzerland was the place selected for his exile, in which it was resolved he should spend some years in wholesome reflections on the error he had committed in yielding to the fascinations of Roman Catholic polemics. No time was lost: Gibbon had been received into the Church on the 8th of June, 1753, and on the 30th of the same month he had reached his destination. He was placed under the care of a M. Pavillard, a Calvinist minister, who had two duties laid upon him, a general one, to superintend the young man's studies, a particular and more urgent one, to bring him back to the Protestant faith.

It was a severe trial which Gibbon had now to undergo. He was by nature shy and retiring; he was ignorant of French; he was very young; and with these disadvantages he was thrown among entire strangers alone. After the excitement and novelty of foreign travel were
over, and he could realise his position, he felt his heart sink within him. From the luxury and freedom of Oxford he was degraded to the dependence of a school-boy. Pavillard managed his expenses, and his supply of pocket-money was reduced to a small monthly allowance. "I had exchanged," he says, "my elegant apartment in Magdalen College for a narrow gloomy street, the most unfrequented in an unhandsome town, for an old inconvenient house, and for a small chamber ill-contrived and ill-furnished, which on the approach of winter, instead of a companionable fire, must be warmed by the dull and invisible heat of a stove." Under these gloomy auspices he began the most profitable, and after a time the most pleasant, period of his whole life, one on which he never ceased to look back with unmingled satisfaction as the starting-point of his studies and intellectual progress.

The first care of his preceptor was to bring about his religious conversion. Gibbon showed an honourable tenacity to his new faith, and a whole year after he had been exposed to the Protestant dialectics of Pavillard he still, as the latter observed with much regret, continued to abstain from meat on Fridays. There is something slightly incongruous in the idea of Gibbon fasting out of religious scruples, but the fact shows that his religion had obtained no slight hold of him, and that although he had embraced it quickly, he also accepted with intrepid frankness all its consequences. His was not an intellect that could endure half measures and half lights; he did not belong to that class of persons who do not know their own minds.

However it is not surprising that his religion, placed where he was, was slowly but steadily undermined. The
Swiss clergy, he says, were acute and learned on the topics of controversy, and Pavillard seems to have been a good specimen of his class. An adult and able man, in daily contact with a youth in his own house, urging persistently but with tact one side of a thesis, could hardly fail in the course of time to carry his point. But though Gibbon is willing to allow his tutor a handsome share in the work of his conversion, he maintains that it was chiefly effected by his own private reflections. And this is eminently probable. What logic had set up, logic could throw down. He gives us a highly characteristic example of the reflections in question. "I still remember my solitary transport at the discovery of a philosophical argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation: that the text of Scripture which seems to inculcate the Real Presence is attested only by a single sense—our sight; while the real presence itself is disproved by three of our senses—the sight, the touch, and the taste." He was unaware of the distinction between the logical understanding and the higher reason, which has been made since his time to the great comfort of thinkers of a certain stamp. Having reached so far, his progress was easy and rapid. "The various articles of the Romish creed disappeared like a dream, and after a full conviction, on Christmas-day, 1754, I received the sacrament in the church of Lausanne. It was here that I suspended my religious inquiries, acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants." He thus had been a Catholic for about eighteen months.

Gibbon's residence at Lausanne was a memorable epoch in his life on two grounds. Firstly, it was during the five years he spent there that he laid the founda-
tions of that deep and extensive learning by which he was afterwards distinguished. Secondly, the foreign education he there received, at the critical period when the youth passes into the man, gave a permanent bent to his mind, and made him a continental European rather than an insular Englishman—two highly important factors in his intellectual growth.

He says that he went up to Oxford with a "stock of erudition which might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy might have been ashamed." Both erudition and ignorance were left pretty well undisturbed during his short and ill-starred university career. At Lausanne he found himself, for the first time, in possession of the means of successful study, good health, calm, books, and tuition, up to a certain point: that point did not reach very far. The good Pavillard, an excellent man, for whom Gibbon ever entertained a sincere regard, was quite unequal to the task of forming such a mind. There is no evidence that he was a ripe or even a fair scholar, and the plain fact is that Gibbon belongs to the honourable band of self-taught men. "My tutor," says Gibbon, "had the good sense to discern how far he could be useful, and when he felt that I advanced beyond his speed and measure, he wisely left me to my genius." Under that good guidance he formed an extensive plan of reviewing the Latin classics, in the four divisions of (1) Historians, (2) Poets, (3) Orators, and (4) Philosophers, in "chronological series from the days of Plautus and Sallust to the decline of the language and empire of Rome." In one year he read over the following authors: Virgil, Sallust, Livy, Velleius Paterculus, Valerius Maximus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Quintus Curtius, Justin, Florus, Plautus, Terence,
and Lucretius. We may take his word when he says that this review, however rapid, was neither hasty nor superficial. Gibbon had the root of all scholarship in him, the most diligent accuracy and an unlimited faculty of taking pains. But he was a great scholar, not a minute one, and belonged to the robust race of the Scaligers and the Bentleys, rather than to the smaller breed of the Elmsleys and Monks, and of course he was at no time a professed philologer, occupied chiefly with the niceties of language. The point which deserves notice in this account of his studies is their wide sweep, so superior and bracing, as compared with that narrow restriction to the "authors of the best period," patronised by teachers who imperfectly comprehend their own business. Gibbon proceeded on the common-sense principle, that if you want to obtain a real grasp of the literature, history, and genius of a people, you must master that literature with more or less completeness from end to end, and that to select arbitrarily the authors of a short period on the grounds that they are models of style, is nothing short of foolish. It was the principle on which Joseph Scaliger studied Greek, and indeed occurs spontaneously to a vigorous mind eager for real knowledge.¹

Nor did he confine himself to reading: he felt that no one is sure of knowing a language who limits his study of it to the perusal of authors. He practised diligently Latin prose composition, and this in the simplest and

most effectual way. "I translated an epistle of Cicero into French, and after throwing it aside till the words and phrases were obliterated from my memory, I re-translated my French into such Latin as I could find, and then compared each sentence of my imperfect version with the ease, the grace, the propriety of the Roman orator." The only odd thing in connection with this excellent method is that Gibbon in his Memoirs seems to think it was a novel discovery of his own, and would recommend it to the imitation of students, whereas it is as old as the days of Ascham at least. There is no indication that he ever in the least degree attempted Latin verse, and it is improbable that he should have done so, reading alone in Lausanne, under the slight supervision of such a teacher as Pavillard. The lack of this elegant frivolity will be less thought of now than it would some years ago. But we may admit that it would have been interesting to have a copy of hexameters or elegiacs by the historian of Rome. So much for Latin. In Greek he made far less progress. He had attained his nineteenth year before he learned the alphabet, and even after so late a beginning he did not prosecute the study with much energy.

M. Pavillard seems to have taught him little more than the rudiments. "After my tutor had left me to myself I worked my way through about half the Iliad, and afterwards interpreted alone a large portion of Xenophon and Herodotus. But my ardour, destitute of aid and emulation, gradually cooled, and from the barren task of searching words in a lexicon I withdrew to the free and familiar conversation of Virgil and Tacitus." This statement of the Memoirs is more than confirmed by the journal of his studies, where we find him, as late as the
year 1762, when he was twenty-five years of age, painfully reading Homer, it would appear, for the first time. He read on an average about a book a week, and when he had finished the Iliad this is what he says: "I have so far met with the success I hoped for, that I have acquired a great facility in reading the language, and treasured up a very great stock of words. What I have rather neglected is the grammatical construction of them, and especially the many various inflections of the verbs." To repair this defect he wisely resolved to bestow some time every morning on the perusal of the Greek Grammar of Port Royal. Thus we see that at an age when many men are beginning to forget their Greek, Gibbon was beginning to learn it. Was this early deficiency ever repaired in Greek as it was in Latin? I think not. He never was at home in old Hellas as he was in old Rome. This may be inferred from the discursive notes of his great work, in which he has with admirable skill incorporated so much of his vast and miscellaneous reading. But his references to classic Greek authors are relatively few and timid compared with his grasp and mastery of the Latin. His judgments on Greek authors are also, to say the least, singular. When he had achieved the Decline and Fall, and was writing his Memoirs in the last years of his life, the Greek writer whom he selects for especial commendation is Xenophon. "Cicero in Latin and Xenophon in Greek are indeed the two ancients whom I would first propose to a liberal scholar, not only for the merit of their style and sentiments, but for the admirable lessons which may be applied almost to every situation of public and private life." Of the merit of Xenophon's sentiments, most people would now admit that the less said the better.
The warmth of Gibbon's language with regard to Xenophon contrasts with the coldness he shows with regard to Plato. "I involved myself," he says, "in the philosophic maze of the writings of Plato, of which perhaps the dramatic is more interesting than the argumentative part." That Gibbon knew amply sufficient Greek for his purposes as an historian no one doubts, but his honourable candour enables us to see that he was never a Greek scholar in the proper sense of the word.

It would be greatly to misknow Gibbon to suppose that his studies at Lausanne were restricted to the learned languages. He obtained something more than an elementary knowledge of mathematics, mastered De Crousaz's Logic and Locke's Essay, and filled up his spare time with that wide and discursive reading to which his boundless curiosity was always pushing him. He was thoroughly happy and contented, and never ceased throughout his life to congratulate himself on the fortunate exile which had placed him at Lausanne. In one respect he did not use his opportunities while in Switzerland. He never climbed a mountain all the time he was there, though he lived to see in his later life the first commencement of the Alpine fever. On the other hand, as became a historian and man of sense, the social and political aspects of the country engaged his attention, as well they might. He enjoyed access to the best society of the place, and the impression he made seems to have been as favourable as the one he received.

The influence of a foreign training is very marked in Gibbon, affecting as it does his general cast of thought, and even his style. It would be difficult to name any writer in our language, especially among the few who deserve to be compared with him, who is so un-English,
not in a bad sense of the word, as implying objectionable qualities, but as wanting the clear insular stamp and native flavour. If an intelligent Chinese or Persian were to read his book in a French translation, he would not readily guess that it was written by an Englishman. It really bears the imprint of no nationality, and is emphatically European. We may postpone the question whether this is a merit or a defect, but it is a characteristic. The result has certainly been that he is one of the best-known of English prose writers on the Continent, and one whom foreigners most readily comprehend. This peculiarity, of which he himself was fully aware, we may agree with him in ascribing to his residence at Lausanne. At the "flexible age of sixteen he soon learned to endure, and gradually to adopt," foreign manners. French became the language in which he spontaneously thought; "his views were enlarged, and his prejudices were corrected." In one particular he cannot be complimented on the effect of his continental education, when he congratulates himself "that his taste for the French theatre had abated his idolatry for the gigantic genius of Shakespeare, which is inculcated from our infancy as the first duty of Englishmen." Still it is well to be rid of idolatry and bigotry even with regard to Shakespeare. We must remember that the insular prejudices from which Gibbon rejoiced to be free were very different in their intensity and narrowness from anything of the kind which exists now. The mixed hatred and contempt for foreigners which prevailed in his day, were enough to excite disgust in any liberal mind.

The lucid order and admirable literary form of Gibbon's great work are qualities which can escape no
observant reader. But they are qualities which are not common in English books. The French have a saying, "Les Anglais ne savent pas faire un livre." This is unjust, taken absolutely, but as a general rule it is not without foundation. It is not a question of depth or originality of thought, nor of the various merits belonging to style properly so-called. In these respects English authors need not fear competition. But in the art of clear and logical arrangement, of building up a book in such order and method that each part contributes to the general effect of the whole, we must own that we have many lessons to learn of our neighbours. Now in this quality Gibbon is a Frenchman. Not Voltaire himself is more perspicuous than Gibbon. Everything is in its place, and disposed in such apparently natural sequence that the uninitiated are apt to think the matter could not have been managed otherwise. It is a case, if there ever was one, of consummate art concealing every trace, not only of art, but even of effort. Of course the grasp and penetrating insight which are implied here, were part of Gibbon's great endowment, which only Nature could give. But it was fortunate that his genius was educated in the best school for bringing out its innate quality.

It would be difficult to explain why, except on that principle of decimation by which Macaulay accounted for the outcry against Lord Byron, Gibbon's solitary and innocent love passage has been made the theme of a good deal of malicious comment. The parties most interested, and who, we may presume, knew the circumstances better than any one else, seem to have been quite satisfied with each other's conduct. Gibbon and Mdlle. Curchod, afterwards Madame Necker, remained on
terms of the most intimate friendship till the end of the former’s life. This might be supposed sufficient. But it has not been so considered by evil tongues. The merits of the case, however, may be more conveniently discussed in a later chapter. At this point it will be enough to give the facts.

Mdlle. Susanne Curchod was born about the year 1740; her father was the Calvinist minister of Crassier, her mother a French Huguenot who had preferred her religion to her country. She had received a liberal and even learned education from her father, and was as attractive in person as she was accomplished in mind. “She was beautiful with that pure virginal beauty which depends on early youth” (Sainte-Beuve). In 1757 she was the talk of Lausanne, and could not appear in an assembly or at the play without being surrounded by admirers; she was called La Belle Curchod. Gibbon’s curiosity was piqued to see such a prodigy, and he was smitten with love at first sight. “I found her” he says “learned without pedantry, lively in conversation, pure in sentiment, and elegant in manners.” He was twenty and she seventeen years of age; no impediment was placed in the way of their meeting; and he was a frequent guest in her father’s house. In fact Gibbon paid his court with an assiduity which makes an exception in his usually unromantic nature. “She listened,” he says, “to the voice of truth and passion, and I might presume to hope that I had made some impression on a virtuous heart.” We must remember that this and other rather glowing passages in his Memoirs were written in his old age, when he had returned to Lausanne, and when, after a long separation and many vicissitudes, he and Madame Necker were again thrown
together in an intimacy of friendship which revived old memories. Letters of hers to him which will be quoted in a later chapter show this in a striking light. He indulged, he says, his dream of felicity, but on his return to England he soon discovered that his father would not hear of this "strange alliance," and then follows the sentence which has lost him in the eyes of some persons. "After a painful struggle I yielded to my fate: I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son." What else he was to do under the circumstances does not appear. He was wholly dependent on his father, and on the Continent at least parental authority is not regarded as a trifling impediment in such cases. Gibbon could only have married Mdlle. Curchod as an exile and a pauper, if he had openly withstood his father's wishes. "All for love" is a very pretty maxim, but it is apt to entail trouble when practically applied. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had the most beautiful sentiments on paper, but who in real life was not always a model of self-denial, found, as we shall see, grave fault with Gibbon's conduct. Gibbon, as a plain man of rather prosaic good sense, behaved neither heroically nor meanly. Time, absence, and the scenes of a new life, which he found in England, had their usual effect; his passion vanished. "My cure," he says, "was accelerated by a faithful report of the tranquillity and cheerfulness of the lady herself, and my love subsided in friendship and esteem." The probability, indeed, that he and Mdlle. Curchod would ever see each other again, must have seemed remote in the extreme. Europe and England were involved in the Seven Years War; he was fixed at home, and an officer in the militia; Switzerland was far off; when and where were they likely to meet?
They did, contrary to all expectation, meet again, and renewed terms not so much of friendship as of affection. Mdle. Curchod, as the wife of Necker, became somewhat of a celebrity, and it is chiefly owing to these last-named circumstances that the world has ever heard of Gibbon’s early love.

While he was at Lausanne Gibbon made the acquaintance of Voltaire, but it led to no intimacy or fruitful reminiscence. “He received me with civility as an English youth, but I cannot boast of any peculiar notice or distinction.” Still he had “the satisfaction of hearing—an uncommon circumstance—a great poet declaim his own productions on the stage.” One is often tempted, in reading Gibbon’s Memoirs, to regret that he adopted the austere plan which led him “to condemn the practice of transforming a private memorial into a vehicle of satire or praise.” As he truly says, “It was assuredly in his power to amuse the reader with a gallery of portraits and a collection of anecdotes.” This reserve is particularly disappointing when a striking and original figure like Voltaire passes across the field, without an attempt to add one stroke to the portraiture of such a physiognomy.

Gibbon had now (1758) been nearly five years at Lausanne, when his father suddenly intimated that he was to return home immediately. The Seven Years War was at its height, and the French had denied a passage through France to English travellers. Gibbon, or more properly his Swiss friends, thought that the alternative road through Germany might be dangerous, though it might have been assumed that the Great Frederick, so far as he was concerned, would make things as pleasant as possible to British subjects, whose country had just
consented to supply him with a much-needed subsidy. The French route was preferred, perhaps as much from a motive of frolic as anything else. Two Swiss officers of his acquaintance undertook to convey Gibbon from France as one of their companions, under an assumed name, and in borrowed regimentals. His complete mastery of French removed any chance of detection on the score of language, and with a "mixture of joy and regret" on the 11th April, 1758, Gibbon left Lausanne. He had a pleasant journey, but no adventures, and returned to his native land after an absence of four years, ten months, and fifteen days.
CHAPTER III.

IN THE MILITIA.

The only person whom, on his return, Gibbon had the least wish to see was his aunt, Catherine Porten. To her house he at once hastened, and "the evening was spent in the effusions of joy and tenderness." He looked forward to his first meeting with his father with no slight anxiety, and that for two reasons. First, his father had parted from him with anger and menace, and he had no idea how he would be received now. Secondly, his mother's place was occupied by a second wife, and an involuntary but strong prejudice possessed him against his step-mother. He was most agreeably disappointed in both respects. His father "received him as a man, as a friend, all constraint was banished at our first interview, and we ever after continued on the same terms of easy and equal politeness." So far the prospect was pleasant. But the step-mother remained a possible obstacle to all comfort at home. He seems to have regarded his father's second marriage as an act of displeasure with himself, and he was disposed to hate the rival of his mother. Gibbon soon found that the injustice was in his own fancy, and the imaginary monster was an amiable and deserving woman. "I could not be
mistaken in the first view of her understanding; her knowledge and the elegant spirit of her conversation, her polite welcome, and her assiduous care to study and gratify my wishes announced at least that the surface would be smooth; and my suspicions of art and falsehood were gradually dispelled by the full discovery of her warm and exquisite sensibility.” He became indeed deeply attached to his step-mother. “After some reserve on my side, our minds associated in confidence and friendship, and as Mrs. Gibbon had neither children nor the hopes of children, we more easily adopted the tender names and genuine characters of mother and son.” A most creditable testimony surely to the worth and amiability of both of them. The friendship thus begun continued without break or coolness to the end of Gibbon’s life. Thirty-five years after his first interview with his step-mother, and only a few months before his own death, when he was old and ailing, and the least exertion, by reason of his excessive corpulence, involved pain and trouble, he made a long journey to Bath for the sole purpose of paying Mrs. Gibbon a visit. He was very far from being the selfish Epicurean that has been sometimes represented.

He had brought with him from Lausanne the first pages of a work which, after much bashfulness and delay, he at length published in the French language, under the title of *Essai sur l’Étude de la Littérature*, in the year 1761, that is two years after its completion. In one respect this juvenile work of Gibbon has little merit. The style is at once poor and stilted, and the general quality of remark eminently commonplace, where it does not fall into paradox. On the other hand, it has an interesting and even original side. The main
idea of the little book, so far as it has one, was excellent, and really above the general thought of the age, namely, the vindication of classical literature and history generally from the narrow and singular prejudice which prevailed against them, especially in France. When Gibbon ascribes the design of his first work to a "refinement of vanity, the desire of justifying and praising the object of a favourite pursuit," he does himself less than justice. This first utterance of his historic genius was prompted by an unconscious but deep reaction against that contempt for the past, which was the greatest blot in the speculative movement of the eighteenth century. He resists the temper of his time rather from instinct than reason, and pleads the cause of learning with the hesitation of a man who has not fully seen round his subject, or even mastered his own thoughts upon it. Still there is his protest against the proposal of D'Alembert, who recommended that after a selection of facts had been made at the end of every century the remainder should be delivered to the flames. "Let us preserve them all," he says, "most carefully. A Montesquieu will detect in the most insignificant, relations which the vulgar overlook." He resented the haughty pretensions of the mathematical sciences to universal dominion, with sufficient vigour to have satisfied Auguste Comte. "Physics and mathematics are at present on the throne. They see their sister sciences prostrate before them, chained to their chariot, or at most occupied in adorning their triumph. Perhaps their downfall is not far off." To speak of a positive downfall of exact sciences was a mistake. But we may fairly suppose that Gibbon did not contemplate anything beyond a relative change of
position in the hierarchy of the sciences, by which history and politics would recover or attain to a dignity which was denied them in his day. In one passage Gibbon shows that he had dimly foreseen the possibility of the modern inquiries into the conditions of savage life and prehistoric man. "An Iroquois book, even were it full of absurdities, would be an invaluable treasure. It would offer a unique example of the nature of the human mind placed in circumstances which we have never known, and influenced by manners and religious opinions, the complete opposite of ours." In this sentence Gibbon seems to call in anticipation for the researches which have since been prosecuted with so much success by eminent writers among ourselves, not to mention similar inquirers on the Continent.

But in the meantime Gibbon had entered on a career which removed him for long months from books and study. Without sufficiently reflecting on what such a step involved, he had joined the militia, which was embodied in the year 1760; and for the next two and a half years led, as he says, a wandering life of military servitude. At first, indeed, he was so pleased with his new mode of life that he had serious thoughts of becoming a professional soldier. But this enthusiasm speedily wore off, and our "mimic Bellona soon revealed to his eyes her naked deformity." It was indeed no mere playing at soldiering that he had undertaken. He was the practical working commander of "an independent corps of 476 officers and men." "In the absence, or even in the presence of the two field officers" (one of whom was his father, the major) "I was intrusted with the effective labour of dictating the orders and exercising the battalion." And his duty did
not consist in occasional drilling and reviews, but in serious marches, sometimes of thirty miles in a day, and camping under canvas. One encampment, on Winchester Downs, lasted four months. Gibbon does not hesitate to say that the superiority of his grenadiers to the detachments of the regular army, with which they were often mingled, was so striking that the most prejudiced regular could not have hesitated a moment to admit it. But the drilling, and manoeuvring, and all that pertained to the serious side of militia business interested Gibbon, and though it took up time it gave him knowledge of a special kind, of which he quite appreciated the value. He was much struck, for instance, by the difference between the nominal and effective force of every regiment he had seen, even when supposed to be complete, and gravely doubts whether a nominal army of 100,000 men often brings fifty thousand into the field. What he found undeniable was the constant shifting of quarters, the utter want of privacy and leisure it often entailed, and the distasteful society in which he was forced to live. For eight months at a stretch he never took a book in his hand. “From the day we marched from Blandford, I had hardly a moment I could call my own, being almost continually in motion, or if I was fixed for a day, it was in the guardroom, a barrack, or an inn.” Even worse were the drinking and late hours; sometimes in “rustic” company, sometimes in company in which joviality and wit were more abundant than decorum and common sense, which will surprise no one who hears that the famous John Wilkes, who was colonel of the Buckingham militia, was not unfrequently one of his boon companions. A few extracts from his journal will be enough.
"To-day (August 28, 1762), Sir Thomas Worsley," the colonel of the battalion, "came to us to dinner. Pleased to see him, we kept bumberising till after roll-calling, Sir Thomas assuring us every fresh bottle how infinitely sober he was growing." September 23rd. "Colonel Wilkes, of the Buckingham militia, dined with us, and renewed the acquaintance Sir Thomas and myself had begun with him at Reading. I scarcely ever met with a better companion; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge . . . This proved a very debauched day; we drank a great deal both after dinner and supper; and when at last Wilkes had retired, Sir Thomas and some others (of whom I was not one) broke into his room and made him drink a bottle of claret in bed." December 17. "We found old Captain Meard at Arlesford with the second division of the Fourteenth. He and all his officers supped with us, which made the evening rather a drunken one." Gibbon might well say that the militia was unfit for and unworthy of him.

Yet it is quite astonishing to see, as recorded in his journal, how keen an interest he still managed to retain in literature in the midst of all this dissipation, and how fertile he was of schemes and projects of future historical works to be prosecuted under more favourable auspices. Subject after subject occurred to him as eligible and attractive; he caresses the idea for a time, then lays it aside for good reasons. First, he pitched upon the expedition of Charles VIII. of France into Italy. He read and meditated upon it, and wrote a dissertation of ten folio pages, besides large notes, in which he examined the right of Charles VIII. to the crown of Naples, and the rival claims of the houses of
Anjou and Aragon. In a few weeks he gives up this idea, firstly, for the rather odd reason that the subject was too remote from us; and, secondly, for the very good reason that the expedition was rather the introduction to great events than great and important in itself. He then successively chose and rejected the Crusade of Richard the First; the Barons' War against John and Henry III.; the history of Edward the Black Prince; the lives and comparisons of Henry V. and the Emperor Titus; the life of Sir Philip Sidney, and that of the Marquis of Montrose. At length he fixed on Sir Walter Raleigh as his hero. On this he worked with all the assiduity that his militia life allowed, read a great quantity of original documents relating to it, and, after some months of labour, declared that “his subject opened upon him, and in general improved upon a nearer prospect.” But half a year later he “is afraid he will have to drop his hero.” And he covers half a page with reasons to persuade himself that he was right in doing so. Besides the obvious one that he would be able to add little that was not already accessible in Oldys’ Life of Raleigh, that the topic was exhausted, and so forth, he goes on to make these remarks, which have more signification to us now than perhaps they had to him when he wrote them. “Could I even surmount these obstacles, I should shrink with terror from the modern history of England, where every character is a problem and every reader a friend or an enemy: when a writer is supposed to hoist a flag of party, and is devoted to damnation by the adverse faction. Such would be my reception at home; and abroad the historian of Raleigh must encounter an indifference far more bitter than censure or reproach. The events of his life are interesting; but
his character is ambiguous; his actions are obscure; his writings are English, and his fame is confined to the narrow limits of our language and our island. *I must embrace a safer and more extensive theme.* Here we see the first gropings after a theme of cosmopolitan interest. He has arrived at two negative conclusions: that it must not be English, and must not be narrow. What it is to be, does not yet appear, for he has still a series of subjects to go through, to be taken up and discarded. The history of the liberty of the Swiss, which at a later period he partially achieved, was one scheme; the history of Florence under the Medici was another. He speaks with enthusiasm of both projects, adding that he will most probably fix upon the latter; but he never did anything of the kind.

These were the topics which occupied Gibbon's mind during his service in the militia, escaping when he could from the uproar and vulgarity of the camp and the guardroom to the sanctuary of the historic muse, to worship in secret. But these private devotions could not remove his disgust at "the inn, the wine, and the company" he was forced to endure, and latterly the militia became downright insupportable to him. But honourable motives kept him to his post. "From a service without danger I might have retired without disgrace; but as often as I hinted a wish of resigning, my fetters were riveted by the friendly in treaties of the colonel, the parental authority of the major, and my own regard for the welfare of the battalion." At last the long-wished-for day arrived, when the militia was disbanded. "Our two companies," he writes in his journal, "were disembodied (December 23rd, 1762), mine at Alton, my father's at
Buriton. They fired three volleys, lodged the major's colours, delivered up their arms, received their money, partook of a dinner at the major's expense, and then separated, with great cheerfulness and regularity. Thus ended the militia." The compression that his spirit had endured was shown by the rapid energy with which he sought a change of scene and oblivion of his woes. Within little more than a month after the scene just described, Gibbon was in Paris beginning the grand tour.

With that keen sense of the value of time which marked him, Gibbon with great impartiality cast up and estimated the profit and loss of his "bloodless campaigns." Both have been alluded to already. He summed up with great fairness in the entry that he made in his journal on the evening of the day on which he recovered his liberty. "I am glad that the militia has been, and glad that it is no more." This judgment he confirmed thirty years afterwards, when he composed his Memoirs. "My principal obligation to the militia was the making me an Englishman and a soldier. After my foreign education, with my reserved temper, I should long have continued a stranger in my native country, had I not been shaken in this various scene of new faces and new friends; had not experience forced me to feel the characters of our leading men, the state of parties, the forms of office, the operations of our civil and military system. In this peaceful service I imbibed the rudiments of the language and science of tactics, which opened a new field of study and observation. I diligently read and meditated the Mémoires Militaires of Quintus Icilius, the only writer who has united the merits of a professor and a veteran."
The discipline and evolution of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion, and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers (the reader may smile) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire." No one can doubt it who compares Gibbon's numerous narratives of military operations with the ordinary performances of civil historians in those matters. The campaigns of Julian, Belisarius, and Heraclius, not to mention many others, have not only an uncommon lucidity, but also exhibit a clear appreciation of the obstacles and arduousness of warlike operations, which is rare or unknown to non-military writers. Macaulay has pointed out that Swift's party pamphlets are superior in an especial way to the ordinary productions of that class, in consequence of Swift's unavowed but very serious participation in the cabinet councils of Oxford and Bolingbroke. In the same manner Gibbon had an advantage through his military training, which gives him no small superiority to even the best historical writers who have been without it.

The course of foreign travel which Gibbon was now about to commence had been contemplated before, but the war and the militia had postponed it for nearly three years. It appears that as early as the year 1760 the elder Gibbon had conceived the project of procuring a seat in Parliament for his son, and was willing to incur the anticipated expense of £1500 for that object. Young Gibbon, who seems to have very accurately gauged his own abilities at that early age, was convinced that the money could be much better employed in another way. He wrote in consequence, under his father's roof, a letter to the latter which does such credit to his
head and to his heart, that, although it is somewhat long, it cannot with propriety be omitted here.

EDWARD GIBBON TO HIS FATHER.

"DEAR SIR,

"An address in writing from a person who has the pleasure of being with you every day may appear singular. However I have preferred this method, as upon paper I can speak without a blush and be heard without interruption. If my letter displeases you, impute it, dear sir, to yourself. You have treated me, not like a son, but like a friend. Can you be surprised that I should communicate to a friend all my thoughts and all my desires? Unless the friend approve them, let the father never know them; or at least let him know at the same time that however reasonable, however eligible, my scheme may appear to me, I would rather forget it for ever than cause him the slightest uneasiness.

"When I first returned to England, attentive to my future interests, you were so good as to give me hopes of a seat in Parliament. This seat, it was supposed, would be an expense of fifteen hundred pounds. This design flattered my vanity, as it might enable me to shine in so august an assembly. It flattered a nobler passion: I promised myself that, by the means of this seat, I might one day be the instrument of some good to my country. But I soon perceived how little mere virtuous inclination, unassisted by talents, could contribute towards that great end, and a very short examination discovered to me that those talents had not fallen to my lot. Do not, dear sir, impute this declaration to a false modesty—the meanest species of pride. Whatever else I may be ignorant of, I think I know myself, and shall always endeavour to mention my good qualities without vanity and my defects without repugnance. I shall say nothing of the most intimate acquaintance with his country and language, so absolutely necessary to every senator; since they may be acquired, to allege my deficiency in them would seem only the plea of laziness. But I shall say with
great truth that I never possessed that gift of speech, the first 
requisite of an orator, which use and labour may improve, but 
which nature can alone bestow; that my temper, quiet, retired, 
somewhat reserved, could neither acquire popularity, bear up 
against opposition, nor mix with ease in the crowds of public 
life; that even my genius (if you allow me any) is better 
qualified for the deliberate compositions of the closet than for 
the extemporaneous discourses of Parliament. An unexpected 
objection would disconcert me, and as I am incapable of ex-
plaining to others what I do not understand myself, I should 
be meditating when I ought to be answering. I even want 
necessary prejudices of party and of nation. In popular 
assumptions it is often necessary to inspire them, and never orator 
inspired well a passion which he did not feel himself. Suppose 
me even mistaken in my own character, to set out with the 
repugnance such an opinion must produce offers but an in-
different prospect. But I hear you say it is not necessary that 
every man should enter into Parliament with such exalted 
hopes. It is to acquire a title the most glorious of any in a 
free country, and to employ the weight and consideration it 
gives in the service of one's friends. Such motives, though not 
glorious, yet are not dishonourable, and if we had a borough in 
our command, if you could bring me in without any great 
expense, or if our fortune enabled us to despise that expense, 
then indeed I should think them of the greatest strength. But 
with our private fortune, is it worth while to purchase at so high 
a rate a title honourable in itself, but which I must share with 
every fellow that can lay out 1500 pounds? Besides, dear 
sir, a merchandise is of little value to the owner when he is 
resolved not to sell it.

"I should affront your penetration did I not suppose you now 
see the drift of this letter. It is to appropriate to another use 
the sum with which you destined to bring me into Parliament; 
to employ it, not in making me great, but in rendering me 
happy. I have often heard you say yourself that the allowance 
you had been so indulgent as to grant me, though very liberal 
in regard to your estate, was yet but small when compared with 
the almost necessary extravagances of the age. I have indeed
found it so, notwithstanding a good deal of economy, and an exemption from many of the common expenses of youth. This, dear sir, would be a way of supplying these deficiencies without any additional expense to you. But I forbear—if you think my proposals reasonable, you want no intreaties to engage you to comply with them, if otherwise all will be without effect.

"All that I am afraid of, dear sir, is that I should seem not so much asking a favour, as this really is, as exacting a debt. After all I can say, you will remain the best judge of my good and your own circumstances. Perhaps, like most landed gentlemen, an addition to my annuity would suit you better than a sum of money given at once; perhaps the sum itself may be too considerable. Whatever you may think proper to bestow on me, or in whatever manner, will be received with equal gratitude.

"I intended to stop here, but as I abhor the least appearance of art, I think it better to lay open my whole scheme at once. The unhappy war which now desolates Europe will oblige me to defer seeing France till a peace. But that reason can have no influence on Italy, a country which every scholar must long to see. Should you grant my request, and not disapprove of my manner of employing your bounty, I would leave England this autumn and pass the winter at Lausanne with M. de Voltaire and my old friends. In the spring I would cross the Alps, and after some stay in Italy, as the war must then be terminated, return home through France, to live happily with you and my dear mother. I am now two-and-twenty; a tour must take up a considerable time; and although I believe you have no thoughts of settling me soon (and I am sure I have not), yet so many things may intervene that the man who does not travel early runs a great risk of not travelling at all. But this part of my scheme, as well as the whole of it, I submit entirely to you.

"Permit me, dear sir, to add that I do not know whether the complete compliance with my wishes could increase my love and gratitude, but that I am very sure no refusal could diminish those sentiments with which I shall always remain, dear sir, your most dutiful and obedient son and servant.

"E. GIBBON, JUN."
Instead of going to Italy in the autumn of 1760, as he fondly hoped when he wrote this letter, Gibbon was marching about the south of England at the head of his grenadiers. But the scheme sketched in the above letter was only postponed, and ultimately realised in every particular. The question of a seat in Parliament never came up again during his father's life, and no doubt the money it would have cost was, according to his wise suggestion, devoted to defray the expenses of his foreign tour, which he is now about to begin.
CHAPTER IV.

THE ITALIAN JOURNEY.

Gibbon reached Paris on the 28th January, 1763; thirty-six days, as he tells us, after the disbanding of the militia. He remained a little over three months in the French capital, which on the whole pleased him so well that he thinks that if he had been independent and rich, he might have been tempted to make it his permanent residence.

On the other hand he seems to have been little if at all aware of the extraordinary character of the society of which he became a spectator and for a time a member. He does not seem to have been conscious that he was witnessing one of the most singular social phases which have yet been presented in the history of man. And no blame attaches to him for this. No one of his contemporaries saw deeper in this direction than he did. It is a remarkable instance of the way in which the widest and deepest social movements are veiled to the eyes of those who see them, precisely because of their width and depth. Foreigners, especially Englishmen, visited Paris in the latter half of the eighteenth century and reported variously of their experience and impressions. Some, like Hume and Sterne, are delighted;
some, like Gibbon, are quietly, but thoroughly pleased; some, like Walpole—though he perhaps is a class by himself—are half pleased and half disgusted. They all feel that there is something peculiar in what they witness, but never seem to suspect that nothing like it was ever seen before in the world. One is tempted to wish that they could have seen with our eyes, or, much more, that we could have had the privilege of enjoying their experience, of spending a few months in that singular epoch when "society," properly so called, the assembling of men and women in drawing-rooms for the purpose of conversation, was the most serious as well as the most delightful business of life. Talk and discussion in the senate, the market-place, and the schools are cheap; even barbarians are not wholly without them. But their refinement and concentration in the salon—of which the president is a woman of tact and culture—this is a phenomenon which never appeared but in Paris in the eighteenth century. And yet scholars, men of the world, men of business passed through this wonderland with eyes blindfolded. They are free to enter, they go, they come, without a sign that they have realised the marvellous scene that they were permitted to traverse. One does not wonder that they did not perceive that in those graceful drawing-rooms, filled with stately company of elaborate manners, ideas and sentiments were discussed and evolved which would soon be more explosive than gunpowder. One does not wonder that they did not see ahead of them—men never do. One does rather wonder that they did not see what was before their eyes. But wonder is useless and a mistake. People who have never seen a volcano
cannot be expected to fear the burning lava, or even to see that a volcano differs from any other mountain.

Gibbon had brought good introductions from London, but he admits that they were useless, or rather superficial. His nationality and his *Essai* were his best recommendations. It was the day of Anglomania, and, as he says, "every Englishman was supposed to be a patriot and a philosopher." "I had rather be," said Mdlle. de Lespinasse to Lord Shelburne, "the least member of the House of Commons than even the King of Prussia." Similar things must have been said to Gibbon, but he has not recorded them; and generally it may be said that he is disappointingly dull and indifferent to Paris, though he liked it well enough when there. He never caught the Paris fever as Hume did, and Sterne, or even as Walpole did, for all the hard things he says of the underbred and overbearing manners of the philosophers. Gibbon had ready access to the well known houses of Madame Geoffrin, Madame Helvétius and the Baron d'Holbach; and his perfect mastery of the language must have removed every obstacle in the way of complete social intercourse. But no word in his Memoirs or Letters shows that he really saw with the eyes of the mind the singularities of that strange epoch. And yet he was there at an exciting and important moment. The Order of the Jesuits was tottering to its fall; the latter volumes of the *Encyclopédia* were being printed, and it was no secret; the corrosive wit and audacity of the salons were at their height. He is not unjust or prejudiced, but somewhat cold. He dines with Baron d'Holbach, and says his dinners were excellent, but nothing of the guests. He goes to Madame Geoffrin, and pronounces her house an excellent
one. Such faint and commonplace praise reflects on the eulogist. The only man of letters of whom he speaks with warmth is Helvétius. He does not appear in this first visit to have known Madame du Deffand, who was still keeping her salon with the help of the pale deep-eyed L’Epinasse, though the final rupture was imminent. Louis Racine died, and so did Marivaux, while he was in Paris. The old Opera-house in the Palais Royal was burnt down when he had been there a little over a month, and the representations were transferred to the Salle des Machines, in the Tuileries. The equestrian statue of Louis XV. was set up in the Place to which it gave its name (where the Luxor column now stands, in the Place de la Concorde) amidst the jeers and insults of the mob, who declared it would never be got to pass the hotel of Madame de Pompadour. How much or how little of all this touched Gibbon, we do not know. We do know one thing, that his English clothes were unfashionable and looked very foreign, the French being “excessively long-waisted.” Doubtless his scanty purse could not afford a new outfit, such as Walpole two years afterwards, under the direction of Lady Hertford, promptly procured. On the 8th of May he hurried off to Lausanne.¹

His ultimate object was Italy. But he wisely resolved to place a period of solid study between the lively dissipation of Paris and his classic pilgrimage. He knew the difference between seeing things he had read about and reading about things after he had seen them; how the mind, charged with associations of famous scenes, is delicately susceptible of impressions, and how

¹ The chronicle of events which occurred during Gibbon’s sojourn in Paris will be found in the interesting Mémoires de Buchanmont.
rapidly old musings take form and colour, when stirred by outward realities; and contrariwise, how slow and inadequate is the effort to reverse this process, and to clothe with memories, monuments and sites over which the spirit has not sent a halo of previous meditation. So he settled down quietly at Lausanne for the space of nearly a year, and commenced a most austere and systematic course of reading on the antiquities of Italy. The list of learned works which he perused "with his pen in his hand" is formidable, and fills a quarto page. But he went further than this, and compiled an elaborate treatise on the nations, provinces, and towns of ancient Italy (which we still have) digested in alphabetical order, in which every Latin author, from Plautus to Rutilius, is laid under contribution for illustrative passages, which are all copied out in full. This laborious work was evidently Gibbon's own guidebook in his Italian travels, and one sees not only what an admirable preparation it was for the object in view, but what a promise it contained of that scrupulous thoroughness which was to be his mark as an historian. His mind was indeed rapidly maturing, and becoming conscious in what direction its strength lay.

His account of his first impressions of Rome has been often quoted, and deserves to be so again. "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the Eternal City. After a sleepless night, I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum. Each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Cesar fell, was
at once present to my eye, and several days of intoxication were lost and enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute examination." He gave eighteen weeks to the study of Rome only, and six to Naples, and we may rest assured that he made good use of his time. But what makes this visit to Rome memorable in his life and in literary history is that it was the occasion and date of the first conception of his great work. "It was at Rome, on the 15th October, 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." The scene, the contrast of the old religion and the new, the priests of Christ replacing the flamens of Jupiter, the evensong of Catholic Rome swelling like a dirge over the prostrate Pagan Rome might well concentrate in one grand luminous idea the manifold but unconnected thoughts with which his mind had so long been teeming. Gibbon had found his work, which was destined to fill the remainder of his life. Henceforth there is a fixed centre around which his thoughts and musings cluster spontaneously. Difficulties and interruptions are not wanting. The plan then formed is not taken in hand at once; on the contrary, it is contemplated at "an awful distance"; but it led him on like a star guiding his steps, till he reached his appointed goal.

After crossing the Alps on his homeward journey, Gibbon had had some thoughts of visiting the southern provinces of France. But when he reached Lyons he found letters "expressive of some impatience" for his return. Though he does not exactly say as much, we may justly conclude that the elder Gibbon's pecuniary
difficulties were beginning to be oppressive. So the traveller, with the dutifulness that he ever showed to his father, at once bent his steps northward. Again he passed through Paris, and the place had a new attraction in his eyes in the person of Mdlle. Curchod, now become Madame Necker, and wife of the great financier.

This perhaps will be the most convenient place to notice and estimate a certain amount of rather spiteful gossip, of which Gibbon was the subject in Switzerland about this time. Rousseau and his friend Moulton have preserved it for us, and it is probable that it has lost none of its pungency in passing through the hands of the latter. The substance of it is this:—that in the year 1763, when Gibbon revisited Lausanne, as we have seen, Susanne Curchod was still in a pitiable state of melancholy and well nigh broken-hearted at Gibbon's manifast coldness, which we know he considered to be "friendship and esteem." Whether he even saw her on this visit cannot be considered certain, but it is at least highly probable. Be that as it may: this is the picture of her condition as drawn by Moulton in a letter to Rousseau: "How sorry I am for our poor Mdlle. Curchod! Gibbon, whom she loves, and to whom I know she has sacrificed some excellent matches, has come to Lausanne, but cold, insensible, and as entirely cured of his old passion as she is far from cured. She has written me a letter that makes my heart ache." Rousseau says in reply, "He who does not appreciate Mdlle. Curchod is not worthy of her; he who appreciates her and separates himself from her is a man to be despised. She does not know what she wants. Gibbon serves her better than her own heart. I would rather a hundred times that he left her poor and free among you than
that he should take her off to be rich and miserable in England." One does not quite see how Gibbon could have acted to the contentment of Jean-Jacques. For not taking Mdlle. Curchod to England—as we may presume he would have done if he had married her—he is contemptible. Yet if he does take her he will make her miserable, and Rousseau would rather a hundred times he left her alone—precisely what he was doing; but then he was despicable for doing it. The question is whether there is not a good deal of exaggeration in all this. Only a year after the tragic condition in which Moulton describes Mdlle. Curchod she married M. Necker, and became devoted to her husband. A few months after she married Necker she cordially invited Gibbon to her house every day of his sojourn in Paris. If Gibbon had behaved in the unworthy way asserted, if she had had her feelings so profoundly touched and lacerated as Moulton declares, would she, or even could she, have acted thus? If she was conscious of being wronged, and he was conscious—as he must have been—of having acted basely, or at least unfeelingly, is it not as good as certain that both parties would have been careful to see as little of each other as possible? A broken-off love-match, even without complication of unworthy conduct on either side, is generally an effective bar to further intercourse. But in this case the intercourse is renewed on the very first opportunity, and never dropped till the death of one of the persons concerned.

Two letters have been preserved of Gibbon and Madame Necker respectively, nearly of the same date, and both referring to this rather delicate topic of their first interviews after her marriage. Gibbon writes to
his friend Holroyd, "The Curchod (Madame Necker) I saw in Paris. She was very fond of me, and the husband particularly civil. Could they insult me more cruelly? Ask me every evening to supper, go to bed and leave me alone with his wife—what impertinent security! It is making an old lover of mighty little consequence. She is as handsome as ever, and much genteeler; seems pleased with her wealth rather than proud of it. I was exalting Nanette d'Illens's good luck and the fortune" (this evidently refers to some common acquaintance, who had changed her name to advantage). "What fortune,' she said with an air of contempt:—'not above twenty thousand livres a year.' I smiled, and she caught herself immediately, 'What airs I give myself in despising twenty thousand livres a year, who a year ago looked upon eight hundred as the summit of my wishes.'"

Let us turn to the lady's account of the same scenes. "I do not know if I told you," she writes to a friend at Lausanne, "that I have seen Gibbon, and it has given me more pleasure than I know how to express. Not indeed that I retain any sentiment for a man who I think does not deserve much" (this little toss of pique or pride need not mislead us); "but my feminine vanity could not have had a more complete and honest triumph. He stayed two weeks in Paris, and I had him every day at my house; he has become soft, yielding, humble, decorous to a fault. He was a constant witness of my husband's kindness, wit, and gaiety, and made me remark for the first time, by his admiration for wealth, the opulence with which I am surrounded, and which up to this moment had only produced a disagreeable impression upon me." Considering the very
different points of view of the writers, these letters are remarkably in unison. The solid fact of the daily visits is recorded in both. It is easy to gather from Madame Necker's letter that she was very glad to show Mr. Gibbon that for going farther and not marrying him she had not fared worse. The rather acid allusion to "opulence" is found in both letters; but much more pronounced in hers than in his. Each hints that the other thought too much of wealth. But he does so with delicacy, and only by implication; she charges him coarsely with vulgar admiration for it. We may reasonably suspect that riches had been the subject of not altogether smooth conversation between them, in the later part of the evening, perhaps, after M. Necker had retired in triumph to bed. One might even fancy that there was a tacit allusion by Madame Necker to the dialogue recorded by Gibbon to Holroyd, when his smile checked her indirect pride in her own wealth, and that she remembered that smile with just a touch of resentment. If so, nothing was more natural and comforting than to charge him with the failing that he had detected in her. But here are the facts. Eight months after her marriage, Madame Necker admits that she had Gibbon every day to her house. He says that she was very cordial. She would have it understood that she received him only for the sake of gratifying a feminine vanity. For her own sake one might prefer his interpretation to hers. It is difficult to believe that the essentially simple-minded Madame Necker would have asked a man every day to her house merely to triumph over him; and more difficult still to believe that the man would have gone if such had been the object. A little tartness in these first interviews, following on a relation of some
ambiguity, cannot surprise one. But it was not the
dominant ingredient, or the interviews must have ceased
of their own accord. In any case few will admit that
either of the persons concerned would have written as
they did if Moutou's statement were correct. In
neither epistle is there any trace of a grand passion
felt or slighted. We discover the much lower level
of vanity and badinage. And the subsequent relations
of Gibbon and Madame Necker all tend to prove that
this was the real one.
CHAPTER V.

LITERARY SCHEMES.—THE HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND.—
DISSERATION ON THE SIXTH ÆNEID.—FATHER’S DEATH.
—SETTLEMENT IN LONDON.

Gibbon now (June, 1765) returned to his father’s house, and remained there till the latter’s death in 1770. He describes these five years as having been the least pleasant and satisfactory of his whole life. The reasons were not far to seek. The unthrifty habits of the elder Gibbon were now producing their natural result. He was saddled with debt, from which two mortgages, readily consented to by his son, and the sale of the house at Putney, only partially relieved him. Gibbon now began to fear that he had an old age of poverty before him. He had pursued knowledge with single-hearted loyalty and now became aware that from a worldly point of view knowledge is not often a profitable investment. A more dejecting discovery cannot be made by the sincere scholar. He is conscious of labour and protracted effort, which the prosperous professional man and tradesman who pass him on their road to wealth with a smile of scornful pity have never known. He has forsaken comparatively all for knowledge, and the busy world meets him with a blank stare, and surmises shrewdly that he is but an idler, with an odd taste for
wasting his time over books. It says much for Gibbon’s robustness of spirit that he did not break down in these trying years, that he did not weakly take fright at his prospect, and make hasty and violent efforts to mend it. On the contrary, he remained steadfast and true to the things of the mind. With diminished cheerfulness perhaps, but with no abatement of zeal, he pursued his course and his studies, thereby proving that he belonged to the select class of the strong and worthy who, penetrated with the loveliness of science, will not be turned away from it.

His first effort to redeem the time was a project of a history of Switzerland. His choice was decided by two circumstances: (1) his love for a country which he had made his own by adoption; (2) by the fact that he had in his friend Deyverdun, a fellow-worker who could render him most valuable assistance. Gibbon never knew German, which is not surprising when we reflect what German literature amounted to, in those days; and he soon discovered that the most valuable authorities of his projected work were in the German language. But Deyverdun was a perfect master of that tongue, and translated a mass of documents for the use of his friend. They laboured for two years in collecting materials, before Gibbon felt himself justified in entering on the “more agreeable task of composition.” And even then he considered the preparation insufficient, as no doubt it was. He felt he could not do justice to his subject; uninformed as he was “by the scholars and statesmen, and remote from the archives and libraries of the Swiss republic.” Such a beginning was not of good augury for the success of the undertaking. He never wrote more than about
sixty quarto pages of the projected work, and these, as they were in French, were submitted to the judgment of a literary society of foreigners in London, before whom the MS. was read. The author was unknown, and Gibbon attended the meeting, and thus listened without being observed “to the free strictures and unfavourable sentence of his judges.” He admits that the momentary sensation was painful; but the condemnation was ratified by his cooler thoughts: and he declares that he did not regret the loss of a slight and superficial essay, though it “had cost some expense, much labour, and more time.” He says in his Memoirs that he burnt the sheets. But this, strange to say, was a mistake on his part. They were found among his papers after his death, and though not published by Lord Sheffield in the first two volumes of his Miscellaneous Works, which the latter edited in 1796, they appeared in the supplemental third volume which came out in 1815. We thus can judge for ourselves of their value. One sees at once why and how they failed to satisfy their author’s mature judgment. They belong to that style of historical writing which consists in the rhetorical transcription and adornment of the original authorities, but in which the writer never gets close enough to his subject to apply the touchstone of a clear and trenchant criticism. Such criticism indeed was not common in Switzerland in his day, and one cannot blame Gibbon for not anticipating the researches of modern investigators. But his historical sense was aroused to suspicion by the story of William Tell, which he boldly sets down as a fable. Altogether, one may pronounce the sketch to be pleasantly written in a flowing, picturesque narrative, and showing immense advance in style beyond the essay on the Study
of Literature. David Hume, to whom he submitted it, urged him to persevere, and the advice was justified under the circumstances, although one cannot now regret that it was not followed.

After the failure of this scheme Gibbon, still in connection with Deyverdun, planned a periodical work under the title of Mémoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne. Only two volumes ever appeared, and the speculation does not seem to have met with much success. Gibbon "presumes to say that their merit was superior to their reputation, though they produced more reputation than emolument." The first volume is executed with evident pains, and gives a fair picture of the literary and social condition of England at the time. The heavy review articles are interspersed with what is intended to be lighter matter on the fashions, foibles, and prominent characters of the day. Gibbon owns the authorship of the first article on Lord Lyttelton’s history of Henry the Second, and his hand is discernible in the account of the fourth volume of Lardner’s work On the Credibility of the Gospel History. The first has no merit beyond a faithful report. The latter is written with much more zest and vigour, and shows the interest that he already took in Christian antiquities. Other articles, evidently from the pen of Deyverdun, on the English theatre and Beau Nash of Bath, are the liveliest in the collection. The magazine was avowedly intended for Continental readers, and might have obtained success if it had been continued long enough. But it died before it had time to make itself known.¹

¹ Two volumes appeared of the Mémoires Littéraires. Of these only the first is to be found in the British Museum. It is a small 12mo, containing 230 pages. Here is the Table des Matières:—(1)
When the Mémoires Littéraires collapsed Gibbon was again left without a definite object to concentrate his energy, and with his work still to seek. One might wonder why he did not seriously prepare for the Decline and Fall. It must have been chiefly at this time that it was "contemplated at an awful distance," perhaps even with numbing doubt whether the distance would ever be lessened and the work achieved, or even begun. The probability is he had too little peace of mind to undertake anything that required calm and protracted labour. "While so many of my acquaintance were married, or in Parliament, or advancing with a rapid step in the various roads of honour or fortune I stood alone, immovable, and insignificant. . . . The progress and the knowledge of our domestic disorders aggravated my anxiety, and I began to apprehend that in my old age I might be left without the fruits of either industry or inheritance." Perhaps a reasonable apprehension of poverty is more paralysing than the reality. In the latter case prompt action is so imperatively commanded that the mind has no leisure for the fatal indulgence of regrets; but when indigence seems only imminent, and has not yet arrived, a certain lethargy is apt to be produced out of which only the most practical characters can rouse themselves, and these are not, as a rule, scholars by nature. We need not be surprised that Gibbon

Histoire de Henri II., par Milord Lyttelton; (2) Le Nouveau Guide de Bath; (3) Essai sur l'Histoire de la Société Civile, par M. Ferguson; (4) Conclusions des Mémoires de Miss Sydney Bidulph; Théologie (5) Recueil des Témoignages Anciens, par Lardner; (6) Le Confessional; (7) Transactions Philosophiques; (8) Le Gouverneur, par D. L. F. Spectacles, Beaux Arts, Nouvelles Littéraires.
during these years did nothing serious, and postponed undertaking his great work. The inspiration needed to accomplish such a long and arduous course as it implied could not be kindled in a mind harassed by pecuniary cares. The fervent heat of a poet's imagination may glow as brightly in poverty as in opulence, but the gentle yet prolonged enthusiasm of the historian is likely to be quenched when the resources of life are too insecure.  

It is perhaps not wholly fanciful to suspect that Gibbon's next literary effort was suggested and determined by the inward discomposure he felt at this time. By nature he was not a controversialist; not that he wanted the abilities to support that character, but his mind was too full, fertile, and fond of real knowledge to take much pleasure in the generally barren occupation of gainsaying other men. But at this point in his life he made an exception, and an unprovoked exception. When he wrote his famous vindication of the first volume of the *Decline and Fall* he was acting in self-defence, and repelling savage attacks upon his historical veracity. But in his *Critical Observations on the Sixth Book of the Aeneid* he sought controversy for its own sake, and became a polemic—shall we say out of gaiety or bitterness of heart? That inward unrest easily produces an aggressive spirit is a matter of common observation, and it may well have been that in attacking Warburton he sought a diversion from the worry of domestic cares. Be that as it may, his *Obser-

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1 Scholarship has been frequently cultivated amidst great poverty; but from the time of Thucydides, the owner of mines, to Grégoire, the banker, historians seem to have been in, at least, easy circumstances.
vations are the most pungent and dashing effusion he ever allowed himself. It was his first effort in English prose, and it is doubtful whether he ever managed his mother tongue better, if indeed he ever managed it so well. The little tract is written with singular spirit and rapidity of style. It is clear, trenchant, and direct to a fault. It is indeed far less critical than polemical, and shows no trace of lofty calm, either moral or intellectual. We are not repelled much by his eagerness to refute and maltreat his opponent. That was not alien from the usages of the time, and Warburton at least had no right to complain of such a style of controversy. But there is no width and elevation of view. The writer does not carry the discussion up to a higher level, and dominate his adversary from a superior standpoint. Controversy is always ephemeral and vulgar, unless it can rise to the discussion and establishment of facts and principles valuable for themselves, independently of the particular point at issue. It is this quality which has made the master-works of Chillingworth and Bentley supereminent. The particular point for which the writers contended is settled or forgotten. But in moving up to that point they touched—such was their large discourse of reason—on topics of perennial interest, did such justice, though only in passing, to certain other truths, that they are gratefully remembered ever after. Thus Bentley's dissertation on Phalaris is read, not for the main thesis—proof of the spuriousness of the letters—but for the profound knowledge and admirable logic with which subsidiary positions are maintained on the way to it. Tried by this standard, and he deserves to be tried by a high standard, Gibbon fails not much, but entirely. The Observations are rarely,
if ever, quoted as an authority of weight by any one engaged on classical or Virgilian literature. This arises from the attitude of the writer, who is nearly solely occupied with establishing negative conclusions that Æneas was not a lawgiver, that the Sixth Æneid is not an allegory, that Virgil had not been initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries when he wrote it, and so forth. Indeed the best judges now hold that he has not done full justice to the grain of truth that was to be found in Warburton’s clumsy and prolix hypothesis. It should be added that Gibbon very candidly admits and regrets the acrimonious style of the pamphlet, and condemns still more “in a personal attack his cowardly concealment of his name and character.”

The Observations were the last work which Gibbon published in his father’s lifetime. His account of the latter’s death (November 10, 1770) is feelingly written, and shows the affectionate side of his own nature to advantage. He acknowledges his father’s failings, his weakness and inconstancy, but insists that they were compensated by the virtues of the head and heart, and the warmest sentiments of honour and humanity. “His graceful person, polite address, gentle manners, and unaffected cheerfulness recommended him to the favour of every company.” And Gibbon recalls with emotion “the pangs of shame, tenderness, and self-reproach”

1 Conington, Introduction to the Sixth Æneid. “A reader of the present day will, I think, be induced to award the palm of learning and ingenuity to Warburton.” “The language and imagery of the sixth book more than once suggest that Virgil intended to embody in his picture the poetical view of that inner side of ancient religion which the mysteries may be supposed to have presented.”—Suggestion on the Study of the Æneid, by H. Nettleship, p. 13.
which preyed on his father's mind at the prospect, no doubt, of leaving an embarrassed estate and precarious fortune to his son and widow. He had no taste for study in the fatal summer of 1770, and declares that he would have been ashamed if he had. "I submitted to the order of nature," he says, in words which recall his resignation on losing his mistress—"I submitted to the order of nature, and my grief was soothed by the conscious satisfaction that I had discharged all the duties of filial piety." We see Gibbon very fairly in this remark. He had tenderness, steady and warm attachments, but no passion.

Nearly two years elapsed after his father's death, before he was able to secure from the wreck of his estate a sufficient competence to establish himself in London. His house was No. 7, Bentinck Street, near Manchester Square, then a remote suburb close to the country fields. His housekeeping was that of a solitary bachelor, who could afford an occasional dinner-party. Though not absolutely straitened in means, we shall presently see that he was never quite at his ease in money matters while he remained in London. But he had now freedom and no great anxieties, and he began seriously to contemplate the execution of his great work.

Gibbon, as we have seen, looked back with little satisfaction on the five years between his return from his travels and his father's death. They are also the years during which his biographer is able to follow him with the least certainty. Hardly any of his letters which refer to that period have been preserved, and he has glided rapidly over it in his Memoirs. Yet it was, in other respects besides the matter of pecuniary troubles, a momentous epoch in his life. The peculiar views
which he adopted and partly professed on religion must have been formed then. But the date, the circumstance, and the occasion are left in darkness. Up to December 18, 1763, Gibbon was evidently a believer. In an entry in his private journal under that date he speaks of a Communion Sunday at Lausanne as affording an "edifying spectacle," on the ground that there is "neither business nor parties, and they interdict even whist" on that day. How soon after this his opinions began to change, it is impossible to say. But we are conscious of a markedly different tone in the Observations, and a sneer at "the ancient alliance between the avarice of the priests and the credulity of the people" is in the familiar style of the Deists from Toland to Chubb. There is no evidence of his familiarity with the widely diffused works of the freethinkers, and as far as I am aware he does not quote or refer to them even once. But they could hardly have escaped his notice. Still his strong historic sense and solid erudition would be more likely to be repelled than attracted by their vague and inaccurate scholarship, and chimerical theories of the light of Nature. Still we know that he practically adopted, in the end, at least the negative portion of these views, and the question is, When did he do so? His visit to Paris, and the company that he frequented there, might suggest that as a probable date of his change of opinions. But the entry just referred to was subsequent by several months to that visit, and we may with confidence assume that no freethinker of the eighteenth century would pronounce the austerities of a Communion Sunday in a Calvinist town an edifying spectacle. It is probable that his relinquishing of dogmatic faith was gradual, and for a time unconscious. It was an age of tepid
belief, except among the Nonjurors and Methodists; and with neither of these groups could he have had the least sympathy. His acquaintance with Hume, and his partiality for the writings of Bayle, are more probable sources of a change of sentiment which was in a way predestined by natural bias and cast of mind. Any occasion would serve to precipitate the result. In any case, this result had been attained some years before the publication of the first volume of the Decline and Fall, in 1776. Referring to his preparatory studies for the execution of that work, he says, "As I believed, and as I still believe, that the propagation of the Gospel and the triumph of the Church are inseparably connected with the decline of the Roman monarchy, I weighed the causes and effects of the revolution, and contrasted the narratives and apologies of the Christians themselves with the glances of candour or enmity which the pagans have cast on the rising sects. The Jewish and heathen testimonies, as they are collected and illustrated by Dr. Lardner, directed without superseding my search of the originals, and in an ample dissertation on the miraculous darkness of the Passion I privately drew my conclusions from the silence of an unbelieving age." Here we have the argument which concludes the sixteenth chapter distinctly announced. But the previous travail of spirit is not indicated. Gibbon has marked with precision the stages of his conversion to Romanism. But the following chapters of the history of his religious opinions he has not written, or he has suppressed them, and we can only vaguely guess their outline.
CHAPTER VI.

LIFE IN LONDON.—PARLIAMENT.—THE BOARD OF TRADE.—
THE DECLINE AND FALL.—MIGRATION TO LAUSANNE.

Gibbon's settlement in London as master in his own house did not come too soon. A few more years of anxiety and dependence, such as he had passed of late with his father in the country, would probably have dried up the spring of literary ambition and made him miss his career. He had no tastes to fit him for a country life. The pursuit of farming only pleased him in Virgil's Georgics. He seems neither to have liked nor to have needed exercise, and English rural sports had no charms for him. "I never handled a gun, I seldom mounted a horse, and my philosophic walks were soon terminated by a shady bench, where I was long detained by the sedentary amusement of reading or meditation." He was a born citadin. "Never," he writes to his friend Holroyd, "never pretend to allure me by painting in odious colours the dust of London. I love the dust, and whenever I move into the Weald it is to visit you, and not your trees." His ideal was to devote the morning, commencing early—at seven, say—to study, and the afternoon and evening to society and recreation, not "disdaining the innocent amusement of a
game at cards." And this plan of a happy life he very fairly realised in his little house in Bentinck Street. The letters that we have of his relating to this period are buoyant with spirits and self-congratulation at his happy lot. He writes to his stepmother that he is every day more satisfied with his present mode of life, which he always believed was most calculated to make him happy. The stable and moderate stimulus of congenial society, alternating with study, was what he liked. The excitement and dissipation of a town life, which purchase pleasure to-day at the expense of fatigue and disgust to-morrow, were as little to his taste as the amusements of the country. In 1772, when he settled in London, he was young in years, but he was old in tastes, and he enjoyed himself with the complacency often seen in healthy old men. "My library," he writes to Holroyd in 1773, "Kensington Gardens, and a few parties with new acquaintance, among whom I reckon Goldsmith and Sir Joshua Reynolds," (poor Goldsmith was to die the year following), "fill up my time, and the monster ennui preserves a very respectful distance. By the by, your friends Batt, Sir John Russell, and Lascelles dined with me one day before they set off: for I sometimes give the prettiest little dinner in the world." One can imagine Gibbon, the picture of plumpness and content, doing the honours of his modest household. Still he was never prominent in society, even after the publication of his great work had made him famous. Lord Sheffield says that his conversation was superior to his writings, and in a circle of intimate friends it is probable that this was true. But in the free encounter of wit and argument, the same want of readiness that made him silent in parliament would
most likely restrict his conversational power. It may be doubted if there is a striking remark or saying of his on record. His name occurs in Boswell, but nearly always as a *persona muta*. Certainly the arena where Johnson and Burke encountered each other was not fitted to bring out a shy and not very quick man. Against Johnson he manifestly harboured a sort of grudge, and if he ever felt the weight of Ursa Major’s paw it is not surprising.

He rather oddly preserved an instance of his conversational skill, as if aware that he would not easily get credit for it. The scene was in Paris. "At the table of my old friend M. de Foncemagne, I was involved in a dispute with the Abbé de Mably... As I might be partial in my own cause, I shall transcribe the words of an unknown critic. ‘You were, my dear Théodon, at M. de Foncemagne’s house, when the Abbé de Mably and Mr. Gibbon dined there along with a number of guests. The conversation ran almost entirely on history. The Abbé, being a profound politician, turned it while at dessert on the administration of affairs, and as by genius and temper, and the habit of admiring Livy, he values only the republican system, he began to boast of the excellence of republics, being well persuaded that the learned Englishman would approve of all he said and admire the profundity of genius that had enabled a Frenchman to discover all these advantages. But Mr. Gibbon, knowing by experience the inconveniences of a popular government, was not at all of his opinion, and generously took up the defence of monarchy. The Abbé wished to convince him out of Livy, and by some arguments drawn from Plutarch in favour of the Spartans. Mr. Gibbon, being endowed with a most
excellent memory, and having all events present to his mind, soon got the command of the conversation. The Abbé grew angry, they lost possession of themselves, and said hard things of each other. The Englishman retaining his native coolness, watched for his advantages, and pressed the Abbé with increasing success in proportion as he was more disturbed by passion. The conversation grew warmer, and was broken off by M. de Foncemagne’s rising from table and passing into the parlour, where no one was tempted to renew it.  

But if not brilliant in society, he was very répandu, and was welcomed in the best circles. He was a member of Boodle’s, White’s, Brooks’s, and Almack’s,¹ and “there were few persons in the literary or political world to whom he was a stranger.” It is to be regretted that the best sketch of him at this period borders on caricature. “The learned Gibbon,” says Colman, “was a curious counterbalance to the learned (may I not say the less learned) Johnson. Their manners and tastes, both in writing and conversation, were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson in his rusty-brown suit and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet, with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology, and Johnson’s famous parallel between Dryden and Pope might be loosely parodied in reference to himself and Gibbon. Johnson’s style was grand, and Gibbon’s elegant: the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson marched to kettledrums and trumpets,

¹ Not the assembly-room of that name, but a gaming-club where the play was high. I find no evidence that Gibbon ever yielded to the prevalent passion for gambling.
Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys. Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens. Manled as I had been by Johnson, Gibbon poured balm upon my bruises by condescending once or twice in the course of the evening to talk with me. The great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy: but it was done more suo—still his mannerism prevailed, still he tapped his snuff-box, still he smirked and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good-breeding, as if he were conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage.” (Quoted in Croker's Boswell.)

Now and then he even joins in a masquerade, “the finest thing ever seen,” which costs two thousand guineas. But the chief charm of it to him seems to have been the pleasure that it gave to his Aunt Porten. These little vanities are however quite superficial, and are never allowed to interfere with work.

Now indeed he was no loiterer. In three years after his settlement in London he had produced the first volume of the Decline and Fall: an amount of diligence which will not be underrated by those who appreciate the vast difference between commencing and continuing an undertaking of that magnitude. “At the outset,” he says, “all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true æra of the decline and fall of the empire, the limits of the Introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative,—and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years;”—alternations no doubt of hope and despair familiar to every sincere and competent
student. But he had taken the best and only reliable means of securing himself from the danger of these fluctuations of spirit. He finished his reading and preparation before he began to write, and when he at last put pen to paper his course lay open before him, with no fear of sudden and disquieting stoppages arising from imperfect knowledge and need of further inquiry. It is a pity that we cannot follow the elaboration of the work in detail. That portion of his Memoirs in which he speaks of it is very short and fragmentary, and the defect is not supplied by his letters. He seems to have worked with singular ease and mastery of his subject, and never to have felt his task as a strain or a fatigue. Even his intimate friends were not aware that he was engaged on a work of such magnitude, and it is amusing to see his friend Holroyd warn him against a hasty and immature publication when he learned that the book was in the press. He had apparently heard little of it before. This alone would show with what ease and smoothness Gibbon must have worked. He had excellent health—a strange fact after his sickly childhood; society unbent his mind instead of distracting it; his stomach was perfect—perhaps too good, as about this time he began to be admonished by the gout. He never seems to have needed change. “Sufficient for the summer is the evil thereof, viz., one distant country excursion.” There was an extraordinary difference in this respect between the present age and those which went before it; restlessness and change of scene have become almost a necessity of life with us, whereas our ancestors could continue healthy and happy for months and years without stirring from home. What is there to explain the change? We must not pretend that we
work harder than they did.\textsuperscript{1} However, Gibbon was able to keep himself in good condition with his long spell of work in the morning, and his dinner-parties at home or elsewhere in the afternoon, and to have kept at home as much as he could. Whenever he went away to the country, it was on invitations which he could not well refuse. The result was a leisurely, unheeding fulness of achievement, calm stretches of thorough and contented work, which have left their marks on the \textit{Decline and Fall}. One of its charms is a constant good humour and complacency; not a sign is visible that the writer is pressed for time, or wants to get his performance out of hand; but, on the contrary, a calm lingering over details, sprightly aside in the notes, which the least hurry would have suppressed or passed by, and a general impression conveyed of thorough enjoyment in the immensity of the labour.

One would have liked to see this elaboration more clearly, to have been allowed a glimpse into his workshop while he was so engaged. Unfortunately the editor of his journals has selected the relatively unimportant records of his earlier studies, and left us in the dark as regards this far more interesting period. He was such an indefatigable diarist that it is unlikely that he neglected to keep a journal in this crisis of his studies. But it has not been published, and it may have been destroyed. All that we have is this short paragraph in his Memoirs:—

\textsuperscript{1} The classics, as low as Tacitus and the younger Pliny and

\textsuperscript{2} The most remarkable instance of all is the case of Newton, who, according to Dr. Whewell, resided in Trinity College "for thirty-five years without the interruption of a month."—\textit{Hist. of the Inductive Sciences}, vol. ii., book vii.
Juvenal, were my old and familiar companions. I insensibly plunged into the ocean of the Augustan history, and in the descending series I investigated, with my pen almost always in my hand, the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus, from the reign of Trajan to the last age of the Western Caesars. The subsidiary rays of medals and inscriptions of geography and chronology, were thrown on their proper objects, and I applied the collections of Tillemont to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information. Through the darkness of the middle ages I explored my way in the Annals and Antiquities of Italy of the learned Muratori, and diligently compared them with the parallel or transverse lines of Sigonius and Maffei, Baronius and Pagi, till I almost grasped the ruins of Rome in the fourteenth century, without suspecting that this final chapter must be attained by the labour of six quartos and twenty years."

When the time for composition arrived, he showed a fastidiousness which was full of good augury. "Three times did I compose the first chapter, and twice the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect." His hand grew firmer as he advanced. But the two final chapters interposed a long delay, and needed "three successive revisals to reduce them from a volume to their present size." Gibbon spent more time over his first volume than over any one of the five which followed it. To these he devoted almost regularly two years apiece, more or less, whereas the first cost him three years—so disproportionately difficult is the start in matters of this kind.

While engaged in the composition of the first volume, he became a member of Parliament. One morning at half past seven, "as he was destroying an army of barbarians," he heard a double rap at his door. It was a friend who came to inquire if he was desirous of
entering the House of Commons. The answer may be imagined, and he took his seat as member for the borough of Liskeard after the general election in 1774.

Gibbon’s political career is the side of his history from which a friendly biographer would most readily turn away. Not that it was exceptionally ignoble or self-seeking if tried by the standard of the time, but it was altogether commonplace and unworthy of him. The fact that he never even once opened his mouth in the House is not in itself blameworthy, though disappointing in a man of his power. It was indeed laudable enough if he had nothing to say. But why had he nothing to say? His excuse is timidity and want of readiness. We may reasonably assume that the cause lay deeper. With his mental vigour he would soon have overcome such obstacles if he had really wished and tried to overcome them. The fact is that he never tried because he never wished. It is a singular thing to say of such a man, but nevertheless true, that he had no taste or capacity whatever for politics. He lived at one of the most exciting periods of our history; he assisted at debates in which constitutional and imperial questions of the highest moment were discussed by masters of eloquence and state policy, and he hardly appears to have been aware of the fact. It was not that he despised politics as Walpole affected to do, or that he regarded party struggles as “barbarous and absurd faction,” as Hume did; still less did he pass by them with the supercilious indifference of a mystic whose eyes are fixed on the individual spirit of man as the one spring of good and evil. He never rose to the level of the ordinary citizen or even partisan, who takes an
exaggerated view perhaps of the importance of the politics of the day, but who at any rate thereby shows a sense of social solidarity and the claims of civic communion. He called himself a Whig, but he had no zeal for Whig principles. He voted steadily with Lord North, and quite approved of taxing and coercing America into slavery; but he had no high notions of the royal prerogative, and was lukewarm in this as in everything. With such absence of passion one might have expected that he would be at least shrewd and sagacious in his judgments on politics. But he is nothing of the kind. In his familiar letters he reserves generally a few lines for parliamentary gossip, amid chat about the weather and family business. He never approaches to a broad survey of policy, or expresses serious and settled convictions on home or foreign affairs. Throughout the American war he never seems to have really made up his mind on the nature of the struggle, and the momentous issues that it involved. Favourable news puts him in high spirits, which are promptly cooled by the announcement of reverses; not that he ever shows any real anxiety or despondency about the commonwealth. His opinions on the subject are at the mercy of the last mail. It is disappointing to find an elegant trifler like Horace Walpole not only far more discerning in his appreciation of such a crisis, but also far more patriotically sensitive as to the wisdom of the means of meeting it, than the historian of Rome. Gibbon’s tone often amounts to levity, and he chronicles the most serious measures with an unconcern really surprising. “In a few days we stop the ports of New England. I cannot write volumes: but I am more and more convinced that with firmness all may go well: yet I
sometimes doubt." (February 8, 1775.) "Something will be done this year; but in the spring the force of the country will be exerted to the utmost: Scotch Highlanders, Irish Papists, Hanoverians, Canadians, Indians, &c., will all in various shapes be employed." (August 1, 1775.) "What think you of the season, of Siberia is it not? A pleasant campaign in America." (January 29, 1776.) At precisely the same time the sanguine coxcomb of Strawberry Hill was writing thus: "The times are indeed very serious. Pacification with America is not the measure adopted. More regiments are ordered thither, and to-morrow a plan, I fear equivalent to a declaration of war, is to be laid before both Houses. They are bold ministers methinks who do not hesitate on civil war, in which victory may bring ruin, and disappointment endanger their heads... Acquisition alone can make burdens palatable, and in a war with our own colonies we must inflict instead of acquiring them, and we cannot recover them without undoing them. I am still to learn wisdom and experience, if these things are not so." (Letter to Mann, January 25, 1775.) "A war with our colonies, which is now declared, is a proof how much influence jargon has on human actions. A war on our own trade is popular." (February 15, 1775.) "The war with America goes on briskly; that is as far as voting goes. A great majority in both houses is as brave as a mob ducking a pickpocket. They flatter themselves they shall terrify the colonies into submission in three months, and are amazed to hear that there is no such probability. They might as well have excommunicated them, and left it to the devil to put the sentence into execution." (February 18, 1775.) Not only is Walpole’s judgment wiser, but the
elements of a wise judgment were present to him in a way in which they were not so to Gibbon. When the latter does attempt a forecast, he shows, as might be expected, as little penetration of the future as appreciation of the present. Writing from Paris on August 11, 1777, when all French society was ablaze with enthusiasm for America, and the court just on the point of yielding to the current, he is under no immediate apprehensions of a war with France, and "would not be surprised if next summer the French were to lend their cordial assistance to England as the weaker party." The emptiness of his letters as regards home politics perhaps admits of a more favourable explanation, and may be owing to the careful suppression by their editor, Lord Sheffield, of everything of real interest. It is impossible to estimate the weight of this consideration, but it may be great. Still we have a sufficient number of his letters to be able to say that on the whole they are neither thoughtful nor graphic; they give us neither pictures of events nor insight into the times. It must be, however, remembered that Gibbon greatly disliked letter-writing, and never wrote unless he was obliged.

It was no secret that Gibbon wanted a place under government. Moderate as his establishment seems to have been, it was more expensive than he could afford, and he looked, not without warrant, to a supplement of income from one of the rich windfalls which in that time of sinecures were wont to refresh the spirits of sturdy supporters of administration. He had influential friends, and even relatives, in and near the government, and but for his parliamentary nullity he would probably have been provided with a comfortable berth at an early period. But his "sincere and silent vote" was
not valuable enough to command a high price from his patrons. Once only was he able to help them with his pen, when he drew up, at the request of Lords Thurlow and Weymouth, his Mémoire Justificatif, in French, in which "he vindicated against the French manifesto the justice of the British arms." It was a service worthy of a small fee, which no doubt he received. He had to wait till 1779, when he had been five years in Parliament, before his cousin Mr. Eliot, and his friend Wedderburne, the Attorney-General, were able to find him a post as one of the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations. The Board of Trade, of which he became one of the eight members, survives in mortal memory only from being embalmed in the bright amber of one of Burke's great speeches. "This board, Sir, has had both its original formation and its regeneration in a job. In a job it was conceived, and in a job its mother brought it forth. . . . This board is a sort of temperate bed of influence: a sort of gently ripening hothouse, where eight members of Parliament receive salaries of a thousand a year for a certain given time, in order to mature at a proper season a claim to two thousand, granted for doing less" (Speech on Economical Reform). Gibbon, with entire good humour, acknowledges the justice of Burke's indictment, and says he was "heard with delight, even by those whose existence he proscribed." After all, he only enjoyed the emolument of his office for three years, and he places that emolument at a lower figure than Burke did. He could not have received more than between two and three thousand pounds of public money; and when we consider what manner of men have fattened on the national purse, it would be churlish to grudge that
small sum to the historian of the *Decline and Fall*. The misfortune is that, reasonably or otherwise, doubts were raised as to Gibbon's complete straightforwardness and honourable adhesion to party ties in accepting office. He says himself: "My acceptance of a place provoked some of the leaders of opposition with whom I had lived in habits of intimacy, and I was most unjustly accused of deserting a party in which I had never enlisted." There is certainly no evidence that those who were most qualified to speak, those who gave him the place and reckoned on his vote, ever complained of want of allegiance. On the other hand, Gibbon's own letter to Edward Elliot, accepting the place, betrays a somewhat uneasy conscience. He owns that he was far from approving all the past measures of the administration, even some of those in which he himself had silently concurred; that he saw many capital defects in the characters of some of the present ministers, and was sorry that in so alarming a situation of public affairs the country had not the assistance of several able and honest men who were now in opposition. Still, for various reasons, he did not consider himself in any way implicated, and rather suspiciously concludes with an allusion to his pecuniary difficulties and a flourish. "The addition of the salary which is now offered will make my situation perfectly easy, but I hope that you will do me the justice to believe that my mind could not be so unless I were conscious of the rectitude of my conduct."

The strongest charge against Gibbon in reference to this matter is asserted to come from his friend Fox, in this odd form. "In June 1781, Mr. Fox's library came to be sold. Amongst his other books the first volume
of Mr. Gibbon's history was brought to the hammer. In the blank leaf of this was a note in the handwriting of Mr. Fox, stating a remarkable declaration of our historian at a well-known tavern in Pall Mall, and contrasting it with Mr. Gibbon's political conduct afterwards. 'The author,' it observed, 'at Brooks's said that there was no salvation for this country until six heads of the principal persons in administration' (Lord North being then prime minister) 'were laid upon the table. Yet,' as the observation added, 'eleven days afterwards this same gentleman accepted a place of a lord of trade under these very ministers, and has acted with them ever since.'" It is impossible to tell what amount of truth there is in this story, and not very important to inquire. It rests on the authority of a strong personal enemy, and the cordial intimacy which ever subsisted between Gibbon and Fox seems to show that it was mere calumny. Perhaps the fact that Gibbon had really no opinions in politics may have led persons of opposite parties to think that he agreed with them more than he did, and when he merely followed his own interest, they may have inferred that he was deserting their principles. After losing his post on the Board of Trade he still hoped for Government employ, "either a secure seat at the Board of Customs or Excise," or in a diplomatic capacity. He was disappointed. If Lord Sheffield is to be believed, it was his friend Fox who frustrated his appointment as secretary of embassy at Paris, when he had been already named to that office.

The way in which Gibbon acted and afterwards spoke in reference to the celebrated Coalition gives perhaps the best measure of his political calibre. He voted
among the rank and file of Lord North's followers for the Coalition with meek subserviency. He speaks of a "principle of gratitude" which actuated him on this occasion. Lord North had given him his seat, and if a
man's conscience allows him to think rather of his
patron than of his country, there is nothing to be said,
except that his code of political ethics is low. We may
admit that his vote was pledged; but there is also no
doubt that any gratitude that there was in the matter
was stimulated by a lively sense of favours to come. The
Portland ministry had not been long in office when he
wrote in the following terms to his friend Deyverdun:
"You have not forgotten that I went into Parliament
without patriotism and without ambition, and that all
my views tended to the convenient and respectable
place of a lord of trade. This situation I at length
obtained. I possessed it for three years, from 1779 to
1782, and the net produce, which amounted to 750f.
stereing, augmented my income to my wants and desires.
But in the spring of last year the storm burst over
our heads. Lord North was overthrown, your humble
servant turned out, and even the Board of Trade, of
which I was a member, abolished and broken up for
ever by Mr. Burke's reform. To complete my misfor-
tunes, I still remain a member of the Lower House. At
the end of the last Parliament, Mr. Eliot withdrew his
nomination. But the favour of Lord North facilitated
my re-election, and gratitude imposed on me the duty of
making available for his service the rights which I held
in part from him. That winter we fought under the
allied standards of Lord North and Mr. Fox: we
triumphed over Lord Shelburne and the peace, and my
friend (i.e. Lord North) remounted his steed in the quality
of a secretary of state. Now he can easily say to me, 'It was a great deal for me, it was nothing for you;' and in spite of the strongest assurances, I have too much reason to allow me to have much faith. With great genius and very respectable talents, he has now neither the title nor the credit of prime minister; more active colleagues carry off the most savoury morsels which their voracious creatures immediately devour; our misfortunes and reforms have diminished the number of favours; either through pride or through indolence I am but a bad suitor, and if at last I obtain something, it may perhaps be on the eve of a fresh revolution, which will in an instant snatch from me that which has cost me so many cares and pains."

Such a letter speaks for itself. Gibbon might well say that he entered parliament without patriotism and without ambition. The only redeeming feature is the almost cynical frankness with which he openly regards politics from a personal point of view. However, it may be pleaded that the letter was written to a bosom friend at a moment of great depression, and when Gibbon's pecuniary difficulties were pressing him severely. The Coalition promised him a place, and that was enough; the contempt for all principle which had brought it about was not thought of. But even this minute excuse does not apply to the way in which, years after, when he was in comfort at Lausanne, he refers to the subject in his Memoirs. The light in which the Coalition deserved to be regarded was clear by that time. Yet he speaks of it, not only without blame or regret, but contrives to cast suspicion on the motives of those who were disgusted by it, and bestowed their allegiance elsewhere.
"It is not the purpose of this narrative to expatiate on the public or secret history of the times; the schism which followed the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, the appointment of the Earl of Shelbourne, the resignation of Mr. Fox and his famous coalition with Lord North. But I may assert with some degree of assurance that in their political conflict those great antagonists had never felt any personal animosity to each other, that their reconciliation was easy and sincere, and that their friendship has never been clouded by the shadow of suspicion or jealousy. The most violent or venal of their respective followers embraced this fair occasion of revolt, but their alliance still commanded a majority of the House of Commons, the peace was censured, Lord Shelbourne resigned, and the two friends knelt on the same cushion to take the oath of secretary of state. From a principle of gratitude I adhered to the Coalition; my vote was counted in the day of battle, but I was overlooked in the division of the spoil."

From this we learn that it was only the violent and the venal who disapproved of the Coalition. One would like to know how Gibbon explained the fact that at the general election of 1784 no less than one hundred and sixty of the supporters of the Coalition lost their seats, and that Fox’s political reputation was all but irretrievably ruined from this time forward.

Meanwhile he had not neglected his own proper work. The first volume of his history was published in February, 1776. It derived, he says, “more credit from the name of the shop than from that of the author.” In the first instance he intended to print only five hundred copies, but the number was doubled by the “prophetic taste” of his printer, Mr. Strahan. The book was received with a burst of applause—it was a succès fou. The first impression was exhausted in a few days, and a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the
demand. The wiser few were as warm in their eulogies as the general public. Hume declared that if he had not been personally acquainted with the author, he should have been surprised by such a performance coming from any Englishman in that age. Dr. Robertson, Adam Ferguson, and Horace Walpole joined in the chorus. Walpole betrays an amusing mixture of admiration and pique at not having found the author out before. "I know him a little, and never suspected the extent of his talents; for he is perfectly modest, or I want penetration, which I know too; but I intend to know him a great deal more." He oddly enough says that Gibbon was the "son of a foolish alderman," which shows at least how little the author was known in the great world up to this time. Now, however, society was determined to know more of him, the surest proof, not of merit, but of success. It must have been a rather intoxicating moment, but Gibbon had a cool head not easily turned. It would be unfair not to add that he had something much better, a really warm and affectionate regard for old friends, the best preservative against the fumes of flattery and sudden fame. Holroyd, Deyverdun, Madame Necker were more to him than all the great people with whom he now became acquainted. Necker and his wife came over from Paris and paid him a long visit in Bentinck Street, when his laurels were just fresh. "I live with her," he writes, "just as I used to do twenty years ago, laugh at her Paris varnish, and oblige her to become a simple reasonable Suissesse. The man, who might read English husbands lessons of proper and dutiful behaviour, is a sensible, good-natured creature" The next year he returned the visit to Paris. His fame had preceded him, and he
received the cordial but discriminating welcome which the ancien régime at that time specially reserved for gens d'esprit. Madame du Deffand writes to Walpole, "Mr. Gibbon has the greatest success here; it is quite a struggle to get him." He did not deny himself a rather sumptuous style of living while in Paris. Perhaps the recollection of the unpleasant effect of his English clothes and the long waists of the French on his former visit dwelt in his mind, for now, like Walpole, he procured a new outfit at once. "After decking myself out with silks and silver, the ordinary establishment of coach, lodgings, servants, eating, and pocket expenses, does not exceed 60l. per month. Yet I have two footmen in handsome liveries behind my coach, and my apartment is hung with damask."

The remainder of his life in London has nothing important. He persevered assiduously with his history, and had two more quartos ready in 1781. They were received with less enthusiasm than the first, although they were really superior. Gibbon was rather too modestly inclined to agree with the public and "to believe that, especially in the beginning, they were more prolix and less entertaining" than the previous volume. He also wasted some weeks on his vindication of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of that volume, which had excited a host of feeble and ill-mannered attacks. His defence was complete, and in excellent temper. But the piece has no permanent value. His assailants were so ignorant and silly that they gave no scope for a great controversial reply. Neither perhaps did the subject admit of it. A literary war generally makes people think of Bentley's incomparable Phalaris. But that was almost a unique occasion and victory in the history
of letters. Bentley himself, the most pugnacious of men, never found such another.

And so the time glided by, till we come to the year 1783. Lord North had resigned office, the Board of Trade was abolished, and Gibbon had lost his convenient salary. The outlook was not pleasant. The seat on the Board of Customs or Excise with which his hopes had been for a time kept up, receded into a remote distance, and he came to the conclusion "that the reign of pensions and sinecures was at an end." It was clearly necessary to take some important step in the way of retrenchment. After he had lost his official income, his expenses exceeded his revenue by something like four hundred pounds. A less expensive style of living in London never seems to have presented itself as an alternative. So, like many an Englishman before and since, he resolved to go abroad to economise.

His old friend Deyverdun was now settled in a comfortable house at Lausanne, overlooking the Lake of Geneva. They had not met for eight years. But the friendship had begun a quarter of a century before, in the old days when Gibbon was a boarder in Pavillard's house, and the embers of old associations only wanted stirring to make them shoot up into flame. In a moment of expansion Gibbon wrote off a warm and eager letter to his friend, setting forth his unsatisfactory position, and his wish and even necessity to change it. He gradually and with much delicacy discloses his plan, that he and Deyverdun, both now old bachelors, should combine their solitary lives in a common household and carry out an old project, often discussed in younger days, of living together. "You live in a charming house. I see from here my apart-
ment, the rooms we shall share with one another, our table, our walks. But such a marriage is worthless unless it suits both parties, and I easily feel that circumstances, new tastes, and connections may frustrate a design which appeared charming in the distance. To settle my mind and to avoid regrets, you must be as frank as I have been, and give me a true picture, external and internal, of George Deyverdun."

This letter, written in fluent and perfect French, is one of the best that we have of Gibbon. Deyverdun answered promptly, and met his friend's advances with at least equal warmth. The few letters that have been preserved of his connected with this subject give a highly favourable idea of his mind and character, and show he was quite worthy of the long and constant attachment that Gibbon felt for him. He cannot express the delight he has felt at his friend's proposal; by the rarest piece of good fortune, it so happens that he himself is in a somewhat similar position of uncertainty and difficulty; a year ago Gibbon's letter would have given him pleasure, now it offers assistance and support. After a few details concerning the tenant who occupies a portion of his house, he proceeds to urge Gibbon to carry out the project he had suggested, to break loose from parliament and politics, for which he was not fit, and to give himself up to the charms of study and friendship. "Call to mind, my dear friend," he goes on, "that I saw you enter parliament with regret, and I think I was only too good a prophet. I am sure that career has caused you more privations than joys, more pains than pleasures. Ever since I have known you I have been convinced that your happiness lay in your study and in society, and that any path which led you
elsewhere was a departure from happiness.” Through nine pages of gentle and friendly eloquence Deyverdun pursues his argument to induce his friend to clinch the bargain. “I advise you not only not to solicit a place, but to refuse one if it were offered to you. Would a thousand a year make up to you for the loss of five days a week? . . . By making this retreat to Switzerland, besides the beauty of the country and the pleasures of its society, you will acquire two blessings which you have lost, liberty and competence. You will also be useful, your works will continue to enlighten us, and, independently of your talents, the man of honour and refinement is never useless.” He then skilfully exhibits the attractions he has to offer. “You used to like my house and garden; what would you do now? On the first floor, which looks on the declivity of Ouchy, I have fitted up an apartment which is enough for me. I have a servant’s room, two salons, two cabinets. On a level with the terrace two other salons, of which one serves as a dining-room in summer, and the other a drawing-room for company. I have arranged three more rooms between the house and the coachhouse, so that I can offer you all the large apartment, which consists actually of eleven rooms, great and small, looking east and south, not splendidly furnished, I allow, but with a certain elegance which I hope you will like. The terrace is but little altered . . . it is lined from end to end with boxes of orange-trees. The vine-trellis has prospered, and extends nearly to the end. I have purchased the vineyard below the garden, and in front of the house made it into a lawn, which is watered by the water of the fountain . . . In a word, strangers come to see the place, and in spite of my pompous description
of it I think you will like it. . . . If you come, you will find a tranquillity which you cannot have in London, and a friend who has not passed a single day without thinking of you, and who, in spite of his defects, his foibles, and his inferiority, is still one of the companions who suits you best."

More letters followed from both sides in a similar strain. Yet Gibbon quailed before a final resolution. His aunt, Mrs. Porten, his mother, Mrs. Gibbon, his friend, Lord Sheffield, all joined in deprecating his voluntary exile. "That is a nonsensical scheme," said the latter, "you have got into your head of returning to Lausanne—a pretty fancy; you remember how much you liked it in your youth, but now you have seen more of the world, and if you were to try it again you would find yourself woefully disappointed." Deyverdun, with complete sympathy, begged him not to be in too great a hurry to decide on a course which he himself desired so much. "I agree with you," he wrote to Gibbon, "that this is a sort of marriage, but I could never forgive myself if I saw you dissatisfied in the sequel, and in a position to reproach me." Gibbon felt it was a case demanding decision of character, and he came to a determination with a promptitude and energy not usual with him. He promised Deyverdun in the next letter an ultimatum, stating whether he meant to go or to stay, and a week after he wrote, "I go." He had prudently refrained from consulting Lord Sheffield during this critical period, knowing that his certain disapprobation of the scheme would only complicate matters and render decision more difficult. Then he wrote, "I have given Deyverdun my word of honour to be at Lausanne at the beginning of October, and no power of persuasion
can divert me from this irrevocable resolution, which I am every day proceeding to execute."

This was no exaggeration. He cancelled the lease of his house in Bentinck Street, packed the more necessary portion of his books and shipped them for Ronen, and as his postchaise moved over Westminster Bridge, "bade a long farewell to the fumum et opes strepitumque Rame." The only real pang he felt in leaving arose from the "silent grief" of his Aunt Porten, whom he did not hope to see again. Nor did he. He started on September 15, 1783, slept at Dover, was flattered with the hope of making Calais harbour by the same tide in "three hours and a half, as the wind was brisk and fair," but was driven into Boulogne. He had not a symptom of seasickness. Then he went on by easy stages through Aire, Bethune, Douay, Cambray, St. Quentin, La Fère, Laon, Rheims, Chalons, St. Dizier, Langres, Besançon, and arrived at Lausanne on the 27th. The inns he found more agreeable to the palate than to the sight or the smell. At Langres he had an excellent bed about six feet high from the ground. He beguiled the time with Homer and Clarendon, talking with his servant, Caplin, and his dog Muff, and sometimes with the French postilions, and he found them the least rational of the animals mentioned.

He reached his journey's end, to alight amid a number of minor troubles, which to a less easy tempered man would have been real annoyances. He found that Deyverdun had reckoned without his host, or rather his tenant, and that they could not have possession of the house for several months, so he had to take lodgings. Then he sprained his ankle, and this brought on a bad attack of the gout, which laid him up completely.
However, his spirits never gave way. In time his books arrived, and the friends got installed in their own house. His satisfaction has then no bounds, with the people, the place, the way of living, and his daily companion. We must now leave him for a short space in the enjoyment of his happiness, while we briefly consider the labours of the previous ten years.
CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST THREE VOLUMES OF THE DECLINE AND FALL.

The historian who is also an artist is exposed to a particular drawback from which his brethren in other fields are exempt. The mere lapse of time destroys the value and even the fidelity of his pictures. In other arts correct colouring and outline remain correct, and if they are combined with imaginative power, age rather enhances than diminishes their worth. But the historian lives under another law. His reproduction of a past age, however full and true it may appear to his contemporaries, appears less and less true to his successors. The way in which he saw things ceases to be satisfactory; we may admit his accuracy, but we add a qualification referring to the time when he wrote, the point of view that he occupied. And we feel that what was accurate for him is no longer accurate for us. This superannuation of historical work is not similar to the superseding of scientific work which is ever going on, and is the capital test of progress. Scientific books become rapidly old-fashioned, because the science to which they refer is in constant growth, and a work on chemistry or biology is out of date by reason of incompleteness
or the discovery of unsuspected errors. The scientific side of history, if we allow it to have a scientific side, conforms to this rule, and presents no singularity. Closer inspection of our materials, the employment of the comparative method, occasionally the bringing to light of new authorities—all contribute to an increase of real knowledge, and historical studies in this respect do not differ from other branches of research. But this is not the sole or the chief cause of the renovation and transformation constantly needed in historic work. That depends on the ever-moving standpoint from which the past is regarded, so that society in looking back on its previous history never sees it for long together at quite the same angle, never sees, we may say, quite the same thing. The past changes to us as we move down the stream of time, as a distant mountain changes through the windings of the road on which we travel away from it. To drop figure and use language now becoming familiar, the social organism is in constant growth, and receiving new additions, and each new addition causes us to modify our view of the whole. The historian, in fact, is engaged in the study of an unfinished organism, whose development is constantly presenting him with surprises. It is as if the biologist were suddenly to come upon new and unheard-of species and families which would upset his old classification, or as if the chemist were to find his laws of combination replaced by others which were not only unknown to him, but which were really new and recent in the world. Other inquirers have the whole of the phenomena with which their science is concerned before them, and they may explore them at their leisure. The sociologist has only an instalment, most likely a very small instalment,
of the phenomena with which his science is concerned before him. They have not yet happened, are not yet phenomena, and as they do happen and admit of investigation they necessarily lead to constant modification of his views and deductions. Not only does he acquire new knowledge like other inquirers, but he is constantly having the subject-matter from which he derives his knowledge augmented. Even in modern times society has thrown out with much suddenness rapid and unexpected developments, of such scope and volume that contemporaries have often lost self-possession at the sight of them, and wondered if social order could survive. The Reformation and the French Revolution are cases in point. And what a principal part do these two great events always play in any speculations instituted subsequent to them! How easy it is to see whether a writer lived before the Reign of Terror, or after it, from his gait and manner of approaching social inquiries! Is there any reason to suppose that such mutations are now at an end? None. The probability, well nigh a certainty, is that metamorphoses of the social organism are in store for us which will equal, if they do not vastly exceed, anything that the past has offered.

Considerations of this kind need to be kept in view if we would be just in our appreciation of historical writings which have already a certain age. It is impossible that a history composed a century ago should fully satisfy us now; but we must beware of blaming the writer for his supposed or real shortcomings, till we have ascertained how far they arose from his personal inadequacy to his task, and were not the result of his
chronological position. It need not be said that this remark does not refer to many books which are called histories, but are really contemporary memoirs and original authorities subservient to history proper. The works of Clarendon and Burnet, for instance, can never lose a certain value on this account. The immortal book which all subsequent generations have agreed to call a possession for ever, is the unapproachable ideal of this class. But neither Thucydides nor Clarendon were historians in the sense in which Gibbon was an historian, that is, engaged in the delineation of a remote epoch by the help of such materials as have escaped the ravages of time. It is historians like Gibbon who are exposed to the particular unhappiness referred to a little way back—that of growing out of date through no fault of their own, but through the changed aspect presented by the past in consequence of the movement which has brought us to the present. But if this is the field of historical disaster, it is also the opportunity of historical genius. In proportion as a writer transcends the special limitations of his time, will "age fail to wither him." That he cannot entirely shake off the fetters which fasten him to his epoch is manifest. But in proportion as his vision is clear, in proportion as he has with singleness of eye striven to draw the past with reverent loyalty, will his bondage to his own time be loosened, and his work will remain faithful work for which due gratitude will not be withheld.

The sudden and rapid expansion of historic studies in the middle of the eighteenth century constitutes one of the great epochs in literature. Up to the year 1750 no great historical work had appeared in any moder
language. The instances that seem to make against this remark will be found to confirm it. They consist of memoirs, contemporary documents, in short materials for history, but not history itself. From Froissart and De Comines, or even from the earlier monastic writers to St. Simon (who was just finishing his incomparable Memoirs), history with wide outlook and the conception of social progress and interconnection of events did not exist. Yet history in its simple forms is one of the most spontaneous of human achievements. Stories of mighty deeds, of the prowess and death of heroes, are among the earliest productions of even semi-civilised man—the earliest subjects of epic and lyric verse. But this rudimentary form is never more than biographical. With increasing complexity of social evolution it dies away, and history proper, as distinct from annals and chronicle, does not arise till circumstances allow of general and synthetic views, till societies can be surveyed from a sufficient distance and elevation for their movements to be discerned. Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus do not appear till Greece and Rome have reached their highest point of homogeneous national life. The tardy dawn of history in the modern world was owing to its immense complexity. Materials also were wanting. They gradually emerged out of manuscript all over Europe, during what may be called the great pedant age (1550-1650), under the direction of meritorious antiquaries, Camden, Savile, Duchesne, Gale, and others. Still official documents and state papers were wanting, and had they been at hand would hardly have been

1 Mézeray's great history of France is next to valueless till he reaches the sixteenth century, that was a period bordering on his own. Thuanus deals with contemporary events.
used with competence. The national and religious limitations were still too marked and hostile to permit a free survey over the historic field. The eighteenth century, though it opened with a bloody war, was essentially peaceful in spirit: governments made war, but men and nations longed for rest. The increased interest in the past was shown by the publication nearly contemporary of the great historic collections of Rymer (a.d. 1704), Leibnitz (1707), and Muratori (1723). Before the middle of the century the historic muse had abundant oil to feed her lamp. Still the lamp would probably not have been lighted but for the singular pass to which French thought had come.

From the latter years of Louis XIV. till the third quarter of the eighteenth century was all but closed, France had a government at once so weak and wicked, so much below the culture of the people it oppressed, that the better minds of the nation turned away in disgust from their domestic ignominy, and sought consolation in contemplating foreign virtue wherever they thought it was to be found; in short, they became cosmopolitan. The country which has since been the birthplace of Chauvinism, put away national pride almost with passion. But this was not all. The country whose king was called the Eldest Son of the Church, and with which untold pains had been taken to keep it orthodox, had lapsed into such an abhorrence of the Church and of orthodoxy that anything seemed preferable to them in its eyes.

Thus, as if by enchantment, the old barriers disappeared, both national and religious. Man and his fortunes, in all climes and all ages, became topics of intense interest, especially when they tended to degrade
by contrast the detested condition of things at home. This was the weak side of historical speculation in France: it was essentially polemical; prompted less by genuine interest in the past than by strong hatred of the present. Of this perturbation note must be taken. But it is none the less true that the disengagement of French thought from the narrow limits of nation and creed produced, as it were in a moment, a lofty conception of history such as subsequent ages may equal, but can hardly surpass.

The influence of French thought was European, and nowhere more beneficial than in England. In other countries it was too despotic, and produced in Germany, at least, Lessing’s memorable reaction. But the robust national and political life of England reduced it to a welcome flavouring of our insular temperament. The Scotch, who had a traditional connection with France, were the first importers of the new views. Hume, who had practically grown in the same soil as Voltaire, was only three years behind him in the historic field. The *Age of Louis XIV* was published in 1751, and the first volume of the *History of England* in 1754. Hume was no disciple of Voltaire; he simply wrote under the stimulus of the same order of ideas. Robertson, who shortly followed him, no doubt drew direct inspiration from Voltaire, and his weightiest achievement, the *View of the State of Europe*, prefixed to his *History of Charles V.*, was largely influenced, if it was not absolutely suggested, by the *Essay on Manners*. But both Hume and Robertson surpassed their masters, if we allow, as seems right, that the French were their masters. The Scotch writers had no quarrel with their country or their age as the French had. One was a
Tory, the other a Whig; and Hume allowed himself to be unworthily affected by party bias in his historical judgment. But neither was tempted to turn history into a covert attack on the condition of things amid which they lived. Hence a calmness and dignity of tone and language, very different from the petulant brilliancy of Voltaire, who is never so happy as when he can make the past look mean and ridiculous, merely because it was the parent of the odious present. But, excellent as were the Scotch historians—Hume, in style nearly perfect; Robertson, admirable for gravity and shrewd sense—they yet left much to be desired. Hume had despatched his five quartos, containing the whole history of England from the Roman period to the Revolution, in nine years. Considering that the subject was new to him when he began, such rapidity made genuine research out of the question. Robertson had the oddest way of consulting his friends as to what subject it would be advisable for him to treat, and was open to proposals from any quarter with exemplary impartiality; this only showed how little the stern conditions of real historic inquiry were appreciated by him. In fact it is not doing them injustice to say that these eminent men were a sort of modern Livies, chiefly occupied with the rhetorical part of their work, and not over inclined to waste their time in ungrateful digging in the deep mines of historic lore. Obviously the place was open for a writer who should unite all the broad spirit of comprehensive survey, with the thorough and minute patience of a Benedictine; whose subject, mellowed by long brooding, should have sought him rather than he it; whose whole previous course of study had been an unconscious preparation for one great effort
which was to fill his life. When Gibbon sat down to write his book, the man had been found who united these difficult conditions.

The decline and fall of Rome is the greatest event in history. It occupied a larger portion of the earth's surface, it affected the lives and fortunes of a larger number of human beings, than any other revolution on record. For it was essentially one, though it took centuries to consummate, and though it had for its theatre the civilised world. Great evolutions and catastrophes happened before it, and have happened since, but nothing which can compare with it in volume and mere physical size. Nor was it less morally. The destruction of Rome was not only a destruction of an empire, it was the destruction of a phase of human thought, of a system of human beliefs, of morals, politics, civilisation, as all these had existed in the world for ages. The drama is so vast, the cataclysm so appalling, that even at this day we are hardly removed from it far enough to take it fully in. The mind is oppressed, the imagination flags under the load imposed upon it. The capture and sack of a town one can fairly conceive: the massacre, outrage, the flaming roofs, the desolation. Even the devastation of a province can be approximately reproduced in thought. But what thought can embrace the devastation and destruction of all the civilised portions of Europe, Africa, and Asia? Who can realise a Thirty Years War lasting five hundred years? a devastation of the Palatinate extending through fifteen generations? If we try to insert into the picture, as we undoubtedly should do, the founding of the new, which was going on beside this destruction of the old, the settling down of the barba-
rian hosts in the conquered provinces, the expansion of the victorious Church, driving paganism from the towns to the country and at last extinguishing it entirely, the effort becomes more difficult than ever. The legend of the Seven Sleepers testifies to the need men felt, even before the tragedy had come to an end, to symbolize in a manageable form the tremendous changes they saw going on around them. But the legend only refers to the changes in religion. The fall of Rome was much more than that. It was the death of the old pagan world and the birth of the new Christian world—the greatest transition in history.

This, and no less than this, is Gibbon's subject.

He has treated it in such a way as even now fills competent judges with something like astonishment. His accuracy, coupled with the extraordinary range of his matter, the variety of his topics, the complexity of his undertaking, the fulness and thoroughness of his knowledge, never failing at any point over the vast field, the ease and mastery with which he lifts the enormous load, are appreciated in proportion to the information and abilities of his critic. One testimonial will suffice. Mr. Freeman says: "That Gibbon should ever be displaced seems impossible. That wonderful man monopolised, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and left little, indeed, of either for his contemporaries. He remains the one historian of the eighteenth century whom modern research has neither set aside nor threatened to set aside. We may correct and improve from the stores which have been opened since Gibbon's time; we may write again large parts of his story from other and often truer and more wholesome points of view, but the work
of Gibbon as a whole, as the encyclopaedic history of 1300 years, as the grandest of historical designs, carried out alike with wonderful power and with wonderful accuracy, must ever keep its place. Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."

Gibbon's immense scheme did not unfold itself to him at once: he passed through at least two distinct stages in the conception of his work. The original idea had been confined to the decline and fall of the city of Rome. Before he began to write, this had been expanded to the fall of the empire of the West. The first volume, which we saw him publish in the last chapter, was only an instalment, limited to the accession of Constantine, through a doubt as to how his labours would be received. The two following volumes, published in 1781, completed his primitive plan. Then he paused exactly a year before he resolved to carry on his work to its true end, the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. The latter portion he achieved in three volumes more, which he gave to the world on his fifty-first birthday, in 1788. Thus the work naturally falls into two equal parts. It will be more convenient to disregard in our remarks the interval of five years which separated the publication of the first volume from its two immediate companions. The first three volumes constitute a whole in themselves, which we will now consider.

From the accession of Commodus, A.D. 180, to the last of the Western Caesars, A.D. 476, three centuries elapsed. The first date is a real point of departure, the commencement of a new stage of decay in the empire. The second is a mere official record of the final disappearance of a series of phantom sovereigns, whose
vanishing was hardly noticed. Between these limits the
empire passed from the autumnal calm of the Antonine
period, through the dreadful century of anarchy between
Pertinax and Diocletian, through the relative peace
brought about by Diocletian's reforms, the civil wars of
the sons of Constantine, the disastrous defeat of Julian,
the calamities of the Gothic war, the short respite under
Theodosius, the growing anarchy and misery under his in-
compent sons, the three sieges of Rome and its sack by
the Goths, the awful appearance of Attila and his Huns,
the final submergence of the Western Empire under the
barbarians, and the universal ruin which marked the
close of the fifth century. This was the temporal side
of affairs. On the spiritual, we have the silent occult
growth of the early Church, the conversion of Constan-
tine, the tremendous conflict of hostile sects, the heresy
of Arius, the final triumph of Athanasius, the spread
of monasticism, the extinction of paganism. Antiquity
has ended, the middle ages have begun.

Over all this immense field Gibbon moves with a
striking attitude of power, which arose from his con-
sciousness of complete preparation. What there was
to be known of his subject he felt sure that he knew.
His method of treatment is very simple, one might say
primitive, but it is very effective. He masters his mate-
rials, and then condenses and clarifies them into a broad,
well-filled narrative, which is always or nearly always
perfectly lucid through his skill in grouping events and
characters, and his fine boldness in neglecting chronologi-
cal sequence for the sake of clearness and unity of action.
It is doing the book injustice to consult it only as a work
of reference, or even to read it in detached portions.
It should be read through, if we would appreciate the
art with which the story is told. No part can be fairly judged without regard to the remainder. In fact, Gibbon was much more an artist than perhaps be suspected, and less of a philosophic thinker on history than he would have been willing to allow. His shortcomings in this latter respect will be adverted to presently; we are now considering his merits. And among these the very high one of lofty and vigorous narrative stands pre-eminent. The campaigns of Julian, Belisarius, and Heraclius are painted with a dash and clearness which few civil historians have equalled. His descriptive power is also very great. The picture of Constantinople in the seventeenth chapter is, as the writer of these pages can testify, a wonderful achievement, both for fidelity and brilliancy, coming from a man who had never seen the place.

"If we survey Byzantium in the extent which it acquired with the august name of Constantinople, the figure of the imperial city may be represented under that of an unequal triangle. The obtuse point, which advances towards the east and the shores of Asia, meets and repels the waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. The northern side of the city is bounded by the harbour; and the southern is washed by the Propontis, or Sea of Marmora. The basis of the triangle is opposed to the west, and terminates the continent of Europe. But the admirable form and division of the circumjacent land and water cannot, without a more ample explanation, be clearly or sufficiently understood.

"The winding channel through which the waters of the Euxine flow with rapid and incessant course towards the Mediterranean received the appellation of Bosphorus, a name not less celebrated in the history than in the fables of antiquity. A crowd of temples and of votive altars, profusely scattered along its steep and woody banks, attested the unskilfulness, the terrors, and the devotion of the Grecian navigators, who, after the example of the Argonauts, explored the dangers of the inhospitable
Euxine. On these banks tradition long preserved the memory of the palace of Phineus, infested by the obscene Harpies, and of the sylvan reign of Amycus, who defied the son of Leda to the combat of the cestus. The straits of the Bosphorus are terminated by the Cyanean rocks, which, according to the description of the poets, had once floated on the surface of the waters, and were destined by the gods to protect the entrance of the Euxine against the eye of profane curiosity. From the Cyanean rocks to the point and harbour of Byzantium the winding length of the Bosphorus extends about sixteen miles, and its most ordinary breadth may be computed at about one mile and a half. The new castles of Europe and Asia are constructed on either continent upon the foundations of two celebrated temples of Serapis and Jupiter Urrius. The old castles, a work of the Greek emperors, command the narrowest part of the channel, in a place where the opposite banks advance within five hundred yards of each other. These fortresses were destroyed and strengthened by Mahomet the Second when he meditated the siege of Constantinople; but the Turkish conqueror was most probably ignorant that near two thousand years before his reign Darius had chosen the same situation to connect the two continents by a bridge of boats. At a small distance from the old castles we discover the little town of Chrysopolis or Scutari, which may almost be considered as the Asiatic suburb of Constantinople. The Bosphorus, as it begins to open into the Propontis, passes between Byzantium and Chalcedon. The latter of these two cities was built by the Greeks a few years before the former, and the blindness of its founders, who overlooked the superior advantages of the opposite coast, has been stigmatised by a proverbial expression of contempt.

"The harbour of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained in a very remote period, the denomination of the Golden Horn. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or as it should seem with more propriety, to that of an ox. The epithet of golden was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. The river Lycus, formed by the conflux of two little streams, pours into the harbour a perpetual supply of fresh
water, which serves to cleanse the bottom and to invite the periodical shoals of fish to seek their retreat in that convenient recess. As the vicissitudes of the tides are scarcely felt in those seas, the constant depth of the harbour allows goods to be landed on the quays without the assistance of boats, and it has been observed that in many places the largest vessels may rest their prows against the houses while their sterns are floating in the water. From the mouth of the Lykus to that of the harbour, this arm of the Bosphorus is more than seven miles in length. The entrance is about five hundred yards broad, and a strong chain could be occasionally drawn across it, to guard the port and the city from the attack of an hostile navy.

"Between the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, the shores of Europe and Asia receding on either side include the Sea of Marmora, which was known to the ancients by the denomination of the Propontis. The navigation from the issue of the Bosphorus to the entrance of the Hellespont is about one hundred and twenty miles. Those who steer their westward course through the middle of the Propontis may at once descry the highlands of Thrace and Bithynia and never lose sight of the lofty summit of Mount Olympus, covered with eternal snows. They leave on the left a deep gulf, at the bottom of which Nicomedia was seated, the imperial residence of Diocletian, and they pass the small islands of Cyzicus and Proconnesus before they cast anchor at Gallipoli, where the sea which separates Asia from Europe is again contracted to a narrow channel.

"The geographers, who with the most skilful accuracy have surveyed the form and extent of the Hellespont, assign about sixty miles for the winding course and about three miles for the ordinary breadth of those celebrated straits. But the narrowest part of the channel is found to the northward of the old Turkish castles between the cities of Sestos and Abydos. It was here that the adventurous Leander braved the passage of the flood for the possession of his mistress. It was here, likewise, in a place where the distance between the opposite banks cannot exceed five hundred paces, that Xerxes imposed a stupendous bridge of boats for the purpose of transporting into Europe an hundred and seventy myriads of barbarians. A sea contracted
within such narrow limits may seem but ill to deserve the singular epithet of broad, which Homer, as well as Orpheus, has frequently bestowed on the Hellespont. But our ideas of greatness are of a relative nature; the traveller, and especially the poet, who sailed along the Hellespont, who pursued the windings of the stream and contemplated the rural scenery which appeared on every side to terminate the prospect, insensibly lost the remembrance of the sea, and his fancy painted those celebrated straits with all the attributes of a mighty river flowing with a swift current in the midst of a woody and inland country, and at length through a wide mouth discharging itself into the Ægean or Archipelago. Ancient Troy, seated on an eminence at the foot of Mount Ida, overlooked the mouth of the Hellespont, which scarcely received an accession of waters from the tribute of those immortal rivulets the Simois and Scamander. The Grecian camp had stretched twelve miles along the shore from the Sigean to the Rhaetian promontory, and the flanks of the army were guarded by the bravest chiefs who fought under the banners of Agamemnon. The first of these promontories was occupied by Achilles with his invincible Myrmidons, and the dauntless Ajax pitched his tents on the other. After Ajax had fallen a sacrifice to his disappointed pride and to the ingratitude of the Greeks, his sepulchre was erected on the ground where he had defended the navy against the rage of Jove and Hector, and the citizens of the rising town of Rhetium celebrated his memory with divine honours. Before Constantine gave a just preference to the situation of Byzantium he had conceived the design of erecting the seat of empire on this celebrated spot, from whence the Romans derived their fabulous origin. The extensive plain which lies below ancient Troy towards the Rhaetian promontory was first chosen for his new capital; and though the undertaking was soon relinquished, the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the straits of the Hellespont.

"We are at present qualified to view the advantageous position of Constantinople; which appears to have been formed by nature for the centre and capital of a great monarchy,
Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude, the imperial city commanded from her seven hills the opposite shores of Europe and Asia; the climate was healthy and temperate; the soil fertile; the harbour secure and capacious; and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. The Bosphorus and the Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople, and the prince who possesses those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the eastern provinces may in some degree be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who in the preceding age had poured their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy, and despaired of forcing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed within their spacious inclosure every production which could supply the wants or gratify the luxury of its numerous inhabitants. The sea-coasts of Thrace and Bithynia, which languished under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibit a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens, and of plentiful harvests; and the Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish that are taken in their stated seasons without skill and almost without labour. But when the passages of the straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the north and south, of the Euxine and the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, and as far as the sources of the Tanais and Borysthenes; whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia, the corn of Egypt, the gems and spices of the furthest India, were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which for many ages attracted the commerce of the ancient world.

The prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth united in a single spot was sufficient to justify the choice of Constantine. But as some mixture of prodigy and fable has in every age been supposed to reflect a becoming majesty on the origin of great
cities, the emperor was desirous of ascribing his resolution not so much to the uncertain counsels of human policy as to the eternal and infallible decrees of divine wisdom. In one of his laws he has been careful to instruct posterity that in obedience to the commands of God he laid the everlasting foundations of Constantinople, and though he has not condescended to relate in what manner the celestial inspiration was communicated to his mind, the defect of his modest silence has been liberally supplied by the ingenuity of succeeding writers, who describe the nocturnal vision which appeared to the fancy of Constantine as he slept within the walls of Byzantium. The tutelar genius of the city, a venerable matron sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, was suddenly transformed into a blooming maid, whom his own hands adorned with all the symbols of imperial greatness. The monarch awoke, interpreted the auspicious omen, and obeyed without hesitation the will of Heaven. The day which gave birth to a city or a colony was celebrated by the Romans with such ceremonies as had been ordained by a generous superstition: and though Constantine might omit some rites which savoured too strongly of their pagan origin, yet he was anxious to leave a deep impression of hope and respect on the minds of the spectators. On foot, with a lance in his hand, the emperor himself led the solemn procession: and directed the line which was traced as the boundary of the destined capital: till the growing circumference was observed with astonishment by the assistants, who at length ventured to observe that he had already exceeded the most ample measure of a great city. ‘I shall still advance,’ replied Constantine, ‘till HE, the invisible Guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop.’

Gibbon proceeds to describe the extent, limits, and edifices of Constantinople. Unfortunately the limits of our space prevent us from giving more than a portion of his brilliant picture.

“In the actual state of the city the palace and gardens of the Seraglio occupy the eastern promontory, the first of the seven hills,
and cover about one hundred and fifty acres of our own measure. The seat of Turkish jealousy and despotism is erected on the foundations of a Grecian republic: but it may be supposed that the Byzantines were tempted by the convenience of the harbour to extend their habitations on that side beyond the modern limits of the Seraglio. The new walls of Constantine stretched from the port to the Propontis across the enlarged breadth of the triangle, at the distance of fifteen stadia from the ancient fortifications: and with the city of Byzantium they inclosed five of the seven hills, which to the eyes of those who approach Constantinople appear to rise above each other in beautiful order. About a century after the death of the founder the new buildings, extending on one side up the harbour, and on the other the Propontis, already covered the narrow ridge of the sixth and the broad summit of the seventh hill. The necessity of protecting those suburbs from the incessant inroads of the barbarians engaged the younger Theodosius to surround his capital with an adequate and permanent inclosure of walls. From the eastern promontory to the Golden Gate, the extreme length of Constantinople was above three Roman miles; the circumference measured between ten and eleven; and the surface might be computed as equal to about two thousand English acres. It is impossible to justify the vain and credulous exaggerations of modern travellers, who have sometimes stretched the limits of Constantinople over the adjacent villages of the European and even Asiatic coasts. But the suburbs of Pera and Galata, though situate beyond the harbour, may deserve to be considered as a part of the city, and this addition may perhaps authorise the measure of a Byzantine historian, who assigns sixteen Greek (about sixteen Roman) miles for the circumference of his native city. Such an extent may seem not unworthy of an imperial residence. Yet Constantinople must yield to Babylon and Thebes, to ancient Rome, to London, and even to Paris . . .

"Some estimate may be formed of the expense bestowed with imperial liberality on Constantinople, by the allowance of about two millions five hundred thousand pounds for the construction of the walls, the porticoes, and the aqueducts. The forests that overshadowed the shores of the Euxine, and the celebrated
quarries of white marble in the little island of Proconnesus, supplied an inexhaustible stock of materials ready to be conveyed by the convenience of a short water carriage to the harbour of Byzantium. A multitude of labourers and artificers urged the conclusion of the work with incessant toil, but the impatience of Constantine soon discovered that in the decline of the arts the skill as well as the number of his architects bore a very unequal proportion to the greatness of his design. . . . The buildings of the new city were executed by such artificers as the age of Constantine could afford, but they were decorated by the hands of the most celebrated masters of the age of Pericles and Alexander. . . . By Constantine's command the cities of Greece and Asia were despoiled of their most valuable ornaments. The trophies of memorable wars, the objects of religious veneration, the most finished statues of the gods and heroes, of the sages and poets of ancient times, contributed to the splendid triumph of Constantinople.

"... The Circus, or Hippodrome, was a stately building of about four hundred paces in length and one hundred in breadth. The space between the two meta, or gaols, was filled with statues and obelisks, and we may still remark a very singular fragment of antiquity—the bodies of three serpents twisted into one pillar of brass. Their triple heads had once supported the golden tripod which, after the defeat of Xerxes, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the victorious Greeks. The beauty of the Hippodrome has been long since defaced by the rude hands of the Turkish conquerors; but, under the similar appellation of Atmeidan, it still serves as a place of exercise for their horses. From the throne whence the emperor viewed the Circensian games a winding staircase descended to the palace, a magnificent edifice, which scarcely yielded to the residence of Rome itself, and which, together with the dependent courts, gardens, and porticoes, covered a considerable extent of ground upon the banks of the Propontis between the Hippodrome and the church of St. Sophia. We might likewise celebrate the baths, which still retained the name of Zeuxippus, after they had been enriched by the magnificence of Constantine with lofty columns, various marbles, and above three score statues of bronze.
But we should deviate from the design of this history if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. . . . A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public and one hundred and fifty-three private baths, fifty-two porticoes, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meeting of the senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and four thousand three hundred and eighty-eight houses, which for their size or beauty deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations.

Gibbon's conception of history was that of a spacious panorama, in which a series of tableaux pass in succession before the reader's eye. He adverts but little, far too little, to that side of events which does not strike the visual sense. He rarely generalises or sums up a widely-scattered mass of facts into pregnant synthetic views. But possibly he owes some of the permanence of his fame to this very defect. As soon as ever a writer begins to support a thesis, to prove a point, he runs imminent danger of one sidedness and partiality in his presentation of events. Gibbon's faithful transcript of the past has neither the merit nor the drawback of generalisation, and he has come in consequence to be regarded as a common mine of authentic facts to which all speculators can resort.

The first volume, which was received with such warm acclamation, is inferior to those that followed. He seems to have been partly aware of this himself, and speaks of the "concise and superficial narrative from Commodus to Alexander." But the whole volume lacks the grasp and easy mastery which distinguish its successors. No doubt the subject-matter was comparatively meagre and ungrateful. The century between
Commodus and Diocletian was one long spasm of anarchy and violence, which was, as Niebuhr said, incapable of historical treatment. The obscure confusion of the age is aggravated into almost complete darkness by the wretched materials which alone have survived, and the attempt to found a dignified narrative on such scanty and imperfect authorities was hardly wise. Gibbon would have shown a greater sense of historic proportion if he had passed over this period with a few bold strokes, and summed up with brevity such general results as may be fairly deduced. We may say of the first volume that it was tentative in every way. In it the author not only sounded his public, but he was also trying his instrument, running over the keys in preparatory search for the right note. He strikes it full and clear in the two final chapters on the Early Church; these, whatever objections may be made against them on other grounds, are the real commencement of the Decline and Fall.

From this point onwards he marches with the steady and measured tramp of a Roman legion. His materials improve both in number and quality. The fourth century, though a period of frightful anarchy and disaster if compared to a settled epoch, is a period of relative peace and order when compared to the third century. The fifth was calamitous beyond example; but ecclesiastical history comes to the support of secular history in a way which might have excited more gratitude in Gibbon than it did. From Constantine to Augustulus Gibbon is able to put forth all his strength. His style is less superfine, as his matter becomes more copious; and the more definite cleavage of events brought about by the separation between the Eastern
VII. THE DECLINE AND FALL.

and Western Empires, enables him to display the higher qualities which marked him as an historian.

The merit of his work, it is again necessary to point out, will not be justly estimated unless the considerations suggested at the beginning of this chapter be kept in view. We have to remember that his culture was chiefly French, and that his opinions were those which prevailed in France in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He was the friend of Voltaire, Helvétius, and D'Holbach; that is, of men who regarded the past as one long nightmare of crime, imposture, and folly, instigated by the selfish machinations of kings and priests. A strong infusion of the spirit which animated not only Voltaire’s Essay on Manners, but certain parts of Hume’s History of England might have been expected as a matter of course. It is essentially absent. Gibbon’s private opinions may have been what they will, but he has approved his high title to the character of an historian by keeping them well in abeyance. When he turned his eyes to the past and viewed it with intense gaze, he was absorbed in the spectacle, his peculiar prejudices were hushed, he thought only of the object before him and of reproducing it as well as he could. This is not the common opinion, but, nevertheless, a great deal can be said to support it.

It will be as well to take two concrete tests—his treatment of two topics which of all others were most likely to betray him into deviations from historic candour. If he stands these, he may be admitted to stand any less severe. Let them be his account of Julian, and his method of dealing with Christianity.

The snare that was spread by Julian’s apostasy for the philosophers of the last century, and their haste to fall
into it, are well known. The spectacle of a philosopher on the throne who proclaimed toleration, and contempt for Christianity, was too tempting and too useful controversially to allow of much circumspection in handling it. The odious comparisons it offered were so exactly what was wanted for depreciating the Most Christian king and his courtly Church, that all further inquiry into the apostate's merits seemed useless. Voltaire finds that Julian had all the qualities of Trajan without his defects; all the virtues of Cato without his ill humour; all that one admires in Julius Caesar without his vices; he had the continency of Scipio, and was in all ways equal to Marcus Aurelius, the first of men. Nay, more. If he had only lived longer, he would have retarded the fall of the Roman Empire, if he could not arrest it entirely. We here see the length to which "polemical fury" could hurry a man of rare insight. Julian had been a subject of contention for years between the hostile factions. While one party made it a point of honour to prove that he was a monster, warring consciously against the Most High, the other was equally determined to prove that he was a paragon of all virtue, by reason of his enmity to the Christian religion. The deep interest attaching to the pagan reaction in the fourth century, and the social and moral problems it suggests, were perceived by neither side, and it is not difficult to see why they were not. The very word reaction, in its modern sense, will hardly be found in the eighteenth century, and the thing that it expresses was very imperfectly conceived. We, who have been surrounded by reactions, real or supposed, in politics, in religion, in philosophy, recognise an old acquaintance in the efforts of the limited, intense Julian to stem the tide of progress as repre-
sented in the Christian Church. It is a fine instance of
the way in which the ever-unfolding present is con-
stantly lighting up the past. Julian and his party were
the Ultramontanes of their day in matters of religion,
and the Romantics in matters of literature. Those
radical innovators and reformers, the Christians, were
marching from conquest to conquest, over the old faith,
making no concealment of their revolutionary aims and
intentions to wipe out the past as speedily as possible.
The conservatives of those times, after long despising
the reformers, passed easily to fearing them and hating
them as their success became threatening. "The attach-
ment to paganism," says Neander, "lingered especially
in many of the ancient and noble families of Greece and
Rome." Old families, or new rich ones who wished to
be thought old, would be sure to take up the cause of
ancestral wisdom as against modern innovation. Before
Julian came to the throne, a pagan reaction was immi-
nent, as Neander points out. Julian himself was a
remarkable man, as men of his class usually are. In the
breaking up of old modes of belief, as Mill has said,
"the most strong-minded and discerning, next to those
who head the movement, are generally those who bring
up the rear." The energy of his mind and character
was quite exceptional, and if we reflect that he only
reigned sixteen months, and died in his thirty-second
year, we must admit that the mark he has left in history
is very surprising. He and his policy are now discussed
with entire calm by inquirers of all schools, and sincere
Christians like Neander and Dean Milman are as little
disposed to attack him with acrimony, as those of a
different way of thought are inclined to make him a
subject of unlimited panegyric.
Through this difficult subject Gibbon has found his way with a prudence and true insight which extorted admiration, even in his own day. His account of Julian is essentially a modern account. The influence of his private opinions can hardly be traced in the brilliant chapters that he has devoted to the Apostle. He sees through Julian's weaknesses in a way in which Voltaire never saw or cared to see. His pitiful superstition, his huge vanity, his weak affectation are brought out with an incisive clearness and subtle penetration into character which Gibbon was not always so ready to display. At the same time he does full justice to Julian's real merits. And this is perhaps the most striking evidence of his penetration. An error on the side of injustice to Julian is very natural in a man who, having renounced allegiance to Christianity, yet fully realises the futility of attempting to arrest it in the fourth century. A certain intellectual disdain for the reactionary emperor is difficult to avoid. Gibbon surmounts it completely, and he does so, not in consequence of a general conception of the reactionary spirit, as a constantly emerging element in society, but by sheer historical insight, clear vision of the fact before him. It may be added that nowhere is Gibbon's command of vivid narrative seen to greater advantage than in the chapters that he has devoted to Julian. The daring march from Gaul to Illyricum is told with immense spirit; but the account of Julian's final campaign and death in Persia is still better, and can hardly be surpassed. It has every merit of clearness and rapidity, yet is full of dignity, which culminates in this fine passage referring to the night before the emperor received his mortal wound.
While Julian struggled with the almost insuperable difficulties of his situation, the silent hours of the night were still devoted to study and contemplation. Whenever he closed his eyes in short and interrupted slumbers, his mind was agitated by painful anxiety; nor can it be thought surprising that the Genius of the empire should once more appear before him, covering with a funereal veil his head and his horn of abundance, and slowly retiring from the Imperial tent. The monarch started from his couch, and, stepping forth to refresh his wearied spirits with the coolness of the midnight air, he beheld a fiery meteor, which shot athwart the sky and suddenly vanished. Julian was convinced that he had seen the menacing countenance of the god of war: the council which he summoned, of Tuscan Haruspices, unanimously pronounced that he should abstain from action; but on this occasion necessity and reason were more prevalent than superstition, and the trumpets sounded at the break of day." ¹

It will not be so easy to absolve Gibbon from the

¹ It is interesting to compare Gibbon's admirable picture with the harsh original Latin of his authority, Ammianus Marcellinus. "Ipse autem ad sollicitam suspensamque quietem paulisper protractus, cum somno (ut solebat) depulso, ad aemulationem Caesaris Julii quodam sub pelibus scribens, obscuro noctis altitudine sensus cujusdam philosophi teneretur, vidit squalidius, ut confessus est proximus, speciem illam Genii publici, quam quum ad Augustum surgens culmen, conspexit in Gallia, velata cum capite cornucopia per sola tristius discendentem. Et quamquam ad momentum hesit, stupore defixus, omni tamen superior metu, ventura decretis celestibus commendabat; relictum humi strato cubili, adulta jam exitus nocte, et numinibus per sacra depulsor suplicant, flagrantissimam facem cadenti similum visum, aëris parte sulcata evanuiisse existimavit: horroreque perfusus est, ne ita aperte minax Martis ad paruerit sidus."—Amm. Marc. lib. xxv. cap. 2.
charge of prejudice in reference to his treatment of the Early Church. It cannot be denied that in the two famous chapters, at least, which concluded his first volume, he adopted a tone which must be pronounced offensive, not only from the Christian point of view, but on the broad ground of historical equity. His preconceived opinions were too strong for him on this occasion, and obstructed his generally clear vision. Yet a distinction must be made. The offensive tone in question is confined to these two chapters. We need not think that it was in consequence of the clamour they raised that he adopted a different style with reference to church matters in his subsequent volumes. A more creditable explanation of his different tone, which will be presently suggested, is at least as probable. In any case, these two chapters remain the chief slur on his historical impartiality, and it is worth while to examine what his offence amounts to.

Gibbon's account of the early Christians is vitiated by his narrow and distorted conception of the emotional side of man's nature. Having no spiritual aspirations himself, he could not appreciate or understand them in others. Those emotions which have for their object the unseen world and its centre, God, had no meaning for him; and he was tempted to explain them away when he came across them, or to ascribe their origin and effects to other instincts which were more intelligible to him. The wonderland which the mystic inhabits was closed to him, he remained outside of it and reproduced in sarcastic travesty the reports he heard of its marvels. What he has called the secondary causes of the growth of Christianity, were much rather its effects. The first is "the inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians."
and their abhorrence of idolatry. With great power of language, he paints the early Christian "encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, the Christian on these interesting occasions was compelled to desert the persons who were dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent in those impious ceremonies." It is strange that Gibbon did not ask himself what was the cause of this inflexible zeal. The zeal produced the effects alleged, but what produced the zeal? He says that it was derived from the Jewish religion, but neglects to point out what could have induced Gentiles of every diversity of origin to derive from a despised race tenets and sentiments which would make their lives one long scene of self-denial and danger. The whole vein of remark is so completely out of date, that it is not worth dwelling on, except very summarily.

The second cause is "the doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth." Again we have an effect treated as a cause. "The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality." Very true; but the fact of their being so animated was what wanted explaining. Gibbon says it "was no wonder that so advantageous an offer" as that of immortality was accepted. Yet he had just before told us that the ablest orators at the bar and in the senate
of Rome, could expose this offer of immortality to ridicule without fear of giving offence. Whence arose, then, the sudden blaze of conviction with which the Christians embraced it?

The third cause is the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church. Gibbon apparently had not the courage to admit that he agreed with his friend Hume in rejecting miracles altogether. He conceals his drift in a cloud of words, suggesting indirectly with innuendo and sneer his real opinion. But this does not account for the stress he lays on the ascription of miracles. He seems to think that the claim of supernatural gifts somehow had the same efficacy as the gifts themselves would have had, if they had existed.

The fourth cause is the virtues of the primitive Christians. The paragraphs upon it, Dean Milman considers the most uncandid in all the history, and they certainly do Gibbon no credit. With a strange ignorance of the human heart, he attributes the austere morals of the early Christians to their care for their reputation. The ascetic temper, one of the most widely manifested in history, was beyond his comprehension.

The fifth cause was the union and discipline of the Christian republic. For the last time the effect figures as the cause. Union and discipline we know are powerful, but we know also that they are the result of deep antecedent forces, and that prudence and policy alone never produced them.

It can surprise no one that Gibbon has treated the early Church in a way which is highly unsatisfactory if judged by a modern standard. Not only is it a period which criticism has gone over again and again with a microscope, but the standpoint from which such periods
are observed has materially changed since his day. That
dim epoch of nascent faith, full of tender and subdued
tints, with a high light on the brows of the Crucified, was
not one in which he could see clearly, or properly see at
all. He has as little insight into the religious condition
of the pagan world, as of the Christian. It is singular
how he passes over facts which were plain before him,
which he knew quite well, as he knew nearly everything
connected with his subject, but the real significance of
which he missed. Thus he attributes to the scepticism
of the pagan world the easy introduction of Christianity.
Misled by the "eloquence of Cicero and the wit of
Lucian," he supposes the second century to have been
vacant of beliefs, in which a "fashion of incredulity" was
widely diffused, and "many were almost disengaged from
artificial prejudices." He was evidently unaware of the
striking religious revival which uplifted paganism in
the age of Hadrian, and grew with the sinking empire:
the first stirrings of it may even be discerned in
Tacitus, and go on increasing till we reach the theurgy
of the Neoplatonists. A growing fear of the gods, a weariness
of life and longing for death, a disposition to look
for compensation for the miseries of this world to a
brighter one beyond the grave—these traits are common
in the literature of the second century, and show the
change which had come over the minds of men. Gibbon
is colour-blind to these shades of the religious spirit:
he can only see the banter of Lucian. ¹ In reference

¹ On the religious revival of the second century, see Hausrath's
Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte, vol. iii., especially the sections,
"Hadrian's Mysticismus" and "Religiöse Tendenzen in Kunst
und Literatur," where this interesting subject is handled with a
freshness and insight quite remarkable.
to these matters he was a true son of his age, and could hardly be expected to transcend it.

He cannot be cleared of this reproach. On the other hand, we must remember that Gibbon’s hard and accurate criticism set a good example in one respect. The fertile fancy of the middle ages had run into wild exaggerations of the number of the primitive martyrs, and their legends had not always been submitted to impartial scrutiny even in the eighteenth century. We may admit that Gibbon was not without bias of another kind, and that his tone is often very offensive when he seeks to deprecate the evidence of the sufferings of the early confessors. His computation, which will allow of “an annual consumption of a hundred and fifty martyrs,” is nothing short of cynical. Still he did good service in insisting on chapter and verse and fair historical proof of these frightful stories, before they were admitted. Dean Milman acknowledges so much, and defends him against the hot zeal of M. Guizot, justly adding that “truth must not be sacrificed even to well-grounded moral indignation,” in which sentiment all now will no doubt be willing to concur.

The difference between the Church in the Catacombs, and the Church in the Palaces at Constantinople or Ravenna, measures the difference between Gibbon’s treatment of early Christian history and his treatment of ecclesiastical history. Just as the simple-hearted emotions of God-fearing men were a puzzle and an irritation to him, so he was completely at home in exposing the intrigues of courtly bishops and in the metaphysics of theological controversy. His mode of dealing with Church matters from this point onward is hardly ever unfair, and has given rise to few protestations. He
has not succeeded in pleasing everybody. What Church historian ever does? But he is candid, impartial, and discerning. His account of the conversion of Constantine is remarkably just, and he is more generous to the first Christian Emperor than Niebuhr or Neander. He plunges into the Arian controversy with manifest delight, and has given in a few pages one of the clearest and most memorable résumés of that great struggle. But it is when he comes to the hero of that struggle, to an historic character who can be seen with clearness, that he shows his wonted tact and insight. A great man hardly ever fails to awaken Gibbon into admiration and sympathy. The "Great Athanasius," as he often calls him, caught his eye at once, and the impulse to draw a fine character, promptly silenced any prejudices which might interfere with faithful portraiture. "Athenasius stands out more grandly in Gibbon, than in the pages of the orthodox ecclesiastical historians"—Dr. Newman has said,—a judge whose competence will not be questioned. And as if to show how much insight depends on sympathy, Gibbon is immediately more just and open to the merits of the Christian community, than he had been hitherto. He now sees "that the privileges of the Church had already revived a sense of order and freedom in the Roman government." His chapter on the rise of monasticism is more fair and discriminating than the average Protestant treatment of that subject. He distinctly acknowledges the debt we owe the monks for their attention to agriculture, the useful trades, and the preservation of ancient literature. The more disgusting forms of asceticism he touches with light irony, which is quite as effective as the vehement denunciations of non-Catholic writers. It must not be forgotten that
his ecclesiastical history derives a great superiority of
clearness and proportion by its interweaving with the
general history of the times, and this fact of itself
suffices to give Gibbon's picture a permanent value even
beside the master works of German erudition which
have been devoted exclusively to Church matters. If
we lay down Gibbon and take up Neander, for instance,
we are conscious that with all the greater fulness of
detail, engaging candour, and sympathetic insight of
the great Berlin Professor, the general impression of
the times is less distinct and lasting. There is no
specialism in Gibbon; his book is a broad sociological
picture in which the whole age is portrayed.

To sum up. In two memorable chapters Gibbon has
allowed his prejudices to mar his work as an historian.
But two chapters out of seventy-one constitute a small
proportion. In the remainder of his work he is as
free from bias and unfairness as human frailty can
well allow. The annotated editions of Milman and
Guizot are guarantees of this. Their critical animad-
versions become very few and far between after the
first volume is passed. If he had been animated by a
polemical object in writing; if he had used the past as
an arsenal from which to draw weapons to attack the
present, we may depend that a swift blight would have
shrivelled his labours, as it did so many famous works
of the eighteenth century, when the great day of reaction
set in. His mild rebuke of the Abbé Raynal should not
be forgotten. He admired the History of the Indies. It is
one of the few books that he has honoured with mention
and praise in the text of his own work. But he points
out that the "zeal of the philosophic historian for the
rights of mankind" had led him into a blunder. It
was not only Gibbon's scholarly accuracy which saved him from such blunders. Perhaps he had less zeal for the rights of mankind than men like Raynal, whose general views he shared. But it is certain that he did not write with their settled partis pris of making history a vehicle of controversy. His object was to be a faithful historian, and due regard being had to his limitations, he attained to it.

If we now consider the defects of the Decline and Fall—which the progress of historic study, and still more the lapse of time, have gradually rendered visible, they will be found, as was to be expected, to consist in the author's limited conception of society, and of the multitudinous forces which mould and modify it. We are constantly reminded by the tone of remark that he sees chiefly the surface of events, and that the deeper causes which produce them have not been seen with the same clearness. In proportion as an age is remote, and therefore different from that in which a historian writes, does it behove him to remember that the social and general side of history is more important than the individual and particular. In reference to a period adjacent to our own the fortunes of individuals properly take a prominent place, the social conditions amid which they worked are familiar to us, and we understand them and their position without effort. But with regard to a remote age the case is different. Here our difficulty is to understand the social conditions, so unlike those with which we are acquainted, and as society is greater than man, so we feel that society, and not individual men, should occupy the chief place in the picture. Not that individuals are to be suppressed or neglected, but their subordination to the large
historic background must be well maintained. The social, religious, and philosophic conditions amid which they played their parts should dominate the scene, and dwarf by their grandeur and importance the human actors who move across it. The higher historical style now demands what may be called compound narrative, that is narrative having reference to two sets of phenomena—one the obvious surface events, the other the larger and wider, but less obvious, sociological condition. A better example could hardly be given than Grote's account of the mutilation of the Herma. The fact of the mutilation is told in the briefest way in a few lines, but the social condition which overarched it, and made the disfiguring of a number of half-statues "one of the most extraordinary events in Greek history," demands five pages of reflections and commentary to bring out its full significance. Grote insists on the duty "to take reasonable pains to realise in our minds the religious and political associations of the Athenians," and helps us to do it by a train of argument and illustration. The larger part of the strength of the modern historical school lies in this method, and in able hands it has produced great results.

It would be unfair to compare Gibbon to these writers. They had a training in social studies which he had not. But it is not certain that he has always acquitted himself well, even if compared to his contemporaries and predecessors, Montesquieu, Mably, and Voltaire. In any case his narrative is generally wanting in historic perspective and suggestive background. It adheres closely to the obvious surface of events with little attempt to place behind them the deeper sky of social evolution. In many of his crowded chapters one
cannot see the wood for the trees. The story is not lifted up and made lucid by general points of view, but drags or hurries along in the hollow of events, over which the author never seems to raise himself into a position of commanding survey. The thirty-sixth chapter is a marked instance of this defect. But the defect is general. The vigorous and skilful narrative, and a certain grandeur and weightiness of language, make us overlook it. It is only when we try to attain clear and succinct views, which condense into portable propositions the enormous mass of facts collected before us, that we feel that the writer has not often surveyed his subject from a height and distance sufficient to allow the great features of the epoch to be seen in bold outline. By the side of the history of concrete events, we miss the presentation of those others which are none the less events for being vague, irregular, and wide-reaching, and requiring centuries for their accomplishment. Gibbon's manner of dealing with the first is always good, and sometimes consummate, and equal to anything in historical literature. The thirty-first chapter, with its description of Rome, soon to fall a prey to the Goths and Alaric, is a masterpiece, artistic and spacious in the highest degree; though it is unnecessary to cite particular instances, as nearly every chapter contains passages of admirable historic power. But the noble flood of narrative never stops in meditative pause to review the situation, and point out with pregnant brevity what is happening in the sum total, abstraction made of all confusing details. Besides the facts of the time, we seek to have the tendencies of the age brought before us in their flow and expansion, the filiation of events over long periods deduced in clear
sequence, a synoptical view which is to the mind what a picture is to the eye. In this respect Gibbon's method leaves not a little to be desired.

Take for instance two of the most important aspects of the subject that he treated: the barbarian invasions, and the causes of the decline and fall of the Roman empire. To the concrete side of both he has done ample justice. The rational and abstract side of neither has received the attention from him which it deserved. On the interesting question of the introduction of the barbarians into the frontier provinces, and their incorporation into the legions, he never seems to have quite made up his mind. In the twelfth chapter he calls it a "great and beneficial plan." Subsequently he calls it a disgraceful and fatal expedient. He recurs frequently to the subject in isolated passages, but never collects the facts, into a focus, with a view of deducing their real meaning. Yet the point is second to none in importance. Its elucidation throws more light on the fall of Rome than any other considerations whatever. The question is, Whether Rome was conquered by the barbarians in the ordinary sense of the word, conquered. We know that it was not, and Gibbon knew that it was not. Yet perhaps most people rise from reading his book with an impression that the empire succumbed to the invasion of the barbarians, as Carthage, Gaul, and Greece had succumbed to the invasion of the Romans; that the struggle lay between classic Rome and outside uncivilised foes; and that after two centuries of hard fighting the latter were victorious. The fact that the struggle lay between barbarians, who were within and friendly to the empire, and barbarians who were without it, and hostile rather to their more fortunate
brethren, than to the empire which employed them, is implicitly involved in Gibbon's narrative, but it is not explicitly brought out. Romanised Goths, Vandals, and Franks were the defenders, nearly the only defenders, of the empire against other tribes and nations who were not Romanised, and nothing can be more plain than that Gibbon saw this as well as any one since, but he has not set it forth with prominence and clearness. With his complete mastery of the subject he would have done it admirably, if he had assumed the necessary point of view.

Similarly, with regard to the causes of the fall of the empire. It is quite evident that he was not at all unconscious of the deep economic and social vices which undermined the great fabric. Depopulation, decay of agriculture, fiscal oppression, the general prostration begotten of despotism—all these sources of the great collapse may be traced in his text, or his wonderful notes, hinted very often with a flashing insight which anticipates the most recent inquiries into the subject. But these considerations are not brought together to a luminous point, nor made to yield clear and tangible results. They lie scattered, isolated, and barren over three volumes, and are easily overlooked. One may say that generalised and synthetic views are conspicuous by their absence in Gibbon.

But what of that? These reflections, even if they be well founded, hardly dim the majesty of the *Decline and Fall*. The book is such a marvel of knowledge at once wide and minute, that even now, after numbers of labourers have gone over the same ground, with only special objects in view, small segments of the great circle which Gibbon fills alone, his word is still one of
the weightiest that can be quoted. Modern research has unquestionably opened out points of view to which he did not attain. But when it comes to close investigation of any particular question, we rarely fail to find that he has seen it, dropped some pregnant hint about it, more valuable than the dissertations of other men. As Mr. Freeman says, "Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."
CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST TEN YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN LAUSANNE

After the preliminary troubles which met him on his arrival at Lausanne, Gibbon had four years of unbroken calm and steady work, of which there is nothing to record beyond the fact that they were filled with peaceful industry. "One day," he wrote, "glides by another in tranquil uniformity." During the whole period he never stirred ten miles out of Lausanne. He had nearly completed the fourth volume before he left England. Then came an interruption of a year—consumed in the break-up of his London establishment, his journey, the transport of his library, the delay in getting settled at Lausanne. Then he sat down in grim earnest to finish his task, and certainly the speed he used, considering the quality of the work, left nothing to be desired. He achieved the fifth volume in twenty-one months, and the sixth in little more than a year. He had hoped to finish sooner, but it is no wonder that he found his work grow under his hands when he passed from design to execution. "A long while ago, when I contemplated the distant prospect of my work," he writes to Lord Sheffield, "I gave you and myself some hopes of landing
in England last autumn; but alas! when autumn grew near, hills began to rise on hills, Alps on Alps, and I found my journey far more tedious and toilsome than I had imagined. When I look back on the length of the undertaking and the variety of materials, I cannot accuse or suffer myself to be accused of idleness; yet it appeared that unless I doubled my diligence, another year, and perhaps more, would elapse before I could embark with my complete manuscript. Under these circumstances I took, and am still executing, a bold and meritorious resolution. The mornings in winter, and in a country of early dinners, are very concise. To them, my usual period of study, I now frequently add the evenings, renounce cards and society, refuse the most agreeable evenings, or perhaps make my appearance at a late supper. By this extraordinary industry, which I never practised before, and to which I hope never to be again reduced, I see the last part of my history growing space under my hands." He was indeed, as he said, now straining for the goal which was at last reached "on the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787. Between the hours of eleven and twelve I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summerhouse in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a bercou, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the sea, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an
everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious."

A faint streak of poetry occasionally shoots across Gibbon's prose. But both prose and poetry had now to yield to stern business. The printing of three quarto volumes in those days of handpresses was a formidable undertaking, and unless expedition were used the publishing season of the ensuing year would be lost. A month had barely elapsed before Gibbon with his precocious cargo started for England. He went straight to his printers. The printing of the fourth volume occupied three months, and both author and publisher were warned that their common interest required a quicker pace. Then Mr. Strahan "fulfilled his engagement, which few printers could sustain, of delivering every week three thousand copies of nine sheets." On the 8th of May, 1788, the three concluding volumes were published, and Gibbon had discharged his debt for the entertainment that he had had in this world.

He returned as speedily as he could to Lausanne, to rest from his labours. But he had a painful greeting in the sadly altered look of his friend Deyverdun. Soon an apoplectic seizure confirmed his forebodings, and within a twelvemonth the friend of his youth, whom he had loved for thirty-three years, was taken away by death (July 4, 1789).1

1 The letter in which Gibbon communicated the sad news to Lord Sheffield was written on the 14th July, 1789, the day of the taking of the Bastille. So "that evening sun of July" sent its beams on Gibbon mourning the dead friend, as well as on "reapers amid peaceful woods and fields, on old women spinning in cottages, on ships far out on the silent main, on balls at the Orangerie of
Gibbon never got over this loss. His staid and solid nature was not given to transports of joy or grief. But his constant references to "poor Deyverdun," and the vacancy caused by his loss, show the depth of the wound. "I want to change the scene," he writes, "and, beautiful as the garden and prospect must appear to every eye, I feel that the state of my mind casts a gloom over them: every spot, every walk, every bench recalls the memory of those hours, those conversations, which will return no more. . . . I almost hesitate whether I shall run over to England to consult with you on the spot, and to fly from poor Deyverdun's shade, which meets me at every turn." Not that he lacked attached friends, and of mere society and acquaintance he had more than abundance. He occupied at Lausanne a position of almost patriarchal dignity, "and may be said," writes Lord Sheffield, "to have almost given the law to a set of as willing subjects as any man ever presided over." Soon the troubles in France sent wave after wave of emigrants over the frontiers, and Lausanne had its full share of the exiles. After a brief approval of the reforms in France he passed rapidly to doubt, disgust, and horror at the "new birth of time" there. "You will allow me to be a tolerable historian," he wrote to his stepmother, "yet on a fair review of ancient and modern times I can find none that bear any affinity to the present." The last social evolution was beyond his power of classification. The mingled bewilderment and anger with which he looks out from Lausanne on the revolutionary welter, form an almost amusing contrast to his usual apathy on political matters.

Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers."
He is full of alarm lest England should catch the revolutionary fever. He is delighted with Burke's *Reflections.* "I admire his eloquence, I approve his politics, I adore his chivalry, and I can forgive even his superstition." His wrath waxes hotter at every post. "Poor France! The state is dissolved! the nation is mad." At last nothing but vituperation can express his feelings, and he roundly calls the members of the Convention "devils," and discovers that "democratical principles lead by a path of flowers into the abyss of hell."

In 1790 his friends the Neckers had fled to Switzerland, and on every ground of duty and inclination he was called upon to show them the warmest welcome, and he did so in a way that excited their liveliest gratitude. Necker was cast down in utter despair, not only for the loss of place and power, but on account of the strong animosity which was shown to him by the exiled French, none of whom would set their foot in his house. The Neckers were now Gibbon's chief intimates till the end of his sojourn in Switzerland. They lived at Coppet, and constant visits were exchanged there and at Lausanne. Madame Necker wrote to him frequent letters, which prove that if she had ever had any grievance to complain of in the past, it was not only forgiven, but entirely forgotten. The letters, indeed, testify a warmth of sentiment on her part which, coming from a lady of less spotless propriety, would almost imply a revival of youthful affection for her early lover. "You have always been dear to me," she writes, "but the friendship you have shown to M. Necker adds to that which you inspire me with on so many grounds, and I love you at present with a double affection."—"Come to us when you are restored to health and to yourself; that
moment should always belong to your first and your last friend (amie), and I do not know which of those titles is the sweetest and dearest to my heart.” —

“Near you, the recollections you recalled were pleasant to me, and you connected them easily with present impressions; the chain of years seemed to link all times together with electrical rapidity; you were at once twenty and fifty years old for me. Away from you the different places, which I have inhabited are only the milestones of my life telling me of the distance I have come.” With much more in the same strain. Of Madame de Staël Gibbon does not speak in very warm praise. Her mother, who was far from being contented with her, may perhaps have prejudiced him against her. In one letter to him she complains of her daughter’s conduct in no measured terms. Yet Gibbon owns that Madame de Staël was a “pleasant little woman;” and in another place says that she was “wild, vain, but good-natured, with a much larger provision of wit than of beauty.” One wonders if he ever knew of her childish scheme of marrying him in order that her parents might always have the pleasure of his company and conversation.

These closing years of Gibbon’s life were not happy, through no fault of his. No man was less inclined by disposition to look at the dark side of things. But heavy blows fell on him in quick succession. His health was seriously impaired, and he was often laid up for months with the gout. His neglect of exercise had produced its effect, and he had become a prodigy of unwieldy corpulence. Unfortunately his digestion seems to have continued only too good, and neither his own observation nor the medical science of that day
sufficed to warn him against certain errors of regimen which were really fatal. All this time, while the gout was constantly torturing him, he drank Madeira freely. There is frequent question of a pipe of that sweet wine in his correspondence with Lord Sheffield. He cannot bear the thought of being without a sufficient supply, as “good Madeira is now become essential to his health and reputation.” The last three years of his residence at Lausanne were agitated by perpetual anxiety and dread of an invasion of French democratic principles, or even of French troops. Reluctance to quit “his paradise” keeps him still, but he is always wondering how soon he will have to fly, and often regrets that he has not done so already. “For my part,” he writes, “till Geneva falls, I do not think of a retreat; but at all events I am provided with two strong horses and a hundred louis in gold.” Fate was hard on the kindly epicurean, who after his long toil had made his bed in the sun, on which he was preparing to lie down in genial content till the end came. But he feels he must not think of rest; and that, heavy as he is, and irksome to him as it is to move, he must before long be a rover again. Still he is never peevish upon his fortune; he puts the best face on things as long as they will bear it.

He was not so philosophical under the bereavements that he now suffered. His aunt, Mrs. Porten, had died in 1786. He deplored her as he was bound to do, and feelingly regrets and blames himself for not having written to her as often as he might have done since their last parting. Then came the irreparable loss of Deyverdun. Shortly, an old Lausanne friend, M. de Severy, to whom he was much attached, died after a long illness.
Lastly and suddenly, came the death of Lady Sheffield, the wife of his friend Holroyd, with whom he had long lived on such intimate terms that he was in the habit of calling her his sister. The Sheffields, father and mother and two daughters, had spent the summer of 1791 with him at Lausanne. The visit was evidently an occasion of real happiness and épanchement de cœur to the two old friends, and supplied Gibbon for nearly two years with tender regrets and recollections. Then, without any warning, he heard of Lady Sheffield’s death. In a moment his mind was made up: he would go at once to console his friend. All the fatigue and irksomeness of the journey to one so ailing and feeble, all the dangers of the road lined and perhaps barred by hostile armies, vanished on the spot. Within twelve days he had made his preparations and started on his journey. He was forced to travel through Germany, and in his ignorance of the language he required an interpreter; young de Severy, the son of his deceased friend, joyfully, and out of mere affection for him, undertook the office of courier. “His attachment to me,” wrote Gibbon, “is the sole motive which prompts him to undertake this troublesome journey.” It is clear that he had the art of making himself loved. He travelled through Frankfort, Cologne, Brussels, Ostend, and was by his friend’s side in little more than a month after he had received the fatal tidings. Well might Lord Sheffield say, “I must ever regard it as the most enduring proof of his sensibility, and of his possessing the true spirit of friendship, that, after having relinquished the thought of his intended visit, he hastened to England, in spite of increasing impediments, to soothe me by the most generous sympathy, and to alleviate my domestic
affliction; neither his great corpulency nor his extraordinary bodily infirmities, nor any other consideration, could prevent him a moment from resolving on an undertaking that might have deterred the most active young man. He almost immediately, with an alertness by no means natural to him, undertook a great circuitous journey along the frontier of an enemy worse than savage, within the sound of their cannon, within the range of the light troops of the different armies, and through roads ruined by the enormous machinery of war."

In this public and private gloom he bade for ever farewell to Lausanne. He was himself rapidly approaching

"The dark portal,
Goal of all mortal,"

but of this he knew not as yet. While he is in the house of mourning, beside his bereaved friend, we will return for a short space to consider the conclusion of his great work.
CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST THREE VOLUMES OF THE DECLINE AND FALL.

The thousand years between the fifth and the fifteenth century comprise the middle age, a period which only recently, through utterly inadequate conceptions of social growth, was wont to be called the dark ages. That long epoch of travail and growth, during which the old field of civilisation was broken up and sown afresh with new and various seed unknown to antiquity, receives now on all hands due recognition, as being one of the most rich, fertile, and interesting in the history of man. The all-embracing despotism of Rome was replaced by the endless local divisions and subdivisions of feudal tenure. The multiform rites and beliefs of polytheism were replaced by the single faith and paramount authority of the Catholic Church. The philosophies of Greece were dethroned, and the scholastic theology reigned in their stead. The classic tongues crumbled away, and out of their débris arose the modern idioms of France, Italy, and Spain, to which were added in Northern Europe the new forms of Teutonic speech. The fine and useful arts took a new departure; slavery was mitigated into servitude; industry and commerce became powers in the world as they had never been
before; the narrow municipal polity of the old world was in time succeeded by the broader national institutions based on various forms of representation. Gunpowder, America, and the art of printing were discovered, and the most civilised portion of mankind passed insensibly into the modern era.

Such was the wide expanse which spread out before Gibbon when he resolved to continue his work from the fall of the Western Empire to the capture of Constantinople. Indeed his glance took in a still wider field, as he was concerned as much with the decay of Eastern as of Western Rome, and the long-retarded fall of the former demanded large attention to the Oriental populations who assaulted the city and remaining empire of Constantine. So bold an historic enterprise was never conceived as when, standing on the limit of antiquity in the fifth century, he determined to pursue in rapid but not hasty survey the great lines of events for a thousand years, to follow in detail the really great transactions while discarding the less important, thereby giving prominence and clearness to what is memorable, and reproducing on a small scale the flow of time through the ages. It is to this portion of Gibbon’s work that the happy comparison has been made, that it resembles a magnificent Roman aqueduct spanning over the chasm which separates the ancient from the modern world. In these latter volumes he frees himself from the trammels of regular annalistic narrative, deals with events in broad masses according to their importance, expanding or contracting his story as occasion requires; now painting in large panoramic view the events of a few years, now compressing centuries into brief outline. Many of his massive chapters afford materials for
volumes, and are well worthy of a fuller treatment than he could give without deranging his plan. But works of greater detail and narrower compass can never compete with Gibbon's history, any more than a county map can compete with a map of England or of Europe.

The variety of the contents of these last three volumes is amazing, especially when the thoroughness and perfection of the workmanship are considered. Prolix compilations or sketchy outlines of universal history have their use and place, but they are removed by many degrees from the *Decline and Fall*, or rather they belong to another species of authorship. It is not only that Gibbon combines width and depth, that the extent of his learning is as wonderful as its accuracy, though in this respect he has hardly a full rival in literature. The quality which places him not only in the first rank of historians, but in a class by himself, and makes him greater than the greatest, lies in his supreme power of moulding into lucid and coherent unity, the manifold and rebellious mass of his multitudinous materials, of coercing his divergent topics into such order that they seem spontaneously to grow like branches out of one stem, clear and visible to the mind. There is something truly epic in these latter volumes. Tribes, nations, and empires are the characters; one after another they come forth like Homeric heroes, and do their mighty deeds before the assembled armies. The grand and lofty chapters on Justinian; on the Arabs; on the Crusades, have a rounded completeness, coupled with such artistic subordination to the main action, that they read more like cantos of a great prose poem than the ordinary staple of historical composition. It may well be questioned whether there is another instance of such
high literary form and finish, coupled with such vast erudition. And two considerations have to be borne in mind, which heighten Gibbon's merit in this respect. (1.) Almost the whole of his subject had been as yet untouched by any preceding writer of eminence, and he had no stimulus or example from his precursors. He united thus in himself the two characters of pioneer and artist. (2.) The barbarous and imperfect nature of the materials with which he chiefly had to work,—dull inferior writers, whose debased style was their least defect. A historian who has for his authorities masters of reason and language such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus is borne up by their genius; apt quotation and translation alone suffice to produce considerable effects; or in the case of subjects taken from modern times, weighty state papers, eloquent debates, or finished memoirs supply ample materials for graphic narrative. But Gibbon had little but dross to deal with. Yet he has smelted and cast it into the grand shapes we see.

The fourth volume is nearly confined to the reign, or rather epoch, of Justinian,—a magnificent subject, which he has painted in his loftiest style of gorgeous narrative. The campaigns of Belisarius and Narses are related with a clearness and vigour that make us feel that Gibbon's merits as a military historian have not been quite sufficiently recognised. He had from the time of his service in the militia taken continued interest in tactics and all that was connected with the military art. It was no idle boast when he said that the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers had not been useless to the historian of the Roman empire. Military matters perhaps occupy a somewhat excessive space in his pages.
Still, if the operations of war are to be related, it is highly important that they should be treated with intelligence, and knowledge how masses of men are moved, and by a writer to whom the various incidents of the camp, the march, and the bivouac, are not matters of mere hearsay, but of personal experience. The campaign of Belisarius in Africa may be quoted as an example.

"In the seventh year of the reign of Justinian, and about the time of the summer solstice, the whole fleet of six hundred ships was ranged in martial pomp before the gardens of the palace. The patriarch pronounced his benediction, the emperor signified his last commands, the general’s trumpet gave the signal of departure, and every heart, according to its fears or wishes, explored with anxious curiosity the omens of misfortune or success. The first halt was made at Perinthus, or Heraclea, where Belisarius waited five days to receive some Thracian horses, a military gift of his sovereign. From thence the fleet pursued their course through the midst of the Propontis; but as they struggled to pass the straits of the Hellespont, an unfavourable wind detained them four days at Abydos, where the general exhibited a remarkable lesson of firmness and severity. Two of the Huns who, in a drunken quarrel, had slain one of their fellow-soldiers, were instantly shown to the army suspended on a lofty gibbet. The national dignity was resented by their countrymen, who disclaimed the servile laws of the empire and asserted the free privileges of Scythia, where a small fine was allowed to expiate the sallies of intemperance and anger. Their complaints were specious, their clamours were loud, and the Romans were not averse to the example of disorder and impunity. But the rising sedition was appeased by the authority and eloquence of the general, and he represented to the assembled troops the obligation of justice, the importance of discipline, the rewards of piety and virtue, and the unpardonable guilt of murder, which, in his apprehension, was aggravated rather than excused by the vice of intoxication."
In the navigation from the Hellespont to the Peloponnesus, which the Greeks after the siege of Troy had performed in four days, the fleet of Belisarius was guided in their course by his master-galley, conspicuous in the day by the redness of the sails, and in the night by torches blazing from the masthead. It was the duty of the pilots as they steered between the islands and turned the capes of Malea and Tamarium to preserve the just order and regular intervals of such a multitude. As the wind was fair and moderate, their labours were not unsuccessful, and the troops were safely disembarked at Methone, on the Messenian coast, to repose themselves for a while after the fatigues of the sea. . . . From the port of Methone the pilots steered along the western coast of Peloponnesus, as far as the island of Zacynthus, or Zante, before they undertook the voyage (in their eyes a most arduous voyage) of one hundred leagues over the Ionian sea. As the fleet was surprised by a calm, sixteen days were consumed in the slow navigation. . . At length the harbour of Caucaena, on the southern side of Sicily, afforded a secure and hospitable shelter. . . Belisarius determined to hasten his operations, and his wise impatience was seconded by the winds. The fleet lost sight of Sicily, passed before the island of Malta, discovered the capes of Africa, ran along the coast with a strong gale from the north-east, and finally cast anchor at the promontory of Caput Vada, about five days journey to the south of Carthage. . . .

"Three months after their departure from Constantinople, the men and the horses, the arms and the military stores were safely disembarked, and five soldiers were left as a guard on each of the ships, which were disposed in the form of a semicircle. The remainder of the troops occupied a camp on the seashore, which they fortified, according to ancient discipline, with a ditch and rampart, and the discovery of a source of fresh water, while it allayed the thirst, excited the superstitious confidence of the Romans. . . The small town of Sullecte, one day's journey from the camp, had the honour of being foremost to open her gates and resume her ancient allegiance; the larger cities of Leptis and Adru-
metum imitated the example of loyalty as soon as Belisarius appeared, and he advanced without opposition as far as Grasse, a palace of the Vandal kings, at the distance of fifty miles from Carthage. The weary Romans indulged themselves in the refreshment of shady groves, cool fountains, and delicious fruits. . . In three generations prosperity and a warm climate had dissolved the hardy virtue of the Vandals, who insensibly became the most luxurious of mankind. In their villas and gardens, which might deserve the Persian name of Paradise, they enjoyed a cool and elegant repose, and after the daily use of the bath, the barbarians were seated at a table profusely spread with the delicacies of the land and sea. Their silken robes, loosely flowing after the fashion of the Medes, were embroidered with gold, love and hunting were the labours of their life, and their vacant hours were amused by pantomimes, chariot-races, and the music and dances of the theatre.

"In a march of twelve days the vigilance of Belisarius was constantly awake and active against his unseen enemies, by whom in every place and at every hour he might be suddenly attacked. An officer of confidence and merit, John the Armenian, led the vanguard of three hundred horse. Six hundred Massagetae covered at a certain distance the left flank, and the whole fleet, steering along the coast, seldom lost sight of the army, which moved each day about twelve miles, and lodged in the evening in strong camps or in friendly towns. The near approach of the Romans to Carthage filled the mind of Gelimer with anxiety and terror. . . . . . .

"Yet the authority and promises of Gelimer collected a formidable army, and his plans were concerted with some degree of military skill. An order was despatched to his brother Ammatas to collect all the forces of Carthage, and to encounter the van of the Roman army at the distance of ten miles from the city; his nephew Gibamund with two thousand horse was destined to attack their left, when the monarch himself, who silently followed, should charge their rear in a situation which excluded them from the aid and even the view of their fleet. But the rashness of Ammatas was fatal to himself and his country. He anticipated the hour of attack, outstripped his
tardy followers, and was pierced with a mortal wound, after he had slain with his own hand twelve of his boldest antagonists. His Vandals fled to Carthage: the highway, almost ten miles, was strewn with dead bodies, and it seemed incredible that such multitudes could be slaughtered by the swords of three hundred Romans. The nephew of Gelimer was defeated after a slight combat by the six hundred Massagetæ; they did not equal the third part of his numbers, but each Scythian was fired by the example of his chief, who gloriously exercised the privilege of his family by riding foremost and alone to shoot the first arrow against the enemy. In the meantime Gelimer himself, ignorant of the event, and misguided by the windings of the hills, inadvertently passed the Roman army and reached the scene of action where Ammatas had fallen. He wept the fate of his brother and of Carthage, charged with irresistible fury the advancing squadrons, and might have pursued and perhaps decided the victory, if he had not wasted those inestimable moments in the discharge of a vain though pious duty to the dead. While his spirit was broken by this mournful office, he heard the trumpet of Belisarius, who, leaving Antonina and his infantry in the camp, pressed forward with his guards and the remainder of the cavalry to rally his flying troops, and to restore the fortune of the day. Much room could not be found in this disorderly battle for the talents of a general; but the king fled before the hero, and the Vandals, accustomed only to a Moorish enemy, were incapable of withstanding the arms and the discipline of the Romans.

"As soon as the tumult had subsided, the several parts of the army informed each other of the accidents of the day, and Belisarius pitched his camp on the field of victory, to which the tenth milestone from Carthage had applied the Latin appellation of Decimus. From a wise suspicion of the stratagems and resources of the Vandals, he marched the next day in the order of battle; halted in the evening before the gates of Carthage, and allowed a night of repose, that he might not, in darkness and disorder, expose the city to the licence of the soldiers, or the soldiers themselves to the secret ambush of the city. But as the fears of Belisarius were the result of calm and intrepid reason, he
was soon satisfied that he might confide without danger in the peaceful and friendly aspect of the capital. Carthage blazed
with innumerable torches, the signal of the public joy; the chain
was removed that guarded the entrance of the port, the gates
were thrown open, and the people with acclamations of gratitude
hailed and invited their Roman deliverers. The defeat of the
Vandals and the freedom of Africa were announced to the city
on the eve of St. Cyprian, when the churches were already
adorned and illuminated for the festival of the martyr whom
three centuries of superstition had almost raised to a local
deity... One awful hour reversed the fortunes of the contending
parties. The suppliant Vandals, who had so lately indulged
the vices of conquerors, sought an humble refuge in the sanctuary
of the church; while the merchants of the east were delivered
from the deepest dungeon of the palace by their affrighted
keeper, who implored the protection of his captives, and showed
them through an aperture in the wall the sails of the Roman
fleet. After their separation from the army, the naval com-
manders had proceeded with slow caution along the coast, till
they reached the Hermaean promontory, and obtained the first
intelligence of the victory of Belisarius. Faithful to his in-
structions, they would have cast anchor about twenty miles
from Carthage, if the more skilful had not represented the perils
of the shore and the signs of an impending tempest. Still
ignorant of the revolution, they declined however the rash
attempt of forcing the chain of the port, and the adjacent
harbour and suburb of Mandracium were insulted only by the
rapine of a private officer, who disobeyed and deserted his
leaders. But the imperial fleet, advancing with a fair wind,
steered through the narrow entrance of the Goletta and occupied
the deep and capacious lake of Tunis, a secure station aboutive miles from the capital. No sooner was Belisarius informed
of the arrival than he despatched orders that the greatest part
of the mariners should be immediately landed to join the
triumph and to swell the apparent numbers of the Romans.
Before he allowed them to enter the gates of Carthage he ex-
horted them, in a discourse worthy of himself and the occasion,
not to disgrace the glory of their arms, and to remember that
the Vandals had been the tyrants, but that they were the deliverers of the Africans, who must now be respected as the voluntary and affectionate subjects of their common sovereign. The Romans marched through the street in close ranks, prepared for battle if an enemy had appeared; the strict order maintained by their general imprinted on their minds the duty of obedience; and in an age in which custom and impunity almost sanctified the abuse of conquest, the genius of one man repressed the passions of a victorious army. The voice of menace and complaint was silent, the trade of Carthage was not interrupted; while Africa changed her master and her government, the shops continued open and busy; and the soldiers, after sufficient guards had been posted, modestly departed to the houses which had been allotted for their reception. Belisarius fixed his residence in the palace, seated himself on the throne of Genseric, accepted and distributed the barbaric spoil, granted their lives to the suppliants Vandals, and laboured to restore the damage which the suburb of Mandraccium had sustained in the preceding night. At supper he entertained his principal officers with the form and magnificence of a royal banquet. The victor was respectfully served by the captive officers of the household, and in the moments of festivity, when the impartial spectators applauded the fortune and merit of Belisarius, his envious flatterers secretly shed their venom on every word and gesture which might alarm the suspicions of a jealous monarch. One day was given to these pompous scenes, which may not be despised as useless if they attracted the popular veneration; but the active mind of Belisarius, which in the pride of victory could suppose defeat, had already resolved that the Roman empire in Africa should not depend on the chance of arms or the favour of the people. The fortifications of Carthage had alone been excepted from the general proscription; but in the reign of ninety-five years they were suffered to decay by the thoughtless and indolent Vandals. A wiser conqueror restored with incredible despatch the walls and ditches of the city. His liberality encouraged the workmen; the soldiers, the mariners, and the citizens vied with each other in the salutary labour; and Gelimer, who had feared to trust his person in an
open town, beheld with astonishment and despair the rising strength of an impregnable fortress.

But we have hardly finished admiring the brilliant picture of the conquest of Africa and Italy, before Gibbon gives us further proofs of his many-sided culture and catholicity of mind. His famous chapter on the Roman law has been accepted by the most fastidious experts of an esoteric science as a masterpiece of knowledge, condensation, and lucidity. It has actually been received as a textbook in some of the continental universities, published separately with notes and illustrations. When we consider the neglect of Roman jurisprudence in England till quite recent times, and its severe study on the Continent, we shall better appreciate the mental grasp and vigour which enabled an unprofessional Englishman in the last century to produce such a dissertation. A little further on (chapter forty-seven) the history of the doctrine of the Incarnation, and the controversies that sprang up around it, are discussed with a subtlety worthy of a scientific theologian. It is perhaps the first attempt towards a philosophical history of dogma, less patient and minute than the works of the specialists of modern Germany on the same subject, but for spirit, clearness, and breadth it is superior to those profound but somewhat barbarous writers. The flexibility of intellect which can do justice in quick succession to such diverse subjects is very extraordinary, and assuredly implies great width of sympathy and large receptivity of nature.

Having terminated the period of Justinian, Gibbon makes a halt, and surveys the varied and immense scene through which he will presently pass in many directions. He rapidly discovers ten main lines, along which he will
advance in succession to his final goal, the conquest of Constantinople. The two pages at the commencement of the forty-eighth chapter, in which he sketches out the remainder of his plan and indicates the topics which he means to treat, are admirable as a luminous précis, and for the powerful grasp which they show of his immense subject. It lay spread out all before him, visible in every part to his penetrating eye, and he seems to rejoice in his conscious strength and ability to undertake the historical conquest on which he is about to set out. "Nor will this scope of narrative," he says, "the riches and variety of these materials, be incompatible with the unity of design and composition. As in his daily prayers the Mussulman of Fez or Delhi still turns his face towards the temple of Mecca, the historian's eye will always be fixed on the city of Constantinople." Then follows the catalogue of nations and empires whose fortunes he means to sing. A grander vision, a more majestic procession, never swept before the mind's eye of poet or historian.

And the practical execution is worthy of the initial inspiration. After a rapid and condensed narrative of Byzantine history till the end of the twelfth century, he takes up the brilliant theme of Mahomet and his successors. A few pages on the climate and physical features of Arabia fittingly introduce the subject. And it may be noted in passing that Gibbon's attention to geography, and his skill and taste for geographical description, are remarkable among his many gifts. He was as diligent a student of maps and travels as of historical records, and seems to have had a rare faculty of realizing in imagination scenes and countries of which he had only read. In three chapters, glowing with oriental
colour and rapid as a charge of Arab horse, he tells the story of the prophet and the Saracen empire. Then the Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Russians appear on the scene, to be soon followed by the Normans, and their short but brilliant dominion in Southern Italy. But now the Seljukian Turks are emerging from the depths of Asia, taking the place of the degenerate Saracens, invading the Eastern empire and conquering Jerusalem. The two waves of hostile fanaticism soon meet in the Crusades. The piratical seizure of Constantinople by the Latins brings in view the French and Venetians, the family of Courtenay and its pleasant digression. Then comes the slow agony of the restored Greek empire. Threatened by the Moguls, it is invaded and dismembered by the Ottoman Turks. Constantinople seems ready to fall into their hands. But the timely diversion of Tamerlane produces a respite of half a century. Nothing can be more artistic than Gibbon’s management of his subject as he approaches its termination. He, who is such a master of swift narrative, at this point introduces artful pauses, suspensions of the final catastrophe, which heighten our interest in the fate which is hanging over the city of Constantine. In 1425 the victorious Turks have conquered all the Greek empire save the capital. Amurath II. besieged it for two months, and was only prevented from taking it by a domestic revolt in Asia Minor. At the end of his sixty-fifth chapter Gibbon leaves Constantinople hanging on the brink of destruction, and paints in glowing colours the military virtues of its deadly enemies, the Ottomans. Then he interposes one of his most finished chapters, of miscellaneous contents, but terminating in the grand and impressive pages on the revival of learning in Italy. There we read of the
"curiosity and emulation of the Latins," of the zeal of Petrarch and the success of Boccace in Greek studies, of Leontius, Pilatus, Bessarion, and Lascaris. A glow of sober enthusiasm warms the great scholar as he paints the early light of that happy dawn. He admits that the "arms of the Turks pressed the flight of the Muses" from Greece to Italy. But he "trembles at the thought that Greece might have been overwhelmed with her schools and libraries, before Europe had emerged from the deluge of barbarism, and that the seeds of science might have been scattered on the winds, before the Italian soil was prepared for their cultivation." In one of the most perfect sentences to be found in English prose he thus describes the Greek tongue: "In their lowest depths of servitude and depression, the subjects of the Byzantine throne were still possessed of a golden key that could unlock the treasures of antiquity, of a musical and prolific language that gives a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philosophy." Meanwhile we are made to feel that the subjects of the Byzantine throne, with their musical speech, that Constantinople with her libraries and schools, will all soon fall a prey to the ravening and barbarous Turk. This brightening light of the Western sky contending with the baleful gloom which is settling down over the East, is one of the most happy contrasts in historical literature. Then comes the end, the preparations and skill of the savage invader, the futile but heroic defence, the overwhelming ruin which struck down the Cross and erected the Crescent over the city of Constantine the Great.

It is one of the many proofs of Gibbon's artistic instinct that he did not end with this great catastrophe.
On the contrary, he adds three more chapters. His fine tact warned him that the tumult and thunder of the final ruin must not be the last sounds to strike the ear. A resolution of the discord was needed; a soft chorale should follow the din and lead to a mellow *adagio* close. And this he does with supreme skill. With ill-suppressed disgust, he turns from New to Old Rome. “Constantinople no longer appertains to the Roman historian—nor shall I enumerate the civil and religious edifices that were profaned or erected by its Turkish masters.” Amid the decayed temples and mutilated beauty of the Eternal City, he moves down to a melodious and pathetic conclusion—piously visits the remaining fragments of ancient splendour and art, deplores and describes the ravages wrought by time, and still more by man, and recurring once again to the scene of his first inspiration, bids farewell to the Roman empire among the ruins of the Capitol.

We have hitherto spoken in terms of warm, though perhaps not excessive eulogy of this great work. But praise would lack the force of moderation and equipoise, if allusion were not made to some of its defects. The pervading defect of it all has been already referred to in a preceding chapter—an inadequate conception of society as an organism, living and growing, like other organisms, according to special laws of its own. In these brilliant volumes on the Middle Ages, the special problems which that period suggests are not stated, far less solved; they are not even suspected. The feudal polity, the Catholic Church, the theocratic supremacy of the Popes, considered as institutions which the historian is called upon to estimate and judge; the gradual dissolution of both feudalism and Catholicism, brought
about by the spread of industry in the temporal order and of science in the spiritual order, are not even referred to. Many more topics might be added to this list of weighty omissions. It would be needless to say that no blame attaches to Gibbon for neglecting views of history which had not emerged in his time, if there were not persons who, forgetting the slow progress of knowledge, are apt to ascribe the defects of a book to incompetence in its author. If Gibbon's conception of the Middle Ages seems to us inadequate now, it is because since his time our conceptions of society in that and in all periods have been much enlarged. We may be quite certain that if Gibbon had had our experience, no one would have seen the imperfections of particular sides of his work as we now have it more clearly than he.

Laying aside, therefore, reflexions of this kind as irrelevant and unjust, we may ask whether there are any other faults which may fairly be found with him. One must admit that there are. After all, they are not very important.

(1.) Striking as is his account of Justinian's reign, it has two blemishes. First, the offensive details about the vices of Theodora. Granting them to be well authenticated, which they are not, it was quite unworthy of the author and his subject to soil his pages with such a chronique scandaleuse. The defence which he sets up in his Memoirs, that he is "justified in painting the manners of the times, and that the vices of Theodora form an essential feature in the reign and character of Justinian," cannot be admitted. First, we are not sure that the vices existed, and were not the impure inventions of a malignant calumniator. Secondly, Gibbon
is far from painting the manners of the time as a moralist or an historian; he paints them with a zest for pruriency worthy of Bayle or Brantome. It was an occasion for a wise scepticism to register grave doubts as to the infamous stories of Procopius. A rehabilitation of Theodora is not a theme calculated to provoke enthusiasm, and is impossible besides from the entire want of adequate evidence. But a thoughtful writer would not have lost his time, if he referred to the subject at all, in pointing out the moral improbability of the current accounts. He might have dwelt on the unsupported testimony of the only witness, the unscrupulous Procopius, whom Gibbon himself convicts on another subject of flagrant mendacity. But he would have been especially slow to believe that a woman who had led the life of incredible profligacy he has described, would, in consequence of "some vision either of sleep or fancy," in which future exaltation was promised to her, assume "like a skilful actress, a more decent character, relieve her poverty by the laudable industry of spinning wool, and affect a life of chastity and solitude in a small house, which she afterwards changed into a magnificent temple." Magdalens have been converted, no doubt, from immoral living, but not by considerations of astute prudence suggested by day-dreams of imperial greatness. Gibbon might have thought of the case of Madame de Maintenon, and how her reputation fared in the hands of the vindictive courtiers of Versailles; how a woman, cold as ice and pure as snow, was freely charged with the most abhorrent vices without an atom of foundation. But the truth probably is that he never thought of the subject seriously
CONCLUSION OF THE DECLINE AND FALL

at all, and that, yielding to a regrettable inclination, he copied his licentious Greek notes with little reluctance.

(2.) The character of Belisarius, enigmatical enough in itself, is made by him more enigmatical still. He concludes the forty-first chapter, in which the great deeds of the conqueror of Italy and Africa, and the ingratitude with which Justinian rewarded his services, are set forth in strong contrast, with the inept remark that “Belisarius appears to be either below or above the character of a MAN.” The grounds of the apparent meekness with which Belisarius supported his repeated disgraces cannot now be ascertained: but the motives of Justinian’s conduct are not so difficult to find. As Finlay points out in his thoughtful history of Greece, Belisarius must have been a peculator on a large and dangerous scale. “Though he refused the Gothic throne and the empire of the West, he did not despise nor neglect wealth: he accumulated riches which could not have been acquired by any commander-in-chief amidst the wars and famines of the period, without rendering the military and civil administration subservient to his pecuniary profit. On his return from Italy he lived at Constantinople in almost regal splendour, and maintained a body of 7,000 cavalry attached to his household. In an empire where confiscation was an ordinary financial resource, and under a sovereign whose situation rendered jealousy only common prudence, it is not surprising that the wealth of Belisarius excited the imperial cupidity, and induced Justinian to seize great part of it” (Greece under the Romans, chap. 3). There is shrewd insight in this, and though we may regret that we cannot attain to more, it is better than leaving the subject with an unmeaning paradox.
It may be said generally that Gibbon has not done justice to the services rendered to Europe by the Byzantine empire. In his crowded forty-eighth chapter, which is devoted to the subject, he passes over events and characters with such speed that his history in this part becomes little more than a chronicle, vivid indeed, but barren of thoughtful political views. His account of the Isaurian period may be instanced among others as an example of defective treatment. If we turn to the judicious Finlay, we see what an immense but generally unacknowledged debt Europe owes to the Greek empire. The saving of Christendom from Mohammedan conquest is too easily attributed to the genius of Charles Martel and his brave Franks. The victory at Tours was important no doubt, but almost a century previously the followers of the prophet had been checked by Heraclius; and their memorable repulse before Constantinople under the Isaurian Leo was the real barrier opposed to their conquest of the West. It requires but little reflection to see that without this brave resistance to the Moslem invasion, the course of mediaeval history would have been completely changed. Next in time, but hardly second in value to the services of the Greeks at Marathon and Salamis, must be reckoned the services of the Byzantine emperors in repelling the barbarians. Such an important consideration as this should hardly have escaped Gibbon.

Gibbon's account of Charlemagne is strangely inadequate. It is perhaps the only instance in his work where he has failed to appreciate a truly great man, and the failure is the more deplorable as it concerns one of the greatest men who have ever lived. He did not realise the greatness of the man, of his age, or of his
work. Properly considered, the eighth century is the most important and memorable which Europe has ever seen. During its course the geographical limits, the ecclesiastical polity, and the feudal system within and under which our western group of nations was destined to live for five or six centuries, were provisionally settled and determined. The wonderful house of the Carolings, which produced no less than five successive rulers of genius (of whom two had extraordinary genius, Charles Martel and Charlemagne, were the human instruments of this great work. The Frankish Monarchy was hastening to ruin when they saved it. Saxons in the East and Saracens in the South were on the point of extinguishing the few surviving embers of civilisation which still existed. The Bishop of Rome was ready to fall a prey to the Lombards, and the progressive papacy of Hildebrand and Innocent ran imminent risk of being extirpated at its root. Charles and his ancestors prevented these evils. Of course it is open to any one to say that there were no evils threatening, that Mohammedanism is as good as Christianity, that the Papacy was a monstrous calamity, that to have allowed Eastern Germany to remain pagan and barbarous would have done no harm. The question cannot be discussed here. But every law of historic equity compels us to admit that whether the result was good or bad, the genius of men who could leave such lasting impressions on the world as the Carolings did, must have been exceptionally great. And this is what Gibbon has not seen; he has not seen that, whether their work was good or bad in the issue, it was colossal. His tone in reference to Charlemagne is unworthy to a degree. "Without injustice to his fame, I may discern
some blemishes in the sanctity and greatness of the restorer of the Western Empire. Of his moral virtues, chastity was not the most conspicuous.” This from the pen of Gibbon seems hardly serious. Again: “I touch with reverence the laws of Charlemagne, so highly applauded by a respectable judge. They compose not a system, but a series of occasional and minute edicts, for the correction of abuses, the reformation of manners, the economy of his farms, the care of his poultry, and even the sale of his eggs.” And yet Gibbon had read the Capitularies. The struggle and care of the hero to master in some degree the wide welter of barbarism surging around him, he never recognised. It is a spot on Gibbon’s fame.

Dean Milman considers that Gibbon’s account of the Crusades is the least accurate and satisfactory chapter in his history, and “that he has here failed in that lucid arrangement which in general gives perspicuity to his most condensed and crowded narratives.” This blame seems to be fully merited, if restricted to the second of the two chapters which Gibbon has devoted to the Crusades. The fifty-eighth chapter, in which he treats of the First Crusade, leaves nothing to be desired. It is not one of his best chapters, though it is quite up to his usually high level. But the fifty-ninth chapter, it must be owned, is not only weak, but what is unexampled elsewhere in him, confused and badly written. It is not, as in the case of Charlemagne, a question of imperfect appreciation of a great man or epoch; it is a matter of careless and slovenly presentation of a period which he had evidently mastered with his habitual thoroughness, but, owing to the rapidity with which he composed his last volume, he did not do
full justice to it. He says significantly in his Memoirs, that "he wished that a pause, an interval, had been allowed for a serious revisal" of the last three volumes, and there can be little doubt that this chapter was one of the sources of his regrets. It is in fact a mere tangle. The Second and the Third Crusades are so jumbled together, that it is only a reader who knows the subject very well who can find his way through the labyrinth. Gibbon seems at this point, a thing very unusual with him, to have become impatient with his subject, and to have wished to hurry over it. "A brief parallel," he says, "may save the repetition of a tedious narrative." The result of this expeditious method has been far from happy. It is the only occasion where Gibbon has failed in his usual high finish and admirable literary form.

Gibbon's style was at one period somewhat of a party question. Good Christians felt a scruple in discerning any merits in the style of a writer who had treated the martyrs of the early Church with so little ceremony and generosity. On the other hand, those whose opinions approached more or less to his, expatiated on the splendour and majesty of his diction. Archbishop Whately went out of his way in a note to his Logie to make a keen thrust at an author whom it was well to depreciate whenever occasion served. "His way of writing," he says, "reminds one of those persons who never dare look you full in the face." Such criticisms are out of date now. The faults of Gibbon's style are obvious enough, and its compensatory merits are not far to seek. No one can overlook its frequent tenuity and constant want of terseness. It lacks suppleness, ease, variety. It is not often distinguished by happy
selection of epithet, and seems to ignore all delicacy of nuance. A prevailing grandiloquence, which easily slides into pomposity, is its greatest blemish. The acute Porson saw this and expressed it admirably. In the preface to his letters to Archdeacon Travis, he says of Gibbon, "Though his style is in general correct and elegant, he sometimes draws out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument." In endeavouring to avoid vulgar terms he too frequently dignifies trifles, and clothes common thoughts in a splendid dress that would be rich enough for the noblest ideas. In short we are too often reminded of that great man, Mr. Prig, the auctioneer, whose manner was so inimitably fine that he had as much to say on a ribbon as on a Raphael." It seems as if Gibbon had taken the stilted tone of the old French tragedy for his model, rather than the crisp and nervous prose of the best French writers. We are constantly offended by a superfine diction lavished on barbarous chiefs and rough soldiers of the Lower Empire, which almost reproduces the high-flown rhetoric in which Corneille's and Racine's characters address each other. Such phrases as the "majesty of the throne," "the dignity of the purple," the "wisdom of the senate," recur with a rather jarring monotony, especially when the rest of the narrative is designed to show that there was no majesty nor dignity nor wisdom involved in the matter. We feel that the writer was thinking more of his sonorous sentence than of the real fact. On the other hand, nothing but a want of candour or taste can lead any one to overlook the rare and great excellences of Gibbon's style. First of all, it is singularly correct; a rather common merit now, but not common in his day. But its sustained vigour
and loftiness will always be uncommon; above all its rapidity and masculine length of stride are quite admirable. When he takes up his pen to describe a campaign, or any great historic scene, we feel that we shall have something worthy of the occasion, that we shall be carried swiftly and grandly through it all, without the suspicion of a breakdown of any kind being possible. An indefinable stamp of weightiness is impressed on Gibbon’s writing; he has a baritone manliness which banishes everthing small, trivial, or weak. When he is eloquent (and it should be remembered to his credit that he never affects eloquence, though he occasionally affects dignity), he rises without effort into real grandeur. On the whole we may say that his manner, with certain manifest faults, is not unworthy of his matter, and the praise is great.

It is not quite easy to give expression to another feeling which is often excited in reading Gibbon. It is somewhat of this kind, that it is more fitted to inspire admiration than love or sympathy. Its merits are so great, the mass of information it contains is so stupendous, that all competent judges of such work feel bound to praise it. Whether they like it in the same degree, may be questioned. Among reading men and educated persons it is not common—such is my experience—to meet with people who know their Gibbon well. Superior women do not seem to take to him kindly, even when there is no impediment on religious grounds. Madame du Deffand, writing to Walpole, says, “I whisper it to you, but I am not pleased with Mr. Gibbon’s work. It is declamatory, oratorical . . . I lay it aside without regret, and it requires an effort to take it up again.” Another of Walpole’s correspondents, the
Countress of Ossory, seems to have made similar strictures. If we admit that women are less capable than masculine scholars of doing justice to the strong side of Gibbon, we may also acknowledge that they are better fitted than men to appreciate and to be shocked by his defective side, which is a prevailing want of moral elevation and nobility of sentiment. His cheek rarely flushes in enthusiasm for a good cause. The tragedy of human life never seems to touch him, no glimpse of the infinite ever calms and raises the reader of his pages. Like nearly all the men of his day, he was of the earth earthy, and it is impossible to get over the fact.
CHAPTER X.

LAST ILLNESS.—DEATH.—CONCLUSION.

Gibbon had now only about six months to live. He did not seem to have suffered by his rapid journey from Lausanne to London. During the summer which he spent with his friend Lord Sheffield, he was much as usual; only his friend noticed that his habitual dislike to motion appeared to increase, and he was so incapable of exercise that he was confined to the library and dining-room. "Then he joined Mr. F. North in pleasant arguments against exercise in general. He ridiculed the unsettled and restless disposition that summer, the most uncomfortable of all seasons, as he said, generally gives to those who have the use of their limbs." The true disciples of Epicurus are not always the least stout and stoical in the presence of irreparable evils.

After spending three or four months at Sheffield Place, he went to Bath to visit his stepmother, Mrs. Gibbon. His conduct to her through life was highly honourable to him. It should be remembered that her jointure, paid out of his father's decayed estate, was a great tax on his small income. In his efforts to improve his position by selling his landed property, Mrs. Gibbon seems to have been at times somewhat difficult to satisfy as regards the security of her interests. It was only
prudent on her part. But it is easy to see what a source of alienation and quarrel was here ready prepared, if both parties had not risen superior to sordid motives. There never seems to have been the smallest cloud between them. When one of his properties was sold he writes: "Mrs. Gibbon’s jointure is secured on the Buriton estate, and her legal consent is requisite for the sale. Again and again I must repeat my hope that she is perfectly satisfied, and that the close of her life may not be embittered by suspicion, fear, or discontent. What new security does she prefer—the funds, a mortgage, or your land? At all events, she must be made easy." So Gibbon left town and lay at Reading on his road to Bath: here he passed about ten days with his stepmother, who was now nearly eighty years of age. "In mind and conversation she is just the same as twenty years ago," he writes to Lord Sheffield; "she has spirits, appetite, legs, and eyes, and talks of living till ninety. I can say from my heart, Amen." And in another letter, a few days later, he says: "A tête-à-tête of eight or nine hours every day is rather difficult to support; yet I do assure you that our conversation flows with more ease and spirit when we are alone, than when any auxiliaries are summoned to our aid. She is indeed a wonderful woman, and I think all her faculties of the mind stronger and more active than I have ever known them. . . . I shall therefore depart next Friday, but I may possibly reckon without my host, as I have not yet apprised Mrs. G. of the term of my visit, and will certainly not quarrel with her for a short delay." He then went to Althorpe, and it is the last evidence of his touching a book—"exhausted the morning (of the 5th November) among the first editions of Cicero." Then he came to London, and in a few days was seized with the
illness which in a little more than two months put an end to his life.

His malady was dropsy, complicated with other disorders. He had most strangely neglected a very dangerous symptom for upwards of thirty years, not only having failed to take medical advice about it, but even avoiding all allusion to it to bosom friends like Lord Sheffield. But longer concealment was now impossible. He sent for the eminent surgeon Farquhar (the same who afterwards attended William Pitt), and he, together with Cline, at once recognised the case as one of the utmost gravity, though they did not say as much to the patient. On Thursday, the 14th of November, he was tapped and greatly relieved. He said he was not appalled by the operation, and during its progress he did not lay aside his usual good-humoured pleasantry. He was soon out again, but only for a few days, and a fortnight after another tapping was necessary. Again he went out to dinners and parties, which must have been most imprudent at his age and in his state. But he does not seem to have acted contrary to medical advice. He was very anxious to meet the prime minister, William Pitt, with whom he was not acquainted, though he must have seen him in old days in the House. He saw him twice; once at Eden Farm for a whole day, and was much gratified, we are told. At last he got to what he called his home—the house of his true and devoted friend, Lord Sheffield. "But," says the latter, whose narrative of his friend's last illness is marked by a deep and reserved tenderness that does him much honour, "this last visit to Sheffield Place became far different from any he had ever made before. That ready, cheerful, various and illuminating conversation which we had before admired
in him, was not always to be found in the library or the
drawing-room. He moved with difficulty, and retired
from company sooner than he had been used to do. On
the 23rd of December his appetite began to fail him. He
observed to me that it was a very bad sign with him
when he could not eat his breakfast, which he had done
at all times very heartily; and this seems to have been
the strongest expression of apprehension that he was
ever observed to utter." He soon became too ill to
remain beyond the reach of the highest medical advice.
On the 7th of January, 1794, he left a houseful of company
and friends for his lodgings in St. James's Street. On
arriving he sent the following note to Lord Sheffield, the
last lines he ever wrote:—

"St. James's, Four o'Clock, Tuesday.

"This date says everything. I was almost killed
between Sheffield Place and East Grinstead by hard,
frozen, long, and cross ruts, that would disgrace the
approach of an Indian wigwam. The rest was some-
what less painful, and I reached this place half dead,
but not seriously feverish or ill. I found a dinner
invitation from Lord Lucan; but what are dinners to
me? I wish they did not know of my departure. I
catch the flying post. What an effort! Adieu till
Thursday or Friday."

The end was not far off. On the 13th of January he
underwent another operation, and, as usual, experienced
much relief. "His spirits continued good. He talked
of passing his time at houses which he had often fre-
quented with great pleasure—the Duke of Devonshire's,
Mr. Craufurd's, Lord Spencer's, Lord Lucan's, Sir Ralph
Payne's, Mr. Batt's." On the 14th of January "he
saw some company—Lady Lucan and Lady Spencer—
and thought himself well enough to omit the opium draught which he had been used to take for some time. He slept very indifferently; before nine the next morning he rose, but could not eat his breakfast. However, he appeared tolerably well, yet complained at times of a pain in his stomach. At one o’clock he received a visit of an hour from Madame de Sylva; and at three, his friend, Mr. Craufurd, of Auchinames (whom he always mentioned with particular regard), called, and stayed with him till past five o’clock. They talked, as usual, on various subjects; and twenty hours before his death Mr. Gibbon happened to fall into a conversation not uncommon with him, on the probable duration of his life. He said that he thought himself a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years. About six he ate the wing of a chicken and drank three glasses of Madeira. After dinner he became very uneasy and impatient, complained a good deal, and appeared so weak that his servant was alarmed.

“During the evening he complained much of his stomach, and of a feeling of nausea. Soon after nine, he took his opium draught and went to bed. About ten he complained of much pain, and desired that warm napkins might be applied to his stomach. He almost incessantly expressed a sense of pain till about four o’clock in the morning, when he said he found his stomach much easier. About seven the servant asked whether he should send for Mr. Farquhar. He answered, No; that he was as well as the day before. At about half-past eight he got out of bed, and said he was ‘plus adroit’ than he had been for three months past, and got into bed again without assistance, better than usual. About nine he said he would rise. The servant, however, persuaded him to remain in bed till Mr. Farquhar, who was
expected at eleven, should come. Till about that hour he spoke with great facility. Mr. Farquhar came at the time appointed, and he was then visibly dying. When the valet-de-chambre returned, after attending Mr. Farquhar out of the room, Mr. Gibbon said, ‘Pourquoi est ce que vous me quittez?’ This was about half-past eleven. At twelve he drank some brandy and water from a teapot, and desired his favourite servant to stay with him. These were the last words he pronounced articulately. To the last he preserved his senses; and when he could no longer speak, his servant having asked a question, he made a sign to show that he understood him. He was quite tranquil, and did not stir, his eyes half shut. About a quarter before one he ceased to breathe.” He wanted just eighty-three days of fifty-seven years of age.

Thus, in consequence of his own strange self-neglect and imprudence, was extinguished one of the most richly-stored minds that ever lived. Occurring when it did, so near the last summons, Gibbon’s prospective hope of continued life “for ten, twelve, or twenty years” is harshly pathetic, and full of that irony which mocks the vain cares of men. But, truly, his forecast was not irrational if he had not neglected ordinary precautions. In spite of his ailments he felt full, and was full, of life, when he was cut off. We cannot be sure if lengthened days would have added much to his work already achieved. There is hardly a parallel case in literature of the great powers of a whole life being so concentrated on one supreme and magnificent effort. Yet, if he had lived to 1804, or as an extreme limit, to 1814, we should have been all gainers. In the first place, he certainly would have finished his admirable autobiography. We cannot imagine what he would have made of it, judging
from the fragment which exists. And yet that fragment is almost a masterpiece. But his fertile mind had other schemes in prospect; and what such a diligent worker would have done with a decade or two more of years it is impossible to say, except that it is certain they would not have been wasted. The extinction of a real mind is ever an irreparable loss.

As it was, he went to his rest after one of the greatest victories ever achieved in his own field of humane letters, and lived long enough to taste the fruits of his toil. He was never puffed up, but soberly and without arrogance received his laurels. His unselfish zeal and haste to console his bereaved friend showed him warm and loving to the last; and we may say that his last serious effort was consecrated to the genius of pious friendship.

In 1796, two years after Gibbon's death, Lord Sheffield published two quarto volumes of the historian's miscellaneous works. They have been republished in one thick octavo, and many persons suppose that it contains the whole of the posthumous works; not unnaturally, as a fraudulent statement on the title-page, "complete in one volume," is well calculated to produce that impression. But in 1814 Lord Sheffield issued a second edition in five volumes octavo, containing much additional matter, which additional matter was again published in a quarto form, no doubt for the convenience of the purchasers of the original quarto edition.

Of the posthumous works, the Memoirs are by far the most important portion. Unfortunately, they were left in a most unfinished state, and what we now read is nothing else than a mosaic put together by Lord Sheffield from six different sketches. Next to the Memoirs are the journals and diaries of his studies. As a picture of Gibbon's method, zeal, and thoroughness in the
pursuit of knowledge, they are of the highest interest. But they refer to an early period of his studies, long previous to the concentration of his mind on his great work, and one would like to know whether they present the best selection that might have been made from these records. It is interesting to follow Gibbon in his perusal of Homer and Juvenal at five and twenty. But one would much like to be admitted to his study when he was a far riper scholar, and preparing for or writing the *Decline and Fall*. Lord Sheffield positively prohibited, by a clause in his will, any further publication of the Gibbon papers, and although Dean Milman was permitted to see them, it was with the express understanding that none of their contents should be divulged. After the Memoirs and the journals, the most interesting portion of the miscellaneous works are *The Antiquities of the House of Brunswick*, which in their present form are merely the preparatory sketch of a large work. It is too imperfect to allow us to judge of what Gibbon even designed to make of it. But it contains some masterly pages, and the style in many places seems more nervous and supple than that of the *Decline and Fall*.

For instance, this account of Albert Azo the Second:

"Like one of his Tuscan ancestors Azo the Second was distinguished among the princes of Italy by the epithet of the *Rich*. The particulars of his rentroll cannot now be ascertained. An occasional though authentic deed of investiture enumerates eighty-three fiefs or manors which he held of the empire in Lombardy and Tuscany, from the Marquisate of Este to the county of Luni; but to these possessions must be added the lands which he enjoyed as the vassal of the Church, the ancient patrimony of Otbert (the terra Obertenga) in the counties of Arezzo, Pisa, and Lucca, and the marriage portion of his first wife, which, according to the various readings of the manuscripts, may be computed either at twenty or two hundred thousand
English acres. If such a mass of landed property were now accumulated on the head of an Italian nobleman, the annual revenue might satisfy the largest demands of private luxury or avarice, and the fortunate owner would be rich in the improvement of agriculture, the manufactures of industry, the refinement of taste, and the extent of commerce. But the barbarism of the eleventh century diminished the income and aggravated the expense of the Marquis of Este. In a long series of war and anarchy, man and the works of man had been swept away, and the introduction of each ferocious and idle stranger had been overbalanced by the loss of five or six perhaps of the peaceful industrious natives. The mischievous growth of vegetation, the frequent inundations of the rivers were no longer checked by the vigilance of labour; the face of the country was again covered with forests and morasses; of the vast domains which acknowledged Azo for their lord, the far greater part was abandoned to the beasts of the field, and a much smaller portion was reduced to the state of constant and productive husbandry. An adequate rent may be obtained from the skill and substance of a free tenant who fertilizes a grateful soil, and enjoys the security and benefit of a long lease. But faint is the hope and scanty is the produce of those harvests which are raised by the reluctant toil of peasants and slaves condemned to a bare subsistence and careless of the interests of a rapacious master. If his granaries are full, his purse is empty, and the want of cities or commerce, the difficulty of finding or reaching a market, obliges him to consume on the spot a part of his useless stock, which cannot be exchanged for merchandise or money. . . . The entertainment of his vassals and soldiers, their pay and rewards, their arms and horses, surpassed the measure of the most oppressive tribute, and the destruction which he inflicted on his neighbours was often retaliated on his own lands. The costly elegance of palaces and gardens was superseded by the laborious and expensive construction of strong castles on the summits of the most inaccessible rocks, and some of these, like the fortress of Canossa in the Apennine, were built and provided to sustain a three years' siege against a royal army. But his defence in this world was less burdensome to a wealthy lord than his salvation in the next; the demands of his chapel, his priests, his
alms, his offerings, his pilgrimages were incessantly renewed; the monastery chosen for his sepulchre was endowed with his fairest possessions, and the naked heir might often complain that his father's sins had been redeemed at too high a price. The Marquis Azo was not exempt from the contagion of the times; his devotion was animated and inflamed by the frequent miracles that were performed in his presence; and the monks of Vangadizza, who yielded to his request the arm of a dead saint, were not ignorant of the value of that inestimable jewel. After satisfying the demands of war and superstition he might appropriate the rest of his revenue to use and pleasure. But the Italians of the eleventh century were imperfectly skilled in the liberal and mechanical arts; the objects of foreign luxury were furnished at an exorbitant price by the merchants of Pisa and Venice; and the superfluous wealth which could not purchase the real comforts of life, were idly wasted on some rare occasions of vanity and pomp. Such were the nuptials of Boniface, Duke or Marquis of Tuscany, whose family was long after united with that of Azo by the marriage of their children. These nuptials were celebrated on the banks of the Mincius, which the fancy of Virgil has decorated with a more beautiful picture. The princes and people of Italy were invited to the feasts, which continued three months; the fertile meadows, which are intersected by the slow and winding course of the river, were covered with innumerable tents, and the bridegroom displayed and diversified the scenes of his proud and tasteless magnificence. All the utensils of the service were of silver, and his horses were shod with plates of the same metal, loosely nailed and carelessly dropped, to indicate his contempt of riches. An image of plenty and profusion was expressed in the banquet; the most delicious wines were drawn in buckets from the well; and the spices of the East were ground in water-mills like common flour. The dramatic and musical arts were in the rudest state; but the Marquis had summoned the most popular singers, harpers, and buffoons to exercise their talents in this splendid theatre. After this festival I might remark a singular gift of this same Boniface to the Emperor Henry III., a chariot and oxen of solid silver, which were designed only as a vehicle for a hogshead of vinegar. If such an example should seem
above the imitation of Azo himself, the Marquis of Este was at least superior in wealth and dignity to the vassals of his compeer. One of these vassals, the Viscount of Mantua, presented the German monarch with one hundred falcons and one hundred bay horses, a grateful contribution to the pleasures of a royal sportsman. In that age the proud distinction between the nobles and princes of Italy was guarded with jealous ceremony. The Viscount of Mantua had never been seated at the table of his immediate lord; he yielded to the invitation of the Emperor; and a stag's skin filled with pieces of gold was graciously accepted by the Marquis of Tuscany as the sign of his presumption.

"The temporal felicity of Azo was crowned by the long possession of honour and riches; he died in the year 1097, aged upwards of an hundred years; and the term of his mortal existence was almost commensurate with the lapse of the eleventh century. The character as well as the situation of the Marquis of Este rendered him an actor in the revolutions of that memorable period; but time has cast a veil over the virtues and vices of the man, and I must be content to mark some of the eras, the milestones of his which measure the extent and intervals of the vacant way. Albert Azo the Second was no more than seventeen when he first drew the sword of rebellion and patriotism, when he was involved with his grandfather, his father, and his three uncles in a common proscription. In the vigour of his manhood, about his fiftieth year, the Ligurian Marquis governed the cities of Milan and Genoa as the minister of Imperial authority. He was upwards of seventy when he passed the Alps to vindicate the inheritance of Maine for the children of his second marriage. He became the friend and servant of Gregory VII., and in one of his epistles that ambitious pontiff recommends the Marquis Azo, as the most faithful and best beloved of the Italian princes, as the proper channel through which a king of Hungary might convey his petitions to the apostolic throne. In the mighty contest between the crown and the mitre, the Marquis Azo and the Countess Matilda led the powers of Italy. And when the standard of St. Peter was displayed, neither the age of the one nor the sex of the other could detain them from the field. With these two affectionate clients the Pope maintained his station in the fortress of Canossa, while
the Emperor, barefoot on the frozen ground, fasted and prayed three days at the foot of the rock; they were witnesses to the abject ceremony of the penance and pardon of Henry IV.; and in the triumph of the Church a patriot might foresee the deliverance of Italy from the German yoke. At the time of this event the Marquis of Este was above fourscore; but in the twenty following years he was still alive and active amidst the revolutions of peace and war. The last act which he subscribed is dated above a century after his birth; and in that the venerable chief possesses the command of his faculties, his family, and his fortune. In this rare prerogative the longevity of Albert Azo the Second stands alone. Nor can I remember in the authentic annals of mortality a single example of a king or prince, of a statesman or general, of a philosopher or poet, whose life has been extended beyond the period of a hundred years. . . . Three approximations which will not hastily be matched have distinguished the present century, Aungzebe, Cardinal Fleury, and Fontenelle. Had a fortnight more been given to the philosopher, he might have celebrated his secular festival; but the lives and labours of the Mogul king and the French minister were terminated before they had accomplished their ninetieth year."

Then follow several striking and graceful pages on Lucrezia Borgia and Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara. The following description of the University of Padua and the literary tastes of the house of Este is all that we can give here:

"An university had been founded at Padua by the house of Este, and the scholastic rust was polished away by the revival of the literature of Greece and Rome. The studies of Ferrara were directed by skilful and eloquent professors, either natives or foreigners. The ducal library was filled with a valuable collection of manuscripts and printed books, and as soon as twelve new plays of Plautus had been found in Germany, the Marquis Lionel of Este was impatient to obtain a fair and faithful copy of that ancient poet. Nor were these elegant pleasures confined to the learned world. Under the reign of
Hercules I. a wooden theatre at a moderate cost of a thousand
crowns was constructed in the largest court of the palace, the
scenery represented some houses, a seaport and a ship, and
the _Menachmi_ of Plautus, which had been translated into
Italian by the Duke himself, was acted before a numerous and
polite audience. In the same language and with the same suc-
cess the _Amphytrion_ of Plautus and the _Eunuchus_ of Terence
were successively exhibited. And these classic models, which
formed the taste of the spectators, excited the emulation of the
poets of the age. For the use of the court and theatre of
Ferrara, Ariosto composed his comedies, which were often played
with applause, which are still read with pleasure. And such
was the enthusiasm of the new arts that one of the sons of
Alphonso the First did not disdain to speak a prologue on the
stage. In the legitimate forms of dramatic composition the
Italians have not excelled; but it was in the court of Ferrara
that they invented and refined the _pastoral comedy_, a romantic
Arcadia which violates the truth of manners and the simplici-
ity of nature, but which commands our indulgence by the elaborate
luxury of eloquence and wit. The _Aminta_ of Tasso was written
for the amusement and acted in the presence of Alphonso the
Second, and his sister Leonora might apply to herself the lan-
guage of a passion which disordered the reason without clouding
the genius of her poetical lover. Of the numerous imitations, the
_Pastor Fido_ of Guarini, which alone can vie with the fame and
merit of the original, is the work of the Duke’s secretary
of state. It was exhibited in a private house in Ferrara.

. . . . The father of the Tuscan muses, the sublime but un-
equal Dante, had pronounced that Ferrara was never honoured
with the name of a poet; he would have been astonished to
behold the chorus of bards, of melodious swans (their own
allusion), which now peopled the banks of the Po. In the
court of Duke Borso and his successor, Boydaro Count
Scandiano, was respected as a noble, a soldier, and a scholar:
his vigorous fancy first celebrated the loves and exploits of
the paladin Orlando; and his fame has been preserved and
eclipsed by the brighter glories and continuation of his work.
Ferrara may boast that on classic ground Ariosto and Tasso
lived and sung; that the lines of the _Orlando Furioso_, the
Gierusalemme Liberata were inscribed in everlasting characters under the eye of the First and Second Alphonso. In a period of near three thousand years, five great epic poets have arisen in the world, and it is a singular prerogative that two of the five should be claimed as their own by a short age and a petty state."

It perhaps will be admitted that if the style of these passages is less elaborate than that of the Decline and Fall, the deficiency, if it is one, is compensated by greater ease and lightness of touch.

It may be interesting to give a specimen of Gibbon's French style. His command of that language was not inferior to his command of his native idiom. One might even be inclined to say that his French prose is controlled by a purer taste than his English prose. The following excerpt, describing the Battle of Morgarten, will enable the reader to judge. It is taken from his early unfinished work on the History of the Swiss Republic, to which reference has already been made (p. 59):—

"Léopold était parti de Zug vers le milieu de la nuit. Il se flattait d'occuper sans résistance le défilé de Morgarten qui ne perçait qu'avec difficulté entre le lac Aegre et le pied d'une montagne escarpée. Il marchait à la tête de sa gendarmerie. Une colonne profond d'infanterie le suivait de près, et les uns et les autres se promettaient une victoire facile si les paysans osaient se présenter à leur rencontre. Ils étaient à peine entrés dans un chemin rude et étroit, et qui ne permettait qu'à trois ou quatre de marcher de front, qu'ils se sentirent accablés d'une grêle de pierres et de traits. Rodolphe de Reding, landamman de Schwitz et général des Confédérés, n'avait oublié aucun des avantages que lui offrit la situation des lieux. Il avait fait couper des rochers énormes, qui en s'ébranlant dès qu'on retiraient les faibles appuis qui les retenaient encore, se détachaient du sommet de la montaigne et se précipitaient avec un bruit
affreux sur les bataillons serrés des Autrichiens. Déjà les chevaux s’effrayaient, les rangs se confondaient, et le désordre égarait le courage et le rendait inutile, lorsque les Suisses descendirent de la montagne en poussant de grands cris. Accoutumés à poursuivre le chamois sur les bords glissants des précipices, ils couraient d’un pas assuré au milieu des neiges. Ils étaient armés de grosses et pesantes hallebardes, auxquelles le fer le mieux trempé ne résistait point. Les soldats de Léopold chancelants et découragés cédèrent bientôt aux efforts désespérés d’une troupe qui combattait pour tout ce qu’il y a de plus cher aux hommes. L’Abbé d‘Einsideln, premier auteur de cette guerre malheureuse, et le comte Henri de Montfort, donnèrent les premiers l’exemple de la fuite. Le désordre devint général, le carnage fut affreux, et les Suisses se livraient au plaisir de la vengeance. A neuf heures du matin la bataille était gagnée. . . . Un grand nombre d’Autrichiens se précipitait les uns sur les autres, cherchèrent vainement dans le lac un asile contre la furyre de leurs ennemis. Ils y périsrent presque tous. Quinze cents hommes restèrent sur le champ de bataille. Ils étaient pour la plupart de la gendarmerie, qu’une valeur malheureuse et une armoire pesante arrêtaient dans un lieu où l’un et l’autre leur étaient inutiles. Longtemps après l’on s’aperçevait dans toutes les provinces voisines que l’élite de la noblesse avait péri dans cette fatale journée. L’infanterie beaucoup moins engagée dans le défilé, vit en tremblant la diffaite des chevaliers qui passaient pour invincibles, et dont les escadrons effrayés se renversaient sur elle. Elle s’arrêta, voulut se retirer, et dans l’instant cette retraite devint une fuite honteuse. Sa perte fut assez peu considérable, mais les historiens de la nation ont conservé la mémoire de cinquante braves Züriquois dont on trouva les rangs couchés morts sur la place. Léopold lui-même fut entrainé par la foule qui le portait du côté de Zug. On le vit entrer dans sa ville de Winterthur. La frayeur, la honte et l’indignation étaient encore peintes sur son front. Dès que la victoire se fut déclarée en faveur des Suisses, ils s’assemblèrent sur le champ de bataille, s’embrassèrent en versant des larmes d’allégresse, et remercièrent Dieu de la grâce qu’il venait de leur faire, et qui ne leur avait coûté que quatorze de leurs compagnons."
His familiar letters and a number of essays, chiefly written in youth, form the remainder of the miscellaneous works. Of the letters, some have been quoted in this volume, and the reader can form his own judgment of them. Of the small essays we may say that they augment, if it is possible, one's notion of Gibbon's laborious diligence and thoroughness in the field of historic research, and confirm his title to the character of an intrepid student.

The lives of scholars are proverbially dull, and that of Gibbon is hardly an exception to the rule. In the case of historians, the protracted silent labour of preparation, followed by the conscientious exposition of knowledge acquired, into which the intrusion of the writer's personality rarely appears to advantage, combine to give prominence to the work achieved, and to throw into the background the author who achieves it. If indeed the historian, forsaking his high function and austere reserve, succumbs to the temptations that beset his path, and turns history into political pamphlet, poetic rhapsody, moral epigram, or garish melodrama, he may become conspicuous to a fault at the expense of his work. Gibbon avoided these seductions. If the Decline and Fall has no superior in historical literature, it is not solely in consequence of Gibbon's profound learning, wide survey, and masterly grasp of his subject. With wise discretion, he subordinated himself to his task. The life of Gibbon is the less interesting, but his work remains monumental and supreme.
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English Men of Letters
EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

THOMAS CARLYLE
THOMAS CARLYLE

BY

JOHN NICHOL, LL.D., M.A., BALLIOL, OXON

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

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PREFATORY NOTE

The following record of the leading events of Carlyle's life and attempt to estimate his genius rely on frequently renewed study of his work, on slight personal impressions —"vidi tantum"—and on information supplied by previous narrators. Of these the great author's chosen literary legatee is the most eminent and, in the main, the most reliable. Every critic of Carlyle must admit as constant obligations to Mr. Froude as every critic of Byron to Moore or of Scott to Lockhart. The works of these masters in biography remain the ample storehouses from which every student will continue to draw. Each has, in a sense, made his subject his own, and each has been similarly arraigned.

I must here be allowed to express a feeling akin to indignation at the persistent, often virulent, attacks directed against a loyal friend, betrayed, it may be, by excess of faith and the defective reticence that often belongs to genius, to publish too much about his hero. But Mr. Froude's quotation, in defence, from the essay on Sir Walter Scott requires no supplement: it should be remembered that he acted with explicit authority; that the restrictions under which he was at first entrusted with the MSS. of the Reminiscences and the Letters and Memorials (annotated by Carlyle himself, as if for publication) were
withdrawn; and that the initial permission to select finally approached a practical injunction to communicate the whole. The worst that can be said is that, in the last years of Carlyle's career, his own judgment as to what should be made public of the details of his domestic life may have been somewhat obscured; but, if so, it was a weakness easily hidden from a devotee.

My acknowledgments are due to several of the Press comments which appeared shortly after Carlyle's death, more especially that of the St. James's Gazette, giving the most philosophical brief summary of his religious views which I have seen; and to the kindness of Dr. Eugene Oswald, President of the Carlyle Society, in supplying me with valuable hints on matters relating to German History and Literature. I have also to thank the Editor of the Manchester Guardian for permitting me to reproduce the substance of my article in its columns of February 1881. That article was largely based on a contribution on the same subject, in 1859, to Mackenzie's Imperial Dictionary of Biography.

I may add that in the distribution of material over the comparatively short space at my command, I have endeavoured to give prominence to facts less generally known, and passed over slightly the details of events previously enlarged on, as the terrible accident to Mrs. Carlyle and the incidents of her death. To her inner history I have only referred in so far as it had a direct bearing on her husband's life. As regards the itinerary of Carlyle's foreign journeys, it has seemed to me that it might be of interest to those travelling in Germany to have a short record of the places where the author sought his "studies" for his greatest work.
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THOMAS CARLYLE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

FOUR SCOTCHMEN, born within the limits of the same hundred years, all in the first rank of writers, if not of thinkers, represent much of the spirit of four successive generations. They are leading links in an intellectual chain.

DAVID HUME (1711-1776) remains the most salient type in our island of the scepticism, half conservative, half destructive, but never revolutionary, which marked the third quarter of the eighteenth century. He had some points of intellectual contact with Voltaire, though substituting a staid temper and passionless logic for the incisive brilliancy of a mocking Mercury; he had no relation, save an unhappy personal one, to Rousseau.

ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796), last of great lyricists inspired by a local genius, keenest of popular satirists, narrative poet of the people, spokesman of their higher as of their lower natures, stood on the verge between two eras. Half
Jacobite, nursling of old minstrelsy, he was also half Jacobin, an early-born child of the upheaval that closed the century; as essentially a foe of Calvinism as Hume himself. Master musician of his race, he was, as Thomas Campbell notes, severed, for good and ill, from his fellow Scots, by an utter want of their protecting or paralysing caution.

**Walter Scott** (1771-1832), broadest and most generous, if not loftiest of the group—"no sounder piece of British manhood," says Carlyle himself in his inadequate review, "was put together in that century"—the great revivalist of the medieval past, lighting up its scenes with a magic glamour, the wizard of northern tradition, was also, like Burns, the humorist of contemporary life. Dealing with Feudal themes, but in the manner of the Romantic school, he was the heir of the Troubadours, the sympathetic peer of Byron, and in his translation of Goetz von Berlichingen he laid the first rafters of our bridge to Germany.

**Thomas Carlyle** (1795-1881) is on the whole the strongest, though far from the finest spirit of the age succeeding—an age of criticism threatening to crowd creation out, of jostling interests and of surging streams, some of which he has striven to direct, more to stem. Even now what Mill twenty-five years ago wrote of Coleridge is still true of Carlyle: "The reading public is apt to be divided between those to whom his views are everything and those to whom they are nothing." But it is possible to extricate from a mass of often turbid eloquence the strands of his thought and to measure his influence by indicating its range.

Travellers in the Hartz, ascending the Brocken, are in certain atmospheres startled by the apparition of a shadowy figure,—a giant image of themselves, thrown on the horizon by the dawn. Similar is the relation of Carlyle to the common types of his countrymen. Burns, despite his perpervid
patriotism, was in many ways "a starry stranger." Carlyle was Scotch to the core and to the close, in every respect a macrocosm of the higher peasant class of the Lowlanders. Saturated to the last with the spirit of a dismissed creed, he fretted in bonds from which he could never get wholly free. Intrepid, independent, steadfast, frugal, prudent, dauntless, he trampled on the pride of kings with the pride of Lucifer. He was clannish to excess, painfully jealous of proximate rivals, self-centred if not self-seeking, fired by zeal and inflamed by almost mean emulations, resenting benefits as debts, ungenerous—with one exception, that of Goethe,—to his intellectual creditors; and, with reference to men and manners around him at variance with himself, violently intolerant. He bore a strange relation to the great poet, in many ways his predecessor in influence, whom with persistent inconsistency he alternately eulogised and disparaged, the half Scot Lord Byron. One had by nature many affinities to the Latin races, the other was purely Teutonic: but the power of both was Titanic rather than Olympian; both were forces of revolution; both protested, in widely different fashion, against the tendency of the age to submerge Individualism; both were to a large extent egoists: the one whining, the other roaring, against the "Philistine" restraints of ordinary society. Both had hot hearts, big brains, and an exhaustless store of winged and fiery words; both were wrapt in a measureless discontent, and made constant appeal against what they deemed the shallows of Optimism; Carlylism is the prose rather than "the male of Byronism." The contrasts are no less obvious: the author of Sartor Resartus, however vaguely, defended the System of the Universe; the author of Cain, with an audacity that in its essence went beyond that of Shelley, arraigned it. In both we find vehemence and substantial honesty; but, in the one, there is a dominant faith,
tempered by pride, in the “caste of Vere de Vere,” in Freedom for itself—a faith marred by shifting purposes, the garrulous incontinence of vanity, and a broken life; in the other unwavering belief in Law. The record of their fame is diverse. Byron leapt into the citadel, awoke and found himself the greatest inheritor of an ancient name. Carlyle, a peasant’s son, laid slow siege to his eminence, and, only after outliving twice the years of the other, attained it. His career was a struggle, sterner than that of either Johnson or Wordsworth, from obscurity, almost from contempt, to a rarely challenged renown. Fifty years ago few “so poor to do him reverence”; at his death, in a sunset storm of praise, the air was full of him, and deafening was the Babel of the reviews; for the progress of every original thinker is accompanied by a stream of commentary that swells as it runs till it ends in a dismal swamp of platitude. Carlyle’s first recognition was from America, his last from his own countrymen. His teaching came home to their hearts “late in the gloamin’.” In Scotland, where, for good or ill, passions are in extremes, he was long howled down, lampooned, preached at, prayed for: till, after his Edinburgh Inaugural Address, he of a sudden became the object of an equally blind devotion; and was, often by the very men who had tried and condemned him for blasphemy, as senselessly credited with essential orthodoxy. “The stone which the builders rejected became the headstone of the corner,” the terror of the pulpit its text. Carlyle’s decease was marked by a dirge of rhapsodists whose measureless acclamations stifled the voice of sober criticism. In the realm of contemporary English prose he has left no adequate successor;¹ the throne that does not pass by primogeniture is vacant, and the bleak northern skies seem colder and grayer since

¹ The nearest being the now foremost prose writers of our time, Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Fréde.
that venerable head was laid to rest by the village churchyard, far from the smoke and din of the great city on whose streets his figure was long familiar and his name was at last so honoured.

Carlyle first saw the world tempest-tossed by the events he celebrates in his earliest History. In its opening pages, we are made to listen to the feet and chariots of “Dubarry-dom” hurrying from the “Armida Palace,” where Louis XV. and the ancien régime lay dying; later to the ticking of the clocks in Launay’s doomed Bastile; again to the tocsin of the steeples that roused the singers of the Marseillaise to march from “their bright Phocean city” and grapple with the Swiss guard, last bulwark of the Bourbons. “The Swiss would have won,” the historian characteristically quotes from Napoleon, “if they had had a commander.” Already, over little more than the space of the author’s life—for he was a contemporary of Keats, born seven months before the death of Burns, Shelley’s junior by three, Scott’s by twenty-four, Byron’s by seven years—three years after Goethe went to feel the pulse of the “cannon-fever” at Argonne—already these sounds are across a sea. Two whole generations have passed with the memory of half their storms. “Another race hath been, and other palms are won.” Old policies, governments, councils, creeds, modes and hopes of life have been sifted in strange fires. Assaye, Trafalgar, Austerlitz, Jena, Leipzig, Inkermann, Sadowa,—Waterloo when he was twenty and Sedan when he was seventy-five,—have been fought and won. Born under the French Directory and the Presidency of Washington, Carlyle survived two French empires, two kingdoms, and two republics; elsewhere partitions, abolutions, revivals and deaths of States innumerable. During his life our sway in the East doubled its area, two peoples (the German with, the Italian without, his sympathy) were consolidated
on the Continent, while another across the Atlantic developed to a magnitude that amazes and sometimes alarms the rest. Aggressions were made and repelled, patriots perorated and fought, diplomatists finessed with a zeal worthy of the world’s most restless, if not its wisest, age. In the internal affairs of the leading nations the transformation scenes were often as rapid as those of a pantomime. The Art and Literature of those eighty-six years—stirred to new thought and form at their commencement by the so-called Romantic movement, more recently influenced by the Classic reaction, the Pre-Raphaelite protest, the Æsthetic mode,—followed various, even contradictory, standards. But, in one line of progress, there was no shadow of turning. Over the road which Bacon laid roughly down and Newton made safe for transit, Physical Science, during the whole period, advanced without let and beyond the cavil of ignorance. If the dreams of the New Atlantis have not even in our days been wholly realised, Science has been brought from heaven to earth, and the elements made ministers of Prospero’s wand. This apparent, and partially real, conquest of matter has doubtless done much to “relieve our estate,” to make life in some directions run more smoothly, and to multiply resources to meet the demands of rapidly-increasing multitudes: but it is in danger of becoming a conquest of matter over us; for the agencies we have called into almost fearful activity threaten, like Frankenstein’s miscreated goblin, to beat us down to the same level. Sanguine spirits who

throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster, O the wondrous, wondrous age,
are apt to forget that the electric light can do nothing to dispel the darkness of the mind; that there are strict
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limits to the power of prosperity to supply man's wants
or satisfy his aspirations. This is a great part of Carlyle's
teaching. It is impossible, were it desirable, accurately to
define his religious, social, or political creed. He swallows
formule with the voracity of Mirabeau, and like Proteus
escapes analysis. No printed labels will stick to him:
when we seek to corner him by argument he thunders and
lightens. Emerson complains that he failed to extract from
him a definite answer about Immortality. Neither by
syllogism nor by crucible could Bacon himself have made
the "Form" of Carlyle to confess itself. But call him
what we will—essential Calvinist or recalcitrant Neologist,
Mystic, Idealist, Deist or Pantheist, practical Absolutist, or
"the strayed reveller" of Radicalism—he is consistent in
his even bigoted antagonism to all Utilitarian solutions of
the problems of the world. One of the foremost physicists
of our time was among his truest and most loyal friends;
they were bound together by the link of genius and
kindred political views; and Carlyle was himself an expert
in mathematics, the mental science that most obviously
suberves physical research: but of Physics themselves
(astronomy being scarcely a physical science) his ignorance
was profound, and his abusive criticisms of such men as
Darwin are infantile. This intellectual defect, or rather
vacuum, left him free to denounce material views of life
with unconditioned vehemence. "Will the whole uphol-
sterers," he exclaims in his half comic, sometimes nonsensi-
cal, vein, "and confectioners of modern Europe undertake
to make one single shoeblack happy!" And more seriously
of the railways, without whose noisy aid he had never been
able to visit the battle-fields of Friedrich II.—

Our stupendous railway miracles I have stopped short in
admiring. . . . The distances of London to Aberdeen, to Ostend,
to Vienna, are still infinitely inadequate to me. Will you teach
me the winged flight through immensity, up to the throne dark with excess of bright. You unfortunate, you grin as an ape would at such a question: you do not know that unless you can reach thither in some effectual most veritable sense, you are lost, doomed to Hela’s death-realm and the abyss where mere brutes are buried. I do not want cheaper cotton, swifter railways; I want what Novalis calls “God, Freedom, and Immortality.” Will swift railways and sacrifices to Hudson help me towards that?

The economic and mechanical spirit of the age, faith in mere steel or stone, was one of Carlyle’s red rags. The others were insincerity in Politics and in Life, Democracy without Reverence, and Philanthropy without Sense. In our time these two last powers have made such strides as to threaten the Reign of Law. The Democrat without a ruler, who protests that one man is by nature as good as another, according to Carlyle is “shooting Niagara.” In deference to the mandate of the philanthropist the last shred of brutality, with much of decision, has vanished from our code. Sentiment is in office and Mercy not only tempers, but threatens to gag Justice. When Sir Samuel Romilly began his beneficent agitation, and Carlyle was at school, talkers of treason were liable to be disembowelled before execution; now the crime of treason is practically erased, and the free use of dynamite brings so-called reforms “within the range of practical politics.” Individualism was still a mark of the early years of the century. The spirit of “L’Etat c’est moi” survived in Mirabeau’s “never name to me that bête of a word ‘impossible’;” in the first Napoleon’s threat to the Austrian ambassador, “I will break your empire like this vase”; in Nelson turning his blind eye to the signal of retreat at Copenhagen, and Wellington fencing Torres Vedras against the world; it lingered in Nicholas the Czar, and has found perhaps its latest political representative in Prince Bismarck.
This is the spirit to which Carlyle has always given his undivided sympathy. He has held out hands to Knox, Francia, Friedrich, to the men who have made manners, not to the manners which have made men, to the rulers of people, not to their representatives: and the not inconsiderable following he has obtained is the most conspicuous tribute to a power resolute to pull against the stream. How strong its currents may be illustrated by a few lines from our leading literary journal, the *Athenæum*, of the Saturday after his death:—

"The future historian of the century will have to record the marvellous fact that while in the reign of Queen Victoria there was initiated, formulated, and methodised an entirely new cosmogony, its most powerful and highly-gifted man of letters was preaching a polity and a philosophy of history that would have better harmonised with the time of Queen Semiramis. . . . Long before he launched his sarcasms at human progress, there had been a conviction among thinkers that it was not the hero that developed the race, but a deep mysterious energy in the race that produced the hero; that the wave produced the bubble, and not the bubble the wave. But the moment a theory of evolution saw the light it was a fact. The old cosmogony, on which were built *Sartor Resartus* and the Calvinism of Ecclefechan, were gone. Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move; but it moved nevertheless. The great stream of modern thought has advanced; the theory of evolution has been universally accepted; nations, it is acknowledged, produce kings, and kings are denied the faculty of producing nations."

*Taliter, qualiter*; but one or two remarks on the incisive summary of this adroit and able theorist are obvious. First, the implied assertion,—"Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move,"—that Carlyle was in essential
sympathy with the Inquisitors who confronted Galileo with the rack, is perhaps the strangest piece of recent criticism extant: for what is his *French Revolution* but a cannonade in three volumes, reverberating, as no other book has done, a hurricane of revolutionary thought and deed, a final storming of old fortresses, an assertion of the necessity of movement, progress, and upheaval? Secondly, every new discovery is apt to be discredited by new shibboleths, and one-sided exaggerations of its range. It were platitude to say that Mr. Darwin was not only an almost unrivalled student of nature, as careful and conscientious in his methods, as fearless in stating his results, but—pace Mr. Carlyle—a man of genius, who has thrown floods of light on the inter-relations of the organic world. But there are whole troops of serfs, "addicti jurare in verba magistri," who, accepting, without attempt or capacity to verify the conclusions of the master mind, think to solve all the mysteries of the universe by ejaculating the word "Evolution." If I ask what was the secret of Dante’s or of Shakespeare’s divining rod, and you answer "Evolution," 'tis as if, when sick in heart and sick in head, I were referred, as medicine for "a mind diseased," to Grimm’s Law or to the Magnetic Belt.

Let us grant that Cæsar was evolved from the currents in the air about the Roman Capitol, that Marcus Aurelius was a blend of Plato and Cleanthes, Charlemagne a graft of Frankish blood on Gallic soil, William I. a rill from Rollo filtered in Neustrian fields, Hildebrand a flame from the altar of the mediæval church, Barbarossa a plant grown to masterdom in German woods, or later—not to heap up figures whose memories still possess the world—that Columbus was a Genoan breeze, Bacon a réchauffé of Elizabethan thought, Orange the Silent a Dutch dyke, Chatham the frontispiece of eighteenth-century England, or
Corsican Buonaparte the "armed soldier of Democracy." These men, at all events, were no bubbles on the froth of the waves which they defied and dominated.

So much, and more, is to be said for Carlyle’s insistence that great men are creators as well as creatures of their age. Doubtless, as we advance in history, direct personal influence, happily or unhappily, declines. In an era of overwrought activity, of superficial, however free, education, when we run the risk of being associated into nothingness and criticised to death, it remains a question whether, in the interests of the highest civilisation (which means opportunity for every capable citizen to lead the highest life), the subordination of the one to the many ought to be accelerated or retarded. It is said that the triumph of Democracy is a mere “matter of time.” But time is in this case of the essence of the matter, and the party of resistance will all the more earnestly maintain that the defenders should hold the forts till the invaders have become civilised. “The individual withers and the world is more and more,” preludes, though over a long interval, the cynical comment of the second “Locksley Hall” on the “increasing purpose” of the age. At an earlier date “Luria” had protested against the arrogance of mere majorities.

A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models to the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.

Carlyle set these notes to Tennyson and to Browning in his Hero-Worship—a creed, though in thought, and more in action, older than Buddha or than Achilles, which he first launched as a dogma on our times, clenching it with the asseveration that on two men, Mirabeau and Napoleon,
mainly hung the fates of the most nominally levelling of Revolutions. The stamp his teaching made remains marked on the minds of the men of light who lead, and cannot be wholly effaced by the clamour of the men of words who orate. If he leans unduly to the exaltation of personal power, Carlyle is on the side of those whose defeat can be beneficent only if it be slow. Further to account for his attitude, we must refer to his life and to its surroundings, i.e. to the circumstances amid which he was "evolved."
CHAPTER II

ECCLEFECHAN AND EDINBURGH

[1795-1826]

In the introduction to one of his essays, Carlyle has warned us against giving too much weight to genealogy: but all his biographies, from the sketch of the Riquetti kindred to his full-length Friedrich, preaced by two volumes of ancestry, recognise, if they do not overrate, inherited influences; and similarly his fragments of autobiography abound in suggestive reference. His family portraits are to be accepted with the deductions due to the family fever that was the earliest form of his hero-worship. Carlyle, says the Atheneæum critic before quoted, divides contemporary mankind into the fools and the wise: the wise are the Carlyles, the Welshes, the Aitkens, and Edward Irving; the fools all the rest of unfortunate mortals: a Fuseli stroke of the critic ¹ rivalling any of the author criticised; yet the comment has a grain of truth.

The Carlyles are said to have come, from the English town somewhat differently spelt, to Annandale, with David II.; and, according to a legend which the great author did not disdain to accept, among them was a certain Lord of Torthorwald, so created for defences of the Border. The

¹ Even the most adverse critics of Carlyle are often his imitators, their hands taking a dye from what they work in.
churchyard of Ecclefechan is profusely strewn with the graves of the family, all with coats of arms—two griffins with adders’ stings. More definitely we find Thomas, the author’s grandfather, settled in that dullest of county villages as a carpenter. In 1745 he saw the rebel Highlanders on their southward march: he was notable for his study of Anson’s Voyages and of the Arabian Nights: “a fiery man, his stroke as ready as his word; of the toughness and springiness of steel; an honest but not an industrious man”; subsequently tenant of a small farm, in which capacity he does not seem to have managed his affairs with much effect; the family were subjected to severe privations, the mother having, on occasion, to heat the meal into cakes by straw taken from the sacks on which the children slept. In such an atmosphere there grew and throve the five sons known as the five fighting masons—“a curious sample of folks,” said an old apprentice of one of them, “pithy, bitter speaking bodies, and awfu’ fighters.”

The second of the group, James, born 1757, married—first, a full cousin, Janet Carlyle (the sole issue of which marriage was John, who lived at Cockermouth); second, Margaret Aitken, by whom he had four sons—Thomas, 1795-1881; Alexander, 1797-1876; John (Dr. Carlyle, translator of Dante), 1801-1879; and James, 1805-1890; also five daughters, one of whom, Jane, became the wife of her cousin James Aitken of Dumfries, and the mother of Mary, the niece who tended her famous uncle so faithfully during the last years of his life. Nowhere is Carlyle’s loyalty to his race shown in a fairer light than in the first of the papers published under the name of Reminiscences. It differs from the others in being of an early date and free from all offence. From this pathetic sketch, written when on a visit to London in 1832 he had sudden news of his father’s death, we may, even in our brief space,
extract a few passages which throw light on the characters, i.e. the points of contact and contrast of the writer and his theme:

In several respects I consider my father as one of the most interesting men I have known, ... of perhaps the very largest natural endowment of any it has been my lot to converse with. None of you will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from his untutored soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was), with all manner of potent words. ... Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible which did not become almost ocularly so. Emphatic I have heard him beyond all men. In anger he had no need of oaths: his words were like sharp arrows that smote into the very heart. The fault was that he exaggerated (which tendency I also inherit), yet in description, and for the sake chiefly of humorous effect. He was a man of rigid, even scrupulous veracity. ... He was never visited with doubt. The old Theorem of the Universe was sufficient for him ... he stood a true man, while his son stands here on the verge of the new. ... A virtue he had which I should learn to imitate: he never spoke of what was disagreeable and past. His was a healthy mind. He had the most open contempt for all "clatter." ... He was irascible, choleric, and we all dreaded his wrath, but passion never mastered him. ... Man's face he did not fear: God he always feared. His reverence was, I think, considerably mixed with fear—rather awe, as of unutterable depths of silence through which flickered a trembling hope. ... Let me learn of him. Let me write my books as he built his houses, and walk as blamelessly through this shadow world. ... Though genuine and coherent, living and life-giving, he was nevertheless but half developed. We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him. His heart seemed as if walled in: he had not the free means to unbosom himself. ... It seemed as if an atmosphere of fear repelled us from him. To me it was especially so. Till late years I was ever more or less awed and chilled by him.

James Carlyle has been compared to the father of Burns. The failings of both leant to virtue's side, in different ways. They were at one in their integrity, independence, fighting
force at stress, and their command of winged words; but
the elder had a softer heart, more love of letters, a broader
spirit; the younger more power to stem adverse tides, he
was a better man of business, made of tougher clay, and a
grimmer Calvinist. "Mr. Lawson," he writes in 1817, "is
doing very well, and has given us no more paraphrases."
He seems to have grown more rigid as he aged, under the
narrowing influences of the Covenanting land; but he re-
mained stable and compact as the Auldgarth Bridge, built
with his own hands. James Carlyle hammered on at
Ecclefechan, making in his best year £100, till, after the
first decade of the century, the family migrated to Mainhill,
a bleak farm two miles from Lockerbie, where he so thrived
by work and thrift that he left on his death in 1832 about
£1000. Strong, rough, and eminently straight, intolerant
of contradiction and ready with words like blows, his un-
sympathetic side recalls rather the father of the Brontës on
the wild Yorkshire moor than William Burness by the ingle
of Mount Oliphant. Margaret Carlyle was in theological
theory as strict as her husband, and for a time made more
moan over the aberrations of her favourite son. Like most
Scotch mothers of her rank, she had set her heart on seeing
him in a pulpit, from which any other eminence seemed a
fall; but she became, though comparatively illiterate, having
only late in life learnt to write a letter, a student of his books.
Over these they talked, smoking together in old country
fashion by the hearth; and she was to the last proud of the
genius which grew in large measure under the unfailing
sunshine of her anxious love.

Book II. of Sartor is an acknowledged fragment of
autobiography, mainly a record of the author's inner life,
but with numerous references to his environment. There
is not much to identify the foster parents of Teufelsdröckh,
and the dramatic drollery of the child's advent takes the
place of ancestry. Entepfuhl is obviously Ecclefechan, where the ducks are paddling in the ditch that has to pass muster for a stream, to-day as a century gone: the severe frugality which (as in the case of Wordsworth and Carlyle himself) survived the need for it, is clearly recalled; also the discipline of the Roman-like domestic law, "In an orderly house, where the litter of children’s sports is hateful, your training is rather to bear than to do. I was forbid much, wishes in any measure bold I had to renounce; everywhere a strait bond of obedience inflexibly held me down. It was not a joyful life, yet . . . a wholesome one." The following oft-quoted passage is characteristic of his early love of nature and the humorous touches by which he was wont to relieve his fits of sentiment:—

On fine evenings I was wont to carry forth my supper (bread crumb boiled in milk) and eat it out of doors. On the coping of the wall, which I could reach by climbing, my porringer was placed; there many a sunset have I, looking at the distant mountains, consumed, not without relish, my evening meal. Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of world’s expectation as day died, were still a Hebrew speech for me: nevertheless I was looking at the fair illumined letters, and had an eye for the gilding.

In all that relates to the writer’s own education, the Dichtung of Sartor and the Wahrheit of the Reminiscences are in accord. By Carlyle’s own account, an “insignificant portion” of it “depended on schools.” Like Burns, he was for some years trained in his own parish, where home influences counted for more than the teaching of not very competent masters. He soon read eagerly and variously. At the age of seven he was, by an Inspector of the old order, reported to be “complete in English.” In his tenth year (1805) he was sent to the Grammar School of Annan, the “Hinterschlag Gymnasium,” where
his "evil days" began. Every oversensitive child finds the life of a public school one long misery. Ordinary boys—those of the Scotch borderland being of the most savage type—are more brutal than ordinary men; they hate singularity as the world at first hates originality, and have none of the restraints which the later semi-civilisation of life imposes. "They obey the impulse of rude Nature which bids the deer herd fall upon any stricken hart, the duck flock put to death any broken-winged brother or sister, and on all hands the strong tyrannise over the weak." Young Carlyle was mocked for his moody ways, laughed at for his love of solitude, and called "Tom the Tearful" because of his habit of crying. To add much to his discomfort, he had made a rash promise to his pious mother, who seems, in contrast to her husband's race, to have adopted non-resistance principles—a promise to abstain from fighting, provocative of many cuffs till it was well broken by a hinterschlag, applied to some blustering bully. Nor had he refuge in the sympathy of his teachers, "hide-bound pedants, who knew Syntax enough, and of the human soul thus much: that it had a faculty called Memory, which could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch rods."

At Annan, however, he acquired a fair knowledge of Latin and French, the rudiments of algebra, the Greek alphabet, began to study history, and had his first glimpse of Edward Irving, the bright prize-taker from Edinburgh, later his Mentor and then life-long friend. On Thomas's return home it was decided to send him to the University, despite the cynical warning of one of the village cronies, "Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents."

"Thou hast not done so," said old James in after years, "God be thanked for it;" and the son pays due tribute to the tolerant patience and substantial generosities of the father: "With a noble faith he launched me forth into a
world which he himself had never been permitted to visit." Carlyle walked through Moffat all the way to Edinburgh with a senior student, Tom Smail (who owes to this fact the preservation of his name), with eyes open to every shade on the moors, as is attested in two passages of the Reminiscences. The boys, as is the fashion still, clubbed together in cheap lodgings, and Carlyle attended the curriculum from 1809 to 1814. Comparatively little is known of his college life, which seems to have been for the majority of Scotch students much as it is now, a compulsorily frugal life, with too little variety, relaxation, or society outside Class rooms; and, within them, a constant tug at Science, mental or physical, at the gateway to dissecting souls or bodies. We infer, from hints in later conversations and memorials, that Carlyle lived much with his own fancies, and owed little to any system. He is clearly thinking of his own youth in his account of Dr. Francia: "Josè must have been a loose-made tawny creature, much given to taciturn reflection, probably to crying humours, with fits of vehement ill nature—subject to the terriblest fits of hypochondria." His explosion in Sartor, "It is my painful duty to say that out of England and Spain, ours was the worst of all hitherto discovered Universities," is the first of a long series of libels on things and persons he did not like. The Scotch capital was still a literary centre of some original brilliancy, in the light of the circle of Scott, which followed that of Burns, in the early fame of Cockburn and of Clerk (Lord Eldin), of the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, and of the elder Alison. The Chairs of the University were conspicuously well filled by men of the sedate sort of ability required from Professors, some of them—conspicuously Brown (the more original if less "sound" successor of Dugald Stewart), Playfair, and Leslie—rising to a higher rank. But great Educational Institutions must adapt themselves to the
training of average minds by requirements and restrictions against which genius always rebels. Biography more than History repeats itself, and the murmurs of Carlyle are, like those of Milton, Gibbon, Locke, and Wordsworth, the protests or growls of irrepressible individuality kicking against the pricks. He was never in any sense a classic; read Greek with difficulty—Æschylus and Sophocles mainly in translations—and while appreciating Tacitus disparaged Horace. For Scotch Metaphysics, or any logical system, he never cared, and in his days there was written over the Academic entrances “No Mysticism.” He distinguished himself in Mathematics, and soon found, by his own vaunt,\(^1\) the *Principia* of Newton prostrate at his feet: he was a favourite pupil of Leslie, who escaped the frequent penalty of befriending him, but he took no prizes: the noise in the class room hindered his answers, and he said later to Mr. Froude that thoughts only came to him properly when alone. The social leader of a select set of young men in his own rank, by choice and necessity *integer vita*, he divided his time between the seclusion of study and writing letters, in which kind of literature he was perhaps the most prolific writer of his time. In 1814 Carlyle completed his course without taking a degree, did some tutorial work, and, in the same year, accepted the post of Mathematical Usher at Annan as successor to Irving, who had been translated to Haddington. Still in formal pursuit of the ministry, though beginning to fight shy of its fences, he went up twice a year to deliver addresses at the Divinity Hall, one of which, “on the uses of affliction,” was afterwards by himself condemned as flowery; another was a Latin thesis on the theme, “num detur religio naturalis.” The

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\(^1\) He went so far as to say in 1847 that “the man who had mastered the first forty-seven propositions of Euclid stood nearer to God than he had done before.”
posthumous publication of some of his writings, e.g. of the fragment of the novel *Wotton Reinsford*, reconciles us to the loss of those which have not been recovered.

In the vacations, spent at Mainhill, he began to study German, and corresponded with his College friends. Many of Carlyle’s early letters, reproduced in the volumes edited by Mr. Charles E. Norton, are written in that which, according to Voltaire, is the only unpermissible style, “the tiresome”; and the thought, far from being precocious, is distinctly commonplace, e.g. the letter to Robert Mitchell on the fall of Napoleon; or the following to his parents: “There are few things in this world more valuable than knowledge, and youth is the season for acquiring it”; or to James Johnstone the trite quotation, “Truly pale death overturns with impartial foot the hut of the poor man and the palace of the king.” Several are marred by the egotism which in most Scotch peasants of aspiring talent takes the form of perpetual comparison of themselves with others; refrains of the ambition against which the writer elsewhere inveighs as the “kettle tied to the dog’s tail.” In a note to Thomas Murray he writes:—

Ever since I have been able to form a wish, the wish of being known has been the foremost. Oh, Fortune! bestow coronets and crowns and principalities and purses, and pudding and power, upon the great and noble and fat ones of the earth. Grant me that, with a heart unyielding to thy favours and unbending to thy frowns, I may attain to literary fame.

That his critical and literary instincts were yet undeveloped there is ample proof. Take his comment, at the age of nineteen, on the verses of Leyden:—

Shout, Britons, for the battle of Assaye,
For that was a day
When we stood in our array
Like the lion’s might at bay.
"Can anything be grander?" To Johnstone (who with Mitchell consumes almost a volume) he writes: "Read Shakespeare. If you have not, then I desire you read it (sic) and tell me what you think of him," etc. Elsewhere the dogmatic summary of Hume's "Essays" illustrates the lingering eighteenth-century Latinism that had been previously travestied in the more stilted passages of the letters of Burns. "Many of his opinions are not to be adopted. How odd does it look to refer all the modifications of national character to the influence of moral causes. Might it not be asserted with some plausibility that even those which he denominates moral causes originate from physical circumstances?" The whole first volume of this somewhat overexpanded collection overflows with ebulitions of bile, in comparison with which the misanthropy of Byron's early romances seems philanthropy, e.g.—

How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world. For what are its inhabitants? Its great men and its little, its fat ones and its lean . . . pitiful automatons, despicable Yahoons, yea, they are altogether an insufferable thing. "O for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade, where the scowl of the purse-proud nabob, the sneer and strut of the coxcomb, the bray of the ninny and the clodpole might never reach me more!"

On the other hand, there are frequent evidences of the imperial intrepidity, the matchless industry, and the splendid independence of the writer. In his twenty-first year Carlyle again succeeded his Annan predecessor (who seems to have given dissatisfaction by some vagaries of severity) as mathematical teacher in the main school of Kirkcaldy. The Reminiscences of Irving's generous reception of his protégé present one of the pleasantest pictures in the records of their friendship. The same chapter is illustrated by a series of sketches of the scenery of the
east coast rarely rivalled in descriptive literature. It is elsewhere enlivened, if also defaced, by the earliest examples of the cynical criticisms of character that make most readers rejoice in having escaped the author's observation.

During the two years of his residence in Fifeshire, Carlyle encountered his first romance, in making acquaintance with a well-born young lady, "by far the brightest and cleverest" of Irving's pupils—Margaret Gordon—"an acquaintance which might easily have been more" had not relatives and circumstances intervened. Doubtless Mr. Froude is right in asserting this lady to have been the original of Sartor's "Blumine"; and in leaving him to marry "Herr Towgood," ultimately governor of Nova Scotia, she bequeathed, though in antithetical style, advice that attests her discrimination of character. "Cultivate the milder dispositions of the heart, subdue the mere extravagant visions of the brain. Genius will render you great. May virtue render you beloved. Remove the awful distance between you and other men by kind and gentle manners. Deal gently with their inferiority, and be convinced that they will respect you as much and like you more." To this advice, which he never even tried to take, she adds, happily perhaps for herself, "I give you not my address, because I dare not promise to see you." In 1818 Carlyle, always intolerant of work imposed, came to the conclusion that "it were better to perish than to continue schoolmastering," and left Kirkcaldy, with £90 saved, for Edinburgh, where he lived over three years, taking private pupils, and trying to enter on his real mission through the gates of literature—gates constantly barred; for, even in those older days of laxer competition, obstinate eccentricity unredeemed by any social advantages led to failure and rebuff. Men with the literary form of genius highly developed have rarely much endurance of defeat.
Carlyle, even in his best moods, resented real or fancied injuries, and at this stage of his career complained that he got nothing but vinegar from his fellows, comparing himself to a worm that trodden on would "turn into a torpedo." He had begun to be tormented by the dyspepsia, which "gnawed like a rat" at its life-long tenement, his stomach, and by sleeplessness, due in part to internal causes, but also to the "Bedlam" noises of men, machines, and animals, which pestered him in town and country from first to last. He kept hesitating about his career, tried law, mathematical teaching, contributions to magazines and dictionaries, everything but journalism, to which he had a rooted repugnance, and the Church, which he had definitely abandoned. How far the change in his views may have been due to his reading of Gibbon, Rousseau, Voltaire, etc., how far to self-reflection, is uncertain; but he already found himself unable, in any plain sense, to subscribe to the Westminster Confession or to any "orthodox" Articles, and equally unable by any philosophical reconciliation of contraries to write black with white on a ground of neutral gray. Mentally and physically adrift he was midway in the valley of the shadow, which he represents as "The Everlasting No," and beset by "temptations in the wilderness." At this crisis he writes, "The biographies of men of letters are the wretchedest chapters in our history, except perhaps the Newgate Calendar," a remark that recalls the similar cry of Burns, "There is not among the martyrologies so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets." Carlyle, reverting to this crisis, refers with constant bitterness to the absence of a popularity which he yet professes to scorn.

1 He refers to Gibbon's Decline and Fall as "of all books the most impressive on me in my then stage of investigation and state of mind. His winged sarcasms, so quiet and yet so conclusively transpiercing, were often admirably potent and illustrative to me."
I was entirely unknown in Edinburgh circles; solitary eating my own heart, misgivings as to whether there shall be presently anything else to eat, fast losing health, a prey to numerous struggles and miseries... three weeks without any kind of sleep, from impossibility to be free of noise... wanderings through mazes of doubt, perpetual questions unanswered, etc.

What is this but Byron's cry, "I am not happy," which his afterwards stern critic compares to the screaming of a meat-jack?

Carlyle carried with him from town to country the same dismal mood. "Mainhill," says his biographer, "was never a less happy home to him than it was this summer (1819). He could not conceal the condition of his mind; and to his family, to whom the truth of their creed was no more a matter of doubt than the presence of the sun in the sky, he must have seemed as if possessed."

Returning to Edinburgh in the early winter, he for a time wrote hopefully about his studies. "The law I find to be a most complicated subject, yet I like it pretty well. Its great charm in my eyes is that no mean compliances are requisite for prospering in it." But this strain soon gave way to a fresh fit of perversity, and we have a record of his throwing up the cards in one of his most ill-natured notes.

I did read some law books, attend Hume's lectures on Scotch law, and converse with and question various dull people of the practical sort. But it and they and the admired lecturing Hume himself appeared to me mere denizens of the kingdom of dulness, pointing towards nothing but money as wages for all that bogpool of disgust.

The same year (that of Peterloo) was that of the Radical rising in Glasgow against the poverty which was the natural aftermath of the great war, oppressions, half real, half imaginary, of the military force, and the yeomanry in particular. Carlyle's contribution to the reminiscences of
the time is doubly interesting because written (in the article on Irving, 1836) from memory, when he had long ceased to be a Radical. A few sentences suffice to illustrate this phase or stage of his political progress:—

A time of great rages and absurd terrors and expectations, a very fierce Radical and anti-Radical time. Edinburgh, endlessly agitated by it all around me . . . gentry people full of zeal and foolish terror and fury, and looking disagreeably busy and important . . . One bleared Sunday morning I had gone out for my walk. At the Riding-house in Nicolson Street was a kind of straggly group, with red-coats interspersed. They took their way, not very dangerous-looking men of war; but there rose from the little crowd the strangest shout I have heard human throats utter, not very loud, but it said as plain as words, and with infinitely more emphasis of sincerity, “May the devil go with you, ye peculiarly contemptible, and dead to the distresses of your fellow-creatures!” Another morning . . . I met an advocate slightly of my acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, towards the Links, there to be drilled as item of the “gentlemen” volunteers now afoot. “You should have the like of this,” said he, cheerily patting his musket. “Hm, yes; but I haven’t yet quite settled on which side”—which probably he hoped was quiz, though it really expressed my feeling . . . mutiny and revolt being a light matter to the young.

This period is illustrated by numerous letters from Irving, who had migrated to Glasgow as an assistant to Dr. Chalmers, abounding in sound counsels to persevere in some profession and make the best of practical opportunities. Carlyle’s answers have in no instance been preserved, but the sole trace of his having been influenced by his friend’s advice is his contribution (1820-1823) of sixteen1

1 The subjects of these were—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Montfaucon, Dr. Moore, Sir John Moore, Necker, Nelson, Netherlands, Newfoundland, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Mungo Park, Lord Chatham, William Pitt. These articles, on the whole judiciously omitted from the author’s collected works, are characterised by marks of great industry, commonplace, and general fairness, with a style singularly formal, like that of the less im-
articles to the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia under the editorship of Sir David Brewster. The scant remuneration obtained from these was well timed, but they contain no original matter, and did nothing for his fame. Meanwhile it appears from one of Irving's letters that Carlyle's thoughts had been, as later in his early London life, turning towards emigration. He says, writes his friend, "I have the ends of my thoughts to bring together . . . my views of life to reform, my health to recover, and then once more I shall venture my bark on the waters of this wide realm, and if she cannot weather it I shall steer west and try the waters of another world."

The resolves, sometimes the efforts, of celebrated Englishmen,—"nos manet oceanus,"—as Cromwell, Burns, Coleridge, and Southey (allured, some critic suggests, by the poetical sound of Susquehanna), Arthur Clough, Richard Hengist Horne, and Browning's "Waring," to elude pressive pages of Johnson. The following, among numerous passages, are curious as illustrating the comparative orthodoxy of the writer's early judgments: "The brilliant hints which Montesquieu scatters round him with a liberal hand have excited or assisted the speculations of others in almost every department of political economy, and he is deservedly mentioned as a principal founder of that important science." "Mirabeau confronted him (Necker) like his evil genius; and being totally without scruple in the employment of any expedient, was but too successful in overthrowing all reasonable proposals, and conducting the people to that state of anarchy out of which his own ambition was to be rewarded," etc. Similarly the verdicts on Pitt, Chatham, Nelson, Park, Lady Montagu, etc., are those of an ordinary intelligent Englishman of conscientious research, fed on the "Lives of the Poets" and Trafalgar memories. The morality, as in the Essay on Montaigne, is unexceptionable; the following would commend itself to any boarding school: "Melancholy experience has never ceased to show that great warlike talents, like great talents of any kind, may be united with a coarse and ignoble heart."

1 Cf. the American Bryant himself, in his longing to leave his New York Press and "plant him where the red deer feed, in the green forest," to lead the life of Robin Hood and Shakespeare's banished Duke.
“the fever and the fret” of an old civilisation, and take refuge in the fancied freedom of wild lands—when more than dreams—have been failures. Puritan patriots, it is true, made New England, and the scions of the Cavaliers Virginia; but no poet or imaginative writer has ever been successfully transplanted, with the dubious exception of Heinrich Heine. It is certain that, despite his first warm recognition coming from across the Atlantic, the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* would have found the “States” more fruitful in food for cursing than either Edinburgh or London.

The spring of 1820 was marked by a memorable visit to Irving, on Carlyle’s way to spend as was his wont the summer months at home. His few days in Glasgow are recorded in a graphic sketch of the bald-headed merchants at the Tontine, and an account of his introduction to Dr. Chalmers, to whom he refers always with admiration and a respect but slightly modified. The critic’s praise of British contemporaries, other than relatives, is so rare that the following sentences are worth transcribing:—

He (Chalmers) was a man of much natural dignity, ingenuity, honesty, and kind affection, as well as sound intellect and imagination. . . . He had a burst of genuine fun too. . . . His laugh was ever a hearty, low guffaw, and his tones in preaching would reach to the piercingly pathetic. No preacher ever went so into one’s heart. He was a man essentially of little culture, of narrow sphere all his life. Such an intellect, professing to be educated, and yet . . . ignorant in all that lies beyond the horizon in place or time I have almost nowhere met with—a man capable of so much soaking indolence, lazy brooding . . . as the first stage of his life well indicated, . . . yet capable of impetuous activity and braving audacity, as his later years showed. I suppose there will never again be such a preacher in any Christian church. “The truth of Christianity,” he said, “was all written in us already in sympathetic ink. Bible awakens it, and you can read.”

—a sympathetic image but of no great weight as an argu-
ment addressed to doubting Thomas. Chalmers, whose originality lay rather in his quick insight and fire than in his mainly commonplace thought, had the credit of recognising the religious side of Carlyle's genius, when to the mass of his countrymen he was a rock of offence. One of the great preacher's criticisms of the great writer is notably just: "He is a lover of earnestness more than a lover of truth."

There follows in some of the early pages of the Reminiscences an account of a long walk with Irving, who had arranged to accompany Carlyle for the first stage, i.e. fifteen miles of the road, of his for the most part pedestrian march from Glasgow to Ecclefechan, a record among many of similar excursions over dales and hills, and "by the beached margent," revived for us in sun and shade by a pen almost as magical as Turner's brush. We must refer to the pages of Mr. Froude for the picture of Drumclog moss,—"a good place for Cameronian preaching, and dangerously difficult for Clavering (sic) and horse soldierly if the suffering remnant had a few old muskets among them,"—for the graphic glimpse of Ailsa Craig, and the talk by the dry stone fence, in the twilight. "It was just here, as the sun was sinking, Irving drew from me by degrees, in the softest manner, that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, and that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or should. This, if this was so, he had pre-engaged to take well of me, like an elder brother, if I would be frank with him. And right loyally he did so." They parted here: Carlyle trudged on to the then "utterly quiet little inn" at Muirkirk, left next morning at 4 A.M., and reached Dumfries, a distance of fifty-four miles, at 8 P.M., "the longest walk I ever made." He spent the summer at Mainhill, studying modern languages, "living riotously with Schiller and Goethe," at work on the Encyclopædia
articles, and visiting his friend at Annan, when he was offered the post of tutor to the son of a Yorkshire farmer, an offer which Irving urged him to accept, saying, "You live too much in an ideal world," and wisely adding, "try your hand with the respectable illiterate men of middle life. You may be taught to forget . . . the splendours and envies . . . of men of literature."

This exhortation led to a result recorded with much humour, egotism, and arrogance in a letter to his intimate friend Dr. John Ferguson, of Kelso Grammar School, which, despite the mark "private and confidential," was yet published, several years after the death of the recipient and shortly after that of the writer, in a gossiping memoir. We are therefore at liberty to select from the letter the following paragraphs:

I delayed sending an answer till I might have it in my power to communicate what seemed then likely to produce a considerable change in my stile (sic) of life, a proposal to become a "travelling tutor," as they call it, to a young person in the North Riding, for whom that exercise was recommended on account of bodily and mental weakness. They offered me £150 per annum, and withal invited me to come and examine things on the spot before engaging. I went accordingly, and happy was it I went; from description I was ready to accept the place; from inspection all Earndale would not have hired me to accept it. This boy was a dotard, a semi-vegetable, the elder brother, head of the family, a two-legged animal without feathers, intellect, or virtue, and all the connections seemed to have the power of eating pudding but no higher power. So I left the barbarous people. . . . York is but a heap of bricks. Jonathan Dryasdust (see Ivanhoe) is justly named. York is the Boeotia of Britain . . . Upon the whole, however, I derived great amusement from my journey, . . . I conversed with all kinds of men, from graziers up to knights of the shire, argued with them all, and broke specimens from their souls (if any), which I retain within the museum of my cranium. I have no prospects that are worth the name. I am like a being thrown from another planet on this dark terrestrial ball, an alien,
pilgrim . . . and life is to me like a pathless, a waste, and a howling wilderness. Do not leave your situation if you can possibly avoid it. Experience shows it to be a fearful thing to be swept in by the roaring surge of life, and then to float alone undirected on its restless, monstrous bosom. Keep ashore while yet you may, or if you must to sea, sail under convoy; trust not the waves without a guide. You and I are but pinnaces or cock-boats, yet hold fast by the Manilla ship, and do not let go the painter.

Towards the close of this year Irving, alarmed by his friend's despondency, sent him a most generous and delicately-worded invitation to spend some months under his roof; but Carlyle declined, and in a letter of March 1821 he writes to his brother John: "Edinburgh, with all its drawbacks, is the only scene for me," on which follows one of his finest descriptions, that of the view from Arthur Seat.

According to the most probable chronology, for many of Carlyle's dates are hard to fix, the next important event of his life, his being introduced, on occasion of a visit to Haddington, to Miss Jane Welsh by her old tutor, Edward Irving—an event which marks the beginning of a new era in his career—took place towards the close of May or in the first week of June. To June is assigned the incident, described in Sartor as the transition from the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yea, a sort of revelation that came upon him as he was in Leith Walk—Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer in the Romance—on the way to cool his distempers by a plunge in the sea. The passage proclaiming this has been everywhere quoted; and it is only essential to note that it resembled the "illuminations" of St. Paul and of Constantine merely by its being a sudden spiritual impulse. It was in no sense a conversion to any belief in person or creed, it was but the assertion of a strong manhood against an almost suicidal mood of despair;
a condition set forth with superabundant paraphernalia of eloquence easily condensed. Doubt in the mind of Teufelsdröckh had darkened into disbelief in divine or human justice, freedom, or himself. If there be a God, He sits on the hills "since the first Sabbath," careless of mankind. Duty seems to be but a "phantasm made up of desire and fear"; virtue "some bubble of the blood," absence of vitality perhaps.

What in these days are terrors of conscience to diseases of the liver? Not on morality but on cookery let us build our stronghold. ... Thus has the bewildered wanderer to stand, shouting question after question into the Sibyl cave, and receiving for answer an echo.

From this scepticism, deeper than that of Queen Mab, fiercer than that of Candide, Carlyle was dramatically rescued by the sense that he was a servant of God, even when doubting His existence.

After all the nameless woe that inquiry had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance. ... Truth I cried, though the heavens crush me for following her; no falsehood! though a whole celestial lubberland were the price of apostacy.

With a grasp on this rock, Carlyle springs from the slough of despond and asserts himself:

Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen
Und das heisst ein Kämpfer seyn.

He finds in persistent action, energy, and courage a present strength, and a lamp of at least such partial victory as he lived to achieve.

He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind,—
but he never "laid them," or came near the serenity of his master, Goethe; and his teaching, public and private, remained half a wail. He threw the gage rather in the
attitude of a man turning at bay than that of one making a leap.

Death? Well, Death... let it come then, and I will meet it and defy it. And as so I thought there rushed a stream of fire over my soul, and I shook base fear away. Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed; not... whining sorrow... but grim defiance.

Yet the misery remained, for two years later we find him writing:—

I could read the curse of Ernulphus, or something twenty times as fierce, upon myself and all things earthly... The year is closing. This time eight and twenty years I was a child of three weeks ago...

Oh! little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
The lands that I should travel in,
The death I was to see.

My curse seems deeper and blacker than that of any man: to be immured in a rotten carcass, every avenue of which is changed into an inlet of pain. How have I deserved this?... I know not. Then why don’t you kill yourself, sir? Is there not arsenic? is there not ratsbane of various kinds? and hemp, and steel? Most true, Sathanas... but it will be time enough to use them when I have lost the game I am but losing... and while my friends, my mother, father, brothers, sisters live, the duty of not breaking their hearts would still remain... I want health, health, health! On this subject I am becoming quite furious: my torments are greater than I am able to bear.

Nowhere in Carlyle’s writing, save on the surface, is there any excess of Optimism; but after the Leith Walk inspiration he had resolved on “no surrender”; and that, henceforth, he had better heart in his work we have proof in its more regular, if not more rapid progress. His last hack service was the series of articles for Brewster, unless we add a translation, under the same auspices, of Legendre’s
Geometry, begun, according to some reports, in the Kirkcaldy period, finished in 1822, and published in 1824. For this task, prefixed by an original Essay on Proportion, much commended by De Morgan, he obtained the respectable sum of £50. Two subsequent candidatures for Chairs of Astronomy showed that Carlyle had not lost his taste for Mathematics; but this work was his practical farewell to that science. His first sustained efforts as an author were those of an interpreter. His complete mastery of German has been said to have endowed him with “his sword of sharpness and shoes of swiftness”; it may be added, in some instances also, with the “fog-cap.” But in his earliest substantial volume, the Life of Schiller, there is nothing either obscure in style or mystic in thought. This work began to appear in the London Magazine in 1823, was finished in 1824, and in 1825 published in a separate form. Approved during its progress by an encouraging article in the Times, it was, in 1830, translated into German on the instigation of Goethe, who introduced the work by an important commendatory preface, and so first brought the author’s name conspicuously before a continental public. Carlyle himself, partly perhaps from the spirit of contradiction, was inclined to speak slightly of this high-toned and sympathetic biography: “It is,” said he, “in the wrong vein, laborious, partly affected, meagre, bombastic.” But these are sentences of a morbid time, when, for want of other victims, he turned and rent himself. Pari passu, he was toiling at his translation of Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship. This was published in Edinburgh in 1824. Heartily commended in Blackwood, it was generally recognised as one of the best English renderings of any foreign author; and Jeffrey, in his absurd review of Goethe’s great prose drama, speaks in high terms of the skill displayed by the translator. The virulent attack of De Quincey—a writer as
unreliable as brilliant—in the London Magazine does not seem to have carried much weight even then, and has none now. The Wanderjahre, constituting the third volume of the English edition, first appeared as the last of four on German Romance—a series of admirably selected and executed translations from Musæus, Fouqué, Tieck, Hoffmann, Richter, and Goethe, prefaced by short biographical and critical notices of each—published in Edinburgh in 1827. This date is also that of the first of the more elaborate and extensive criticisms which, appearing in the Edinburgh and Foreign reviews, established Carlyle as the English pioneer of German literature. The result of these works would have been enough to drive the wolf from the door and to render their author independent of the oatmeal from home; while another source of revenue enabled him not only to keep himself, but to settle his brother Alick in a farm, and to support John through his University course as a medical student. This and similar services to the family circle were rendered with gracious disclaimers of obligation. “What any brethren of our father’s house possess, I look on as a common stock from which all are entitled to draw.”

For this good fortune he was again indebted to his friend of friends. Irving had begun to feel his position at Glasgow unsatisfactory, and at the close of 1821 he was induced to accept an appointment to the Caledonian Chapel at Hatton Garden. On migrating to London, to make a greater, if not a safer, name in the central city, and finally, be lost in its vortex, he had invited Carlyle to follow him, saying, “Scotland breeds men, but England rears them.” Shortly after, introduced by Mrs. Strachey, one of his worshipping audience, to her sister Mrs. Buller, he found the latter in trouble about the education of her sons. Charles, the elder, was a youth of
bright but restive intelligence, and it was desired to find some transitional training for him on his way from Harrow to Cambridge. Irving urged his being placed, in the interim, under Carlyle's charge. The proposal, with an offer of £200 a year, was accepted, and the brothers were soon duly installed in George Square, while their tutor remained in Moray Place, Edinburgh. The early stages of this relationship were eminently satisfactory; Carlyle wrote that the teaching of the Bullers was a pleasure rather than a task; they seemed to him "quite another set of boys than I have been used to, and treat me in another sort of manner than tutors are used. The eldest is one of the cleverest boys I have ever seen." There was never any jar between the teacher and the taught. Carlyle speaks with unfailing regard of the favourite pupil, whose brilliant University and Parliamentary career bore testimony to the good practical guidance he had received. His premature death at the entrance on a sphere of wider influence made a serious blank in his old master's life.

But as regards the relation of the employer and employed, we are wearied by the constantly recurring record of kindness lavishly bestowed, ungraciously received, and soon ungratefully forgotten. The elder Bullers—the mother a former beauty and woman of some brilliancy, the father a solid and courteous gentleman retired from the Anglo-Indian service—came to Edinburgh in the spring of the tutorship, and recognising Carlyle's abilities, welcomed him to the family circle, and treated him, by his own confession, with a "degree of respect" he "did not deserve"; adapting their arrangements, as far as possible, to his hours and habits; consulting his convenience and humouring his whims. Early in 1823 they went to live together at Kinnaird.

1 Charles Buller became Carlyle's pupil at the age of fifteen. He died as Commissioner of the Poor in 1848 (at forty-two).
House, near Dunkeld, when he continued to write letters to his kin still praising his patrons; but the first note of discord is soon struck in satirical references to their aristocratic friends and querulous complaints of the servants. During the winter, for greater quiet, a room was assigned to him in another house near Kinnaird; a consideration which met with the award: “My bower is the most polite of bowers, refusing admittance to no wind that blows.” And about this same time he wrote, growling at his fare: “It is clear to me that I shall never recover my health under the economy of Mrs. Buller.”

In 1824 the family returned to London, and Carlyle followed in June by a sailing yacht from Leith. On arrival he sent to Miss Welsh a letter, sneering at his fellow passengers, but ending with a striking picture of his first impressions of the capital:—

We were winding slowly through the forest of masts in the Thames up to our station at Tower Wharf. The giant bustle, the coal heavers, the bargemen, the black buildings, the ten thousand times ten thousand sounds and movements of that monstrous harbour formed the grandest object I had ever witnessed. One man seems a drop in the ocean; you feel annihilated in the immensity of that heart of all the world.

On reaching London he first stayed for two or three weeks under Irving's roof and was introduced to his friends. Of Mrs. Strachey and her young cousin Kitty, who seems to have run the risk of admiring him to excess, he always spoke well; but the Basil Montagues, to whose hospitality and friendship he was made welcome, he has maligned in such a manner as to justify the retaliatory pamphlet of the sharp-tongued eldest daughter of the house, then about to become Mrs. Anne Procter. By letter and “reminiscence” he is equally reckless in invective against almost all the eminent men of letters with whom he
then came in contact, and also, in most cases, in ridicule of their wives. His accounts of Hazlitt, Campbell, and Coleridge have just enough truth to give edge to libels, in some cases perhaps whetted by the consciousness of their being addressed to a sympathetic listener; but it is his frequent travesty of well-wishers and creditors for kindness that has left the deepest stain on his memory. Settled with his pupil Charles in Kew Green lodgings he writes: "The Bullers are essentially a cold race of people. They live in the midst of fashion and external show. They love no living creature." And a fortnight later, from Irving’s house at Pentonville, he sends to his mother an account of his self-dismissal. Mrs. Buller had offered him two alternatives—to go with the family to France or to remain in the country preparing the eldest boy for Cambridge. He declined both, and they parted, shaking hands with dry eyes. "I feel glad," he adds in a sentence that recalls the worst egotism of Coleridge,1 "that I have done with them . . . I was selling the very quintessence of my spirit for £200 a year."

There followed eight weeks of residence in or about Birmingham, with a friend called Badams, who undertook to cure dyspepsia by a new method and failed without being reviled. Together, and in company with others, as the astronomer Airy, they saw the black country and the toiling squads, in whom Carlyle, through all his shifts from radical democracy to Platonic autocracy, continued to take a deep interest; on other days they had pleasant excursions to the green fields and old towers of Warwickshire. On occasion of this visit he came in contact with De Quincey’s review of Meister, and in recounting the event credits himself with the philosophic thought, "This man is perhaps right on some points; if so let him be admonitory."

1 Vide Carlyle’s Life of Sterling (1st ed. 1851), chap. viii. p. 79.
But the description that follows of "the child that has been in hell," however just, is less magnanimous. Then came a trip, in company with Mr. Strachey and Kitty and maid, by Dover and Calais along Sterne's route to Paris, "The Vanity Fair of the Universe," where Louis XVIII. was then lying dead in state. Carlyle's comments are mainly acid remarks on the Palais Royal, with the refrain, "God bless the narrow seas." But he met Legendre and Laplace, heard Cuvier lecture and saw Talma act, and, what was of more moment, had his first glimpse of the Continent and the city of one phase of whose history he was to be the most brilliant recorder. Back in London for the winter, where his time was divided between Irving's house and his own neighbouring room in Southampton Street, he was cheered by Goethe's own acknowledgment of the translation of Meister, characteristically and generously cordial.

In March 1825 Carlyle again set his face northward, and travelling by coach through Birmingham, Manchester, Bolton, and Carlisle, established himself, in May, at Hoddam Hill; a farm near the Solway, three miles from Mainhill, which his father had leased for him. His brother Alexander farmed, while Thomas toiled on at German translations and rode about on horseback. For a space, one of the few contented periods of his life, there is a truce to complaining. Here free from the noises which are the pests of literary life, he was building up his character and forming the opinions which, with few material changes, he long continued to hold. Thus he writes from over a distance of forty years:

With all its manifold petty troubles, this year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me, and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life. . . . I found that I had conquered all my scepti-
cisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether. I had in effect gained an immense victory. . . . Once more, thank Heaven for its highest gift, I then felt and still feel endlessly indebted to Goethe in the business. He, in his fashion, I perceived, had travelled the steep road before me, the first of the moderns. Bodily health itself seemed improving. . . . Nowhere can I recollect of myself such pious musings, communings silent and spontaneous with Fact and Nature as in these poor Annandale localities. The sound of the Kirk bell once or twice on Sunday mornings from Hoddam Kirk, about a mile off on the plain below me, was strangely touching, like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years.

Elsewhere, during one of the rare gleams of sunshine in a life of lurid storms, we have the expression of his passionate independence, his tyrannous love of liberty:—

It is inexpressible what an increase of happiness and of consciousness—of inward dignity—I have gained since I came within the walls of this poor cottage—my own four walls. They simply admit that I am Herr im Hause, and act on this conviction. There is no grumbling about my habitues and whims. If I choose to dine on fire and brimstone, they will cook it for me to their best skill, thinking only that I am an unintelligible mortal, fâcheux to deal with, but not to be dealt with in any other way. My own four walls.

The last words form the refrain of a set of verses, the most characteristic, as Mr. Froude justly observes, of the writer, the actual composition of which seems, however, to belong to the next chapter of his career, beginning—

The storm and night is on the waste,
Wild through the wind the huntsman calls,
As fast on willing nag I haste
Home to my own four walls.

The feeling that inspires them is clenched in the defiance—
King George has palaces of pride,
    And armed grooms must ward those halls;
With one stout bolt I safe abide
    Within my own four walls.

Not all his men may sever this;
    It yields to friends', not monarchs' calls;
My whinstone house my castle is—
    I have my own four walls.

When fools or knaves do make a rout,
    With gigmen, dinners, balls, cabals,
I turn my back and shut them out;
    These are my own four walls.
CHAPTER III
CRAIGENPUTTOCK

[1826-1834]

"Ah, when she was young, she was a fleecin', dancin', light-heartit thing, Jeannie Welsh, that naething would hae daunlit. But she grew grave a' at ance. There was Maister Irving, ye ken, that had been her teacher; and he cam' aboot her. Then there was Maister ——. Then there was Maister Carlyle himsel', and he cam' to finish her off like."

—HADDINGTON NURSE.

"My broom, as I sweep up the withered leaves, might be heard at a furlong's distance."

—T. CARLYLE, from Craigenputtock, Oct. 1830.

During the last days at Hoddam Hill, Carlyle was on the verge of a crisis of his career, i.e. his making a marriage, for the chequered fortune of which he was greatly himself to blame.

No biography can ignore the strange conditions of a domestic life, already made familiar in so many records that they are past evasion. Various opinions have been held regarding the lady whom he selected to share his lot. Any adequate estimate of this remarkable woman belongs to an account of her own career, such as that given by Mrs. Ireland in her judicious and interesting abridgment of the material amply supplied. Jane Baillie Welsh (b. 1801, d. 1866)—descended on the paternal side from Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of John Knox; on the maternal owning to an
inheritance of gipsy blood—belonged to a family long esteemed in the borders. Her father, a distinguished Edinburgh student, and afterwards eminent surgeon at Haddington, noted alike for his humanity and skill, made a small fortune, and purchased in advance from his father his inheritance of Craigenputtock, a remnant of the once larger family estate. He died in 1819, when his daughter was in her eighteenth year. To her he left the now world-famous farm and the bulk of his property. Jane, of precocious talents, seems to have been, almost from infancy, the tyrant of the house at Haddington, where her people took a place of precedence in the small county town. Her grandfathers, John of Penfillian and Walter of Templand, also a Welsh, though of another—the gipsy—stock, vied for her baby favours, while her mother’s quick and shifty tempers seem at that date to have combined in the process of “spoiling” her. The records of the schooldays of the juvenile Jane all point to a somewhat masculine strength of character. Through life, it must be acknowledged, this brilliant creature was essentially “a mocking-bird,” and made game of every one till she met her mate. The little lady was learned, reading Virgil at nine, ambitious enough to venture a tragedy at fourteen, and cynical; writing to her life-long friend, Miss Eliza Stodart, of Haddington as a “bottomless pit of dulness,” where “all my little world lay glittering in tinsel at my feet.” She was ruthless to the suitors—as numerous, says Mr. Froude, “as those of Penelope”—who flocked about the young beauty, wit, and heiress. Of the discarded rivals there was only one of note—George Rennie, long afterwards referred to by Carlyle as a “clever, decisive, very ambitious, but quite unmelodious young fellow whom we knew here (in Chelsea) as sculptor and M.P.” She dismissed him in 1821 for some cause of displeasure, “due to pride,
reserve, and his soured temper about the world”; but when he came to take leave, she confesses, “I scarcely heard a word he said, my own heart beat so loud.” Years after, in London, she went by request of his wife to Rennie’s death-bed.

Meanwhile she had fallen under the spell of her tutor, Edward Irving, and, as she, after much finesse and evasion, admitted, came to love him in earnest. Irving saw her weak points, saying she was apt to turn her powers to “arts of cruelty which satire and scorn are,” and “to contemplate the inferiority of others rather from the point of view of ridicule and contempt than of com- miseration and relief.” Later she retaliated, “There would have been no tongues’ had Irving married me.” But he was fettered by a previous engagement, to which, after some struggle for release, he held, leaving in charge of his pupil, as guide, philosopher, and friend, his old ally and successor, Thomas Carlyle. Between this exceptional pair there began in 1821 a relationship of constant growth in intimacy, marked by frequent visits, conversations, confidences, and a correspondence, long, full, and varied, starting with interchange of literary sympathies, and sliding by degrees into the dangerous friendship called Platonic. At the outset it was plain that Carlyle was not the St. Preux or Wolmar whose ideas of elegance Jane Welsh—a hasty student of Rousseau—had set in unhappy contrast to the honest young swains of Haddington. Uncoy, ungainly in manner and attire, he first excited her ridicule even more than he attracted her esteem, and her written descriptions of him recall that of Johnson by Lord Chesterfield. “He scraps the fender, . . . only his tongue should be left at liberty, his other members are most fantastically awkward”; but the poor mocking-bird had met her fate. The correspondence falls under two sections, the critical and the personal. The
critical consists of remarks, good, bad, and indifferent, on books and their writers. Carlyle began his siege by talking German to her, now extolling Schiller and Goethe to the skies, now, with a rare stretch of deference, half conniving at her sneers. Much also passed between them about English authors, among them comments on Byron, notably inconsistent. Of him Carlyle writes (April 15th 1824) as "a pampered lord," who would care nothing for the £500 a year that would make an honest man happy; but later, on hearing of the death at Mesolonghi, more in the vein of his master Goethe, he exclaims:—

Alas, poor Byron! the news of his death came upon me like a mass of lead; and yet the thought of it sends a painful twinge through all my being, as if I had lost a brother. O God! that so many souls of mud and clay should fill up their base existence to the utmost bound; and this, the noblest spirit in Europe, should sink before half his course was run. . . . Late so full of fire and generous passion and proud purposes, and now for ever dumb and cold. . . . Had he been spared to the age of three-score and ten what might he not have been! what might he not have been! . . . I dreamed of seeing him and knowing him; but . . . we shall go to him, he shall not return to us.

This in answer to her account of the same intelligence: "I was told it all alone in a room full of people. If they had said the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens, it could not have struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words 'Byron is dead.'" Other letters of the same period, from London, are studded or disfigured by the incisive ill-natured sarcasms above referred to, or they relate to the work and prospects of the writer. Those that bear on the progress of his suit mark it as the strangest and, when we look before and after, one of the saddest courtships in literary history. As early as 1822 Carlyle entertained the idea of making Jane Welsh his wife; she
had begun to yield to the fascinations of his speech—a fascination akin to that of Burns—when she wrote, "I will be happier contemplating my beau-ideal than a real, substantial, eating, drinking, sleeping, honest husband." In 1823 they were half-declared lovers, but there were recalcitrant fits on both sides. On occasion of a meeting at Edinburgh there was a quarrel, followed by a note of repentance, in which she confessed, "Nothing short of a devil could have tempted me to torment you and myself as I did on that unblessed day." Somewhat earlier she had written in answer to his first distinct avowal, "My friend, I love you. But were you my brother I should love you the same. No. Your friend I will be . . . while I breathe the breath of life; but your wife never, though you were as rich as Croesus, as honoured and renowned as you yet shall be." To which Carlyle answered with characteristic pride, "I have no idea of dying in the Arcadian shepherd's style for the disappointment of hopes which I never seriously entertained, and had no right to entertain seriously." There was indeed nothing of Corydon and Phillis in this struggle of two strong wills, the weaker giving way to the stronger, the gradual but inexorable closing of an iron ring. Backed by the natural repugnance of her mother to the match, Miss Welsh still rebelled, bracing herself with the reflection, "Men and women may be very charming without having any genius;" and to his renewed appeal (1825), "It lies with you whether I shall be a right man or only a hard and bitter Stoic," retorting, "I am not in love with you . . . my affections are in a state of perfect tranquillity." But she admitted he was her "only fellowship and support," and confiding at length the truth about Irving, surrendered in the words, "Decide, and woe to me if your reason be your judge and not your love." In this duel of Puck and Theseus, the latter felt he had won and pressed his advan-
tage, offering to let her free and adding warnings to the blind, “Without great sacrifices on both sides, the possibility of our union is an empty dream.” At the eleventh hour, when, in her own words, she was “married past redemption,” he wrote, “If you judge fit, I will take you to my heart this very week. If you judge fit, I will this very week forswear you for ever;” and replied to her request that her widowed mother might live under their wedded roof in terms that might have become Petruchio: “It may be stated in a word. The man should bear rule in the house, not the woman. This is an eternal axiom, the law of nature which no mortal departs from unpunished. . . . Will your mother consent to make me her guardian and director, and be a second wife to her daughter’s husband?”

Was ever woman in this humour woo’d,  
Was ever woman in this humour won?

Miss Welsh at length reluctantly agreed to come to start life at Scotsbrig, where his family had migrated; but Carlyle pushed another counter: “Your mother must not visit mine: the mere idea of such a visit argued too plainly that you knew nothing of the family circle in which for my sake you were willing to take a place.” It being agreed that Mrs. Welsh was to leave Haddington, where the alliance was palpably unpopular, Carlyle proposed to begin married life in his mother-in-law’s vacant house, saying in effect to his fiancée that as for intrusive visitors he had “nerve enough” to kick her old friends out of doors. At this point, however, her complaisance had reached its limit. The bridegroom-elect had to soothe his sense of partial retreat by a scolding letter. As regards difficulties of finance he pointed out that he had £200 to start with, and that a labourer and his wife had been known to live on £14 a year.

On the edge of the great change in her life, Jane Welsh
writes, "I am resolved in spirit, in the face of every horrible fate," and says she has decided to put off mourning for her father, having found a second father. Carlyle proposed that after the "dreaded ceremony" he and his bride and his brother John should travel together by the stage-coach from Dumfries to Edinburgh. In "the last dying speech and marrying words" she objects to this arrangement, and after the event (October 17th 1826) they drove in a post-chaise to 21 Comely Bank, where Mrs. Welsh, now herself settled at Templand, had furnished a house for them. Meanwhile the Carlyle family migrated to Scotsbrig. There followed eighteen comparatively tranquil months, an oasis in the wilderness, where the anomalous pair lived in some respects like other people. They had seats in church, and social gatherings—Wednesday "At Homes," to which the celebrity of their brilliant conversational powers attracted the brightest spirits of the northern capital, among them Sir William Hamilton, Sir David Brewster, John Wilson, De Quincey, forgiven for his review, and above all Jeffrey, a friend, though of opposite character, nearly as true as Irving himself. Procter had introduced Carlyle to the famous editor, who, as a Scotch cousin of the Welshes, took from the first a keen interest in the still struggling author, and opened to him the door of the Edinburgh Review. The appearance of the article on Richter, 1827, and that, in the course of the same year, on The State of German Literature, marks the beginning of a long series of splendid historical and critical essays—closing in 1855 with the Prinzenraub—which set Carlyle in the front of the reviewers of the century. The success in the Edinburgh was an "open sesame;" and the conductors of the Foreign and Foreign Quarterly Reviews, later, those of Fraser and the Westminster, were ready to receive whatever the new writer might choose to send.
To the *Foreign Review* he contributed from Comely Bank the *Life and Writings of Werner*, a paper on *Helena*, the leading episode of the second part of "Faust," and the first of the two great Essays on *Goethe*, which fixed his place as the interpreter of Germany to England. In midsummer 1827 Carlyle received a letter from Goethe cordially acknowledging the *Life of Schiller*, and enclosing presents of books for himself and his wife. This, followed by a later inquiry as to the author of the article on *German Literature*, was the opening of a correspondence of sage advice on the one side and of lively gratitude on the other, that lasted till the death of the veteran in 1832. Goethe assisted, or tried to assist, his admirer by giving him a testimonial in a candidature for the Chair (vacant by the promotion of Dr. Chalmers) of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. Jeffrey, a frequent visitor and host of the Carlyles, still regarded as "a jewel of advocates . . . the most lovable of little men," urged and aided the canvass, but in vain. The testimonials were too strong to be judicious, and "it was enough that" the candidate "was described as a man of original and extraordinary gifts to make college patrons shrink from contact with him." Another failure, about the same date and with the same backing, was an application for a Professorship in London University, practically under the patronage of Brougham; yet another, of a different kind, was Carlyle's attempt to write a novel, which having been found—better before than after publication—to be a failure, was for the most part burnt. "He could not," says Froude, "write a novel any more than he could write poetry. He had no invention."

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4 Carlyle's verses also demonstrate that he had no metrical ear. The only really good lines he ever wrote, save in translations where the rhythm was set to him, are those constantly quoted about the dawn of "another blue day." Those sent to his mother on
His genius was for fact; to lay hold on truth, with all his intellect and all his imagination. He could no more invent than he could lie."

The remaining incidents of Carlyle's Edinburgh life are few: a visit from his mother; a message from Goethe transmitting a medal for Sir Walter Scott; sums generously sent for his brother John's medical education in Germany; loans to Alexander, and a frustrate scheme for starting a new Annual Register, designed to be a literary résumé of the year, make up the record. The "rift in the lute," Carlyle's incapacity for domestic life, was already showing itself. Within the course of an orthodox honeymoon he had begun to shut himself up in interior solitude, seldom saw his wife from breakfast till 4 P.M., when they dined together and read Don Quixote in Spanish. The husband was half forgotten in the author beginning to prophesy: he wrote alone, walked alone, thought alone, and for the most part talked alone, i.e. in monologue that did not wait or care for answer. There was respect, there was affection, but there was little companionship. Meanwhile, despite the Review articles, Carlyle's other works, especially the volumes on German romance, were not succeeding, and the mill had to grind without grist. It seemed doubtful whether he could afford to live in Edinburgh; he craved after greater quiet, and when the farm, which was the main Welsh inheritance, fell vacant, resolved on migrating thither. His wife yielding, though with a natural repugnance to the extreme seclusion in store for her, and the Jeffreys kindly assisting, they went together in May 1828 to the Hill of the Hawks.

Craigenputtock is by no means "the dreariest spot

"Proud Hapsburg," and to Jane Welsh before marriage are unworthy of Macaulay's school-boy, "Non di non homines;" but it took much hammering to persuade Carlyle of the fact, and, when persuaded he concluded that verse-writing was a mere tinkling of cymbals!
in all the British dominions." On a sunny day it is an inland home, with wide billowy straths of grass around, inestimable silence broken only by the placid bleating of sheep, and the long rolling ridges of the Solway hills in front. But in the "winter wind," girt by drifts of snow, no post or apothecary within fifteen miles, it may be dreary enough. Here Carlyle allowed his wife to serve him through six years of household drudgery; an offence for which he was never quite forgiven, and to estimate its magnitude here seems the proper place. He was a model son and brother, and his conjugal fidelity has been much appraised, but he was as unfit, and for some of the same reasons, to make "a happy fireside clime" as was Jonathan Swift; and less even than Byron had he a share of the mutual forbearance which is essential to the closest of all relations.

"Napoleon," says Emerson, "to achieve his ends risked everything and spared nothing, neither ammunition, nor money, nor troops, nor generals, nor himself." With a slight change of phrase the same may be said of Carlyle's devotion to his work. There is no more prevailing refrain in his writing, public and private, than his denunciation of literature as a profession, nor are there wiser words than those in which the veteran warns the young men, whose questions he answers with touching solicitude, against its adoption. "It should be," he declares, "the wine not the food of life, the ardent spirits of thought and fancy without the bread of action parches up nature and makes strong souls like Byron dangerous, the weak despicable." But it was nevertheless the profession of his deliberate choice, and he soon found himself bound to it as Ixion to his wheel. The most thorough worker on record, he found nothing easy that was great, and he would do nothing little. In his determination to pluck out the heart of the mystery, be it of
himself, as in Sartor; of Germany, as in his Goethes and Richters; the state of England, as in Chartism and Past and Present; of Cromwell or of Friedrich, he faced all obstacles and overthrew them. Dauntless and ruthless, he allowed nothing to divert or to mar his designs, least of all domestic cares or even duties. "Selfish he was,"—I again quote from his biographer,—"if it be selfish to be ready to sacrifice every person dependent on him as completely as he sacrificed himself." What such a man wanted was a housekeeper and a nurse, not a wife, and when we consider that he had chosen for the latter companionship a woman almost as ambitious as himself, whose conversation was only less brilliant than his own, of delicate health and dainty ways, loyal to death, but, according to Mr. Froude, in some respects "as hard as flint," with "dangerous sparks of fire," whose quick temper found vent in sarcasms that blistered and words like swords, who could declare during the time of the engagement, to which in spite of warnings manifold she clung, "I will not marry to live on less than my natural and artificial wants"; who, ridiculing his accent to his face and before his friends, could write, "apply your talents to gild over the inequality of our births"; and who found herself obliged to live sixteen miles from the nearest neighbour, to milk a cow, scour floors and mend shoes—when we consider all this we are constrained to admit that the 17th October 1826 was a dies nefastus, nor wonder that thirty years later Mrs. Carlyle wrote, "I married for ambition, Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him, and I am miserable,"—and to a young friend, "My dear, whatever you do, never marry a man of genius."

Carlyle's own references to the life at Craigenputtock are marked by all his aggravating inconsistency. "How happy we shall be in this Craig o' Putta," he writes to his
wife from Scotsbrig, April 17th 1827; and later to Goethe:

Here Rousseau would have been as happy as on his island of Saint Pierre. My town friends indeed ascribe my sojourn here to a similar disposition, and forebode me no good results. But I came here solely with the design to simplify my way of life, and to secure the independence through which I could be enabled to be true to myself. This bit of earth is our own; here we can live, write, and think as best pleases ourselves, even though Zollius himself were to be crowned the monarch of literature. From some of our heights I can descry, about a day's journey to the west, the hill where Agricola and the Romans left a camp behind them. At the foot of it I was born, and there both father and mother still live to love me. . . . The only piece of any importance that I have written since I came here is an Essay on Burns.

This Essay,—modified at first, then let alone, by Jeffrey,—appeared in the Edinburgh in the autumn of 1828. We turn to Carlyle's journal and find the entry, "Finished a paper on Burns at this Devil's Den," elsewhere referred to as a "gaunt and hungry Siberia." Later still he confesses, when preparing for his final move south, "Of solitude I have really had enough."

Rome: Tibur amem ventosus, Tibure Romam.

Carlyle in the moor was always sighing for the town, and in the town for the moor. During the first twenty years of his London life, in what he called "the Devil's oven," he is constantly clamouring to return to the den. His wife, more and more forlorn though ever loyal, consistently disliked it; little wonder, between sluttish maid-servants and owl-like solitude; and she expressed her dislike in the pathetic verses, "To a Swallow Building under our Eaves," sent to Jeffrey in 1832, and ending—
God speed thee, pretty bird; may thy small nest
With little ones all in good time be blest;
I love thee much
For well thou managhest that life of thine,
While I! Oh, ask not what I do with mine,
Would I were such!  

The Desert.

The monotony of the moorland life was relieved by visits of relations and others made and repaid, an excursion to Edinburgh, a residence in London, and the production of work, the best of which has a chance of living with the language. One of the most interesting of the correspondences of this period is a series of letters, addressed to an anonymous Edinburgh friend who seems to have had some idea of abandoning his profession of the Law for Literature, a course against which Carlyle strenuously protests. From these letters, which have only appeared in the columns of the Glasgow Herald, we may extract a few sentences:—

Don't disparage the work that gains your bread. What is all work but a drudgery? no labour for the present joyous, but grievous. A man who has nothing to admire except himself is in the minimum state. The question is, Does a man really love Truth, or only the market price of it? Even literary men should have something else to do. Kames was a lawyer, Roscoe a merchant, Hans Sachs a cobbler, Burns a gauger, etc.

The following singular passage, the style of which suggests an imitation of Sterne, is the acme of unconscious self-satire:—

You are infinitely unjust to Blockheads, as they are called. Ask yourself seriously within your own heart—what right have you to live wisely in God's world, and they not to live a little less wisely? Is there a man more to be consoled with, nay, I will say to be cherished and tenderly treated, than a man that has no brain? My Purse is empty, it can be filled again; the Jew Rothschild could fill it; or I can even live with it very far from full. But, gracious heavens! what is to be done with my empty Head?
Three of the visits of this period are memorable. Two from the Jeffreys (in 1828 and 1830) leave us with the same uncomfortable impression of kindness ungrudgingly bestowed and grudgingly received. Jeffrey had a double interest in the household at Craigenputtock—an almost brotherly regard for the wife, and a belief, restrained by the range of a keen though limited appreciation, in the powers of the husband, to whom he wrote: "Take care of the fair creature who has entrusted herself so entirely to you," and with a half truth, "You have no mission upon earth, whatever you may fancy, half so important as to be innocently happy." And again: "Bring your blooming Eve out of your blasted Paradise, and seek shelter in the lower world." But Carlyle held to the "banner with a strange device," and was either deaf or indignant. The visits passed, with satirical references from both host and hostess; for Mrs. Carlyle, who could herself abundantly scoff and seold, would allow the liberty to no one else. Jeffrey meanwhile was never weary of well-doing. Previous to his promotion as Lord Advocate and consequent transference to London, he tried to negotiate for Carlyle's appointment as his successor in the editorship of the Review, but failed to make him accept the necessary conditions. The paper entitled Signs of the Times was the last production that he had to revise for his eccentric friend. Those following on Taylor's German Literature and the Characteristics were brought out in 1831 under the auspices of Maevy Napier. The other visit was from the most illustrious of Carlyle's English-speaking friends, in many respects a fellow-worker, yet "a spirit of another sort," and destined, though a transcendental mystic, to be the most practical of his benefactors. Twenty-four hours of Ralph Waldo Emerson (often referred to in the course of a long and intimate correspondence) are spoken of by Mrs. Carlyle as a visit from the clouds,
brightening the prevailing gray. He came to the remote inland home with "the pure intellectual gleam" of which Hawthorne speaks, and "the quiet night of clear fine talk" remained one of the memories which led Carlyle afterwards to say, "Perhaps our happiest days were spent at the Craig." Goethe's letters, especially that in which he acknowledges a lock of Mrs. Carlyle's hair, "eine unvergleichliche schwarze Haar Locke," were also among the gleams of 1829. The great German died three years later, after receiving the birthday tribute, in his 82nd year, from English friends; and it is pleasant to remember that in this instance the disciple was to the end loyal to his master. To this period belong many other correspondences. "I am scribble scribbling," he says in a letter of 1832, and mere scribbling may fill many pages with few headaches; but Carlyle wrestled as he wrote, and not a page of those marvellous Miscellanies but is red with his life's blood. Under all his reviewing, he was set on a work whose fortunes were to be the strangest, whose result was, in some respects, the widest of his efforts. The plan of Sartor Resartus is far from original. Swift's Tale of a Tub distinctly anticipates the Clothes Philosophy; there are besides manifest obligations to Reinecke Fuchs, Jean Paul Richter, and other German authors: but in our days originality is only possible in the handling; Carlyle has made an imaginary German professor the mere mouthpiece of his own higher aspirations and those of the Scotland of his day, and it remains the most popular as surely as his Friedrich is the greatest of his works. The author was abundantly conscious of the value of the book, and super-abundantly angry at the unconsciousness of the literary patrons of the time. In 1831 he resolved if possible to go up to London to push the prospects of this first-born male child. The res angusta stood in the way. Jeffrey, after asking his friend "what situation he could get him that he
would detest the least,” pressed on him “in the coolest, lightest manner the use of his purse.” This Carlyle, to the extent of £50 as a loan (carefully returned), was induced ultimately to accept. It has been said that “proud men never wholly forgive those to whom they feel themselves obliged,” but their resenting benefits is the worst feature of their pride. Carlyle made his second visit to London to seek types for Sartor, in vain. Always preaching reticence with the sound of artillery, he vents in many pages the rage of his chagrin at the “Arimaspian” publishers, who would not print his book, and the public which, “dosed with froth,” would not buy it. The following is little softened by the chiaroscuro of five-and-thirty years:—

Done, I think, at Craigenputtock between January and August 1830, Teufelsdröckh was ready, and I decided to make for London; night before going, how I remember it. . . . The beggarly history of poor Sartor among the blockheadisms is not worth recording or remembering, least of all here! In short, finding that I had got £100 (if memory serve) for Schüller six or seven years before, and for Sartor, at least twice as good, I could not only not get £200, but even get no Murray or the like to publish it on half profits. Murray, a most stupendous object to me, tumbling about eyeless, with the evidently strong wish to say “Yes” and “No”—my first signal experience of that sad human predicament. I said, We will make it “No,” then; wrap up our MS., and carry it about for some two years from one terrified owl to another; published at last experimentally in Fraser, and even then mostly laughed at, nothing coming of the volume except what was sent by Emerson from America.

This summary is unfair to Murray, who was inclined, on Jeffrey’s recommendation, to accept the book; but on finding that Carlyle had carried the MS. to Longmans and another publisher, in hopes of a better bargain, and that it had been refused, naturally wished to refer the matter to his “reader,” and the negotiation closed. Sartor struggled into half life in parts of the
Magazine to which the writer had already contributed several of his German essays, and it was even then published with reluctance, and on half pay. The reception of this work, a nondescript, yet among the finest prose poems in our language, seemed to justify bookseller, editor, and readers alike, for the British public in general were of their worst opinion. "It is a heap of clotted nonsense," pronounced the Sun. "Stop that stuff or stop my paper," wrote one of Fraser's constituents. "When is that stupid series of articles by the crazy tailor going to end?" cried another. At this time Carlyle used to say there were only two people who found anything in his book worth reading—Emerson and a priest in Cork, who said to the editor that he would take the magazine when anything in it appeared by the author of Sartor. The volume was only published in 1838, by Saunders and Otley, after the French Revolution had further raised the writer's name, and then on a guarantee from friends willing to take the risk of loss. It does not appear whether Carlyle refers to this edition or to some slighter reissue of the magazine articles when he writes in the Reminiscences: "I sent off six copies to six Edinburgh literary friends, from not one of whom did I get the smallest whisper even of receipt—a thing disappointing more or less to human nature, and which has silently and insensibly led me never since to send any copy of a book to Edinburgh. . . . The plebs of literature might be divided in their verdicts about me; though by count of heads I always suspect the guilty clear had it; but the conscript fathers declined to vote at all."¹ In America Sartor was pieced together from Fraser, published in a volume introduced by Alexander Everett, extolled by

¹ Tempora mutantur. A few months before Carlyle's death a cheap edition of Sartor was issued, and 30,000 copies were sold within a few weeks.
Emerson as "A criticism of the spirit of the age in which we live; exhibiting in the most just and novel light the present aspect of religion, politics, literature, and social life." The editors add: "We believe no book has been published for many years . . . which discovers an equal mastery over all the riches of the language. The author makes ample amends for the occasional eccentricity of his genius not only by frequent bursts of pure splendour, but by the wit and sense which never fail him."

Americans are intolerant of honest criticism on themselves; but they are, more than any other nation, open to appreciate vigorous expressions of original views of life and ethics—all that we understand by philosophy—and equally so to new forms of art. The leading critics of the New England have often been the first and best testers of the fresh products of the Old. A land of experiment in all directions, ranging from Mount Lebanon to Oneida Creek, has been ready to welcome the suggestions, physical or metaphysical, of startling enterprise. Ideas which filter slowly through English soil and abide for generations, flash over the electric atmosphere of the West. Hence Coleridge, Carlyle and Browning were already accepted as prophets in Boston, while their own countrymen were still examining their credentials. To this readiness, as of a photographic plate, to receive, must be added the fact that the message of Sartor crossed the Atlantic when the hour to receive it had struck. To its publication has been attributed the origin of a movement that was almost simultaneously inaugurated by Emerson's Harvard Discourse. It was a revolt against the reign of Commerce in practice, Calvinism in theory, and precedent in Art that gave birth to the Transcendentalism of The Dial—a Pantheon in which Carlyle had at once assigned to him a place. He meanwhile was busy in London making friends by his conspicuous, almost
obtrusive, genius, and sowing the seeds of discord by his equally obtrusive spleen. To his visit of 1831-1832 belongs one of the worst of the elaborate invectives against Lamb which have recoiled on the memory of his critic—to the credit of English sympathies with the most lovable of slightly erring men—with more than the force of a boomerang. A sheaf of sharp sayings of the same date owe their sting to their half truth, e.g. to a man who excused himself for profligate journalism on the old plea, "I must live, sir."

"No, sir, you need not live, if your body cannot be kept together without selling your soul." Similarly he was abusing the periodicals—"mud," "sand," and "dust magazines"—to which he had contributed, _inter alia_, the great Essay on _Voltaire_ and the consummate sketch of _Novalis_; with the second paper on Richter to the _Foreign Review_, the reviews of _History_ and of _Schiller_ to _Fraser_, and that on Goethe's _Works_ to the _Foreign Quarterly_. During this period he was introduced to Molesworth, Austin, and J. S. Mill. On his summons, October 1st 1832, Mrs. Carlyle came up to Ampton Street, where he then resided, to see him safe through the rest of his London time. They lamented over the lapse of Irving, now lost in the delirium of tongues, and made a league of friendship with Mill, whom he describes as "a partial disciple of mine," a friendship that stood a hard test, but was broken when the author of _Liberty_ naturally found it impossible to remain a disciple of the writer of _Latter-Day Pamphlets_. Mill, like Napier, was at first staggered by the _Characteristics_, though he afterwards said it was one of Carlyle's greatest works, and was enthusiastic over the review of Boswell's _Johnson_, published in _Fraser_ in the course of this year. Meanwhile Margaret, Carlyle's favourite sister, had died, and his brightest, Jean, "the Craw," had married her cousin, James Aitken. In memory of the former he wrote as a
master of threnody: to the bridegroom of the latter he addressed a letter reminding him of the duties of a husband, "to do as he would be done by to his wife"! In 1832 John, again by Jeffrey's aid, obtained a situation at £300 a year as travelling physician to Lady Clare, and was enabled, as he promptly did, to pay back his debts. Alexander seems to have been still struggling with an imperfectly successful farm. In the same year, when Carlyle was in London, his father died at Scotsbrig, after a residence there of six years. His son saw him last in August 1831, when, referring to his Craigenputtock solitude, he said: "Man, it's surely a pity that thou shouldst sit yonder with nothing but the eye of Omniscience to see thee, and thou with such a gift to speak."

The Carlyles returned in March, she to her domestic services, baking bread, preserving eggs, and brightening grates till her eyes grew dim; he to work at his Diderot, doing justice to a character more alien to his own than even Voltaire's, reading twenty-five volumes, one per day, to complete the essay; then at Count Cagliostro, also for Fraser, a link between his last Craigenputtock and his first London toils. The period is marked by shoals of letters, a last present from Weimar, a visit to Edinburgh, and a candidature for a University Chair, which Carlyle thought Jeffrey could have got for him; but the advocate did not, probably could not, in this case satisfy his client. In excusing himself he ventured to lecture the applicant on what he imagined to be the impracticable temper and perverse eccentricity which had retarded and might continue to retard his advancement. Carlyle, never tolerant of rebuke however just, was indignant, and though an open quarrel was avoided by letters, on both sides, of courteous compromise, the breach was in reality never healed, and

1 The last was in 1836, for the Chair of Astronomy in Glasgow.
Jeffrey has a niche in the Reminiscences as a "little man who meant well but did not see far or know much." Carlyle went on, however, like Thor, at the Diamond Necklace, which is a proem to the French Revolution, but inly growling, "My own private impression is that I shall never get any promotion in this world." "A prophet is not readily acknowledged in his own country"; "Mein Leben geht sehr übel: all dim, misty, squally, disheartening at times, almost heartbreaking." This is the prose rather than the male of Byron. Of all men Carlyle could least reck his own rede. He never even tried to consume his own smoke. His Sorrows is indeed more contained, and takes at its summit a higher flight than Rousseau's Confessions, or the Sorrows of Werther, or the first two cantos of Childe Harold: but reading Byron's letters is mingling with a world gay and grave; reading Goethe's walking in the Parthenon, though the Graces in the niches are sometimes unclad; reading Carlyle's is travelling through glimpses of sunny fields and then plunging into coal-black tunnels. At last he decided, "Puttock is no longer good for me," and his brave wife approving, and even inciting, he resolved to burn his ships and seek his fortune—sink or swim—in the metropolis. Carlyle, for once taking the initiative of practical trouble, went in advance on a house-hunt to London, and by advice of Leigh Hunt fixed on the now famous house in Chelsea near the Thames.
CHAPTER IV

CHEYNE ROW

[1834–1842]

The curtain falls on Craigenputtock, the bleak farm by the bleak hills, and rises on Cheyne Row, a side street off the river Thames, that winds, as slowly as Cowper's Ouse, by the reaches of Barnes and Battersea, dotted with brown-sailed ships and holiday boats in place of the excursion steamers that now stop at Carlyle Pier; hard by the Carlyle Statue on the new (1874) Embankment, in front the "Carlyle mansions," a stone's-throw from "Carlyle Square." Turning up the row, we find over No. 24, formerly No. 5, the Carlyle medallion in marble, marking the house where the Chelsea prophet, rejected, recognised, and adulated of men, lived over a stretch of forty-seven years. Here were his headquarters, but he was a frequent wanderer. About half the time was occupied in trips almost yearly to Scotland, one to Ireland, one to Belgium, one to France, and two to Germany; besides, in the later days, constant visits to admiring friends, more and more drawn from the higher ranks in English society, the members of which learnt to appreciate his genius before he found a hearing among the mass of the people.

The whole period falls readily under four sections,
marking as many phases of the author's outer and inner life, while the same character is preserved throughout:—

I. 1834-1842—When the death of Mrs. Welsh and the late success of Carlyle's work relieved him from a long, sometimes severe, struggle with narrow means. It is the period of the French Revolution, The Lectures, and Hero-Worship, and of Chartism, the last work with a vestige of adherence to the Radical creed.

II. 1842-1853—When the death of his mother loosened his ties to the North. This decade of his literary career is mainly signalised by the writing and publication of the Life and Letters of Cromwell, of Carlyle's political works, Past and Present and the Latter-Day Pamphlets, and of the Life of Sterling, works which mark his now consummated disbelief in democracy, and his distinct abjuration of adherence, in any ordinary sense, to the "Creed of Christendom."

III. 1853-1866—When the laurels of his triumphant speech as Lord Rector at Edinburgh were suddenly withered by the death of his wife. This period is filled with the History of Friedrich II., and marked by a yet more decidedly accentuated trust in autocracy.

IV. 1866-1881.—Fifteen years of the setting of the sun.

The Carlyles, coming to the metropolis in a spirit of rarely realised audacity on a reserve fund of from £200 to £300 at most, could not propose to establish themselves in any centre of fashion. In their circumstances their choice of abode was on the whole a fortunate one. Chelsea,

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite Beyond it,
was, even in those days of less constant communication, within measurable distance of the centres of London life: it had then and still preserves a host of interesting historic and literary traditions. Among the men who in old times lived or met together in that outlying region of London, we have memories of Sir Thomas More and of Erasmus, of the Essayists Addison and Steele, and of Swift. Hard by is the tomb of Bolingbroke and the Square of Sir Hans Sloane; Smollett lived for a time in Laurence Street; nearer our own day, Turner resided in Cheyne Walk, later George Eliot, W. B. Scott, Dante Rossetti, Swinburne for a season, and George Meredith. When Carlyle came to settle there, Leigh Hunt\(^1\) in Upper Cheyne Row, an almost next-door neighbour, was among the first of a series of visitors; always welcome, despite his "hugger-mugger" household and his borrowing tendencies, his "unpractical messages" and "rose-coloured reform processes," as a bright "singing bird, musical in flowing talk," abounding in often subtle criticisms and constant good humour. To the Chelsea home, since the Mecca of many pilgrims, there also flocked other old Ampton Street friends, drawn thither by genuine regard. Mrs. Carlyle, by the testimony of Miss Cushman and all competent judges, was a "raconteur unparalleled." To quote the same authority, "that wonderful woman, able to live in the full light of Carlyle's genius without being overwhelmed by it," had a peculiar skill in drawing out the most brilliant conversationalist of the age. Burns and Wilson were his Scotch predecessors in an art of which the close of our century—when every fresh thought is treasured to be

\(^1\) Cf. Byron's account of the same household at Pisa. Carlyle deals very leniently with the malignant volume on Byron which amply justified the epigram of Moore. But he afterwards spoke more slightly of his little satellite, attributing the faint praise, in the _Examiner_, of the second course of lectures to Hunt's jealousy of a friend now "beginning to be somebody."
printed and paid for—knows little but the shadow. Of Carlyle, as of Johnson, it might have been said, “There is no use arguing with him, for if his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt”: both men would have benefited by revolt from their dictation, but the power to contradict either was overborne by a superior power to assert. Swift’s occasional insolence, in like manner, prevailed by reason of the colossal strength that made him a Gulliver in Lilliput. Carlyle in earlier, as in later times, would have been the better of meeting his mate, or of being overmatched; but there was no Wellington found for this “grand Napoleon of the realms” of prose. His reverence for men, if not for things, grew weaker with the strengthening of his sway, a sway due to the fact that men of extensive learning are rarely men of incisive force, and Carlyle—in this respect more akin to Johnson than to Swift—had the acquired material to serve as fuel for the inborn fire. Hence the least satisfactory of his criticisms are those passed on his peers. Injustices of conversation should be pardoned to an impulsive nature, even those of correspondence in the case of a man who had a mania for pouring out his moods to all and sundry; but where Carlyle has carefully recarved false estimates in cameo, his memory must abide the consequence. Quite late in life, referring to the Chelsea days, he says, “The best of those who then flocked about us was Leigh Hunt,” who never seriously said him nay; “and the worst Lamb,” who was not among the worshippers. No one now doubts that Carlyle’s best adviser and most candid critic might have been John Stuart Mill, for whom he long felt as much regard as it was possible for him to entertain towards a proximate equal. The following is characteristic: “He had taken a great attachment to me (which lasted about ten years and then sud-
denly ended, I never knew how), an altogether clear, logical, honest, amicable, affectionate young man, and respected as such here, though sometimes felt to be rather colourless, even aqueous, no religion in any form traceable in him.” And similarly of his friend, Mrs. Taylor, “She was a will-o’-the-wispish iridescence of a creature; meaning nothing bad either”; and again of Mill himself, “His talk is sawdustish, like ale when there is no wine to be had.” Such criticisms, some ungrateful, others unjust, may be relieved by reference to the close of two friendships to which (though even these were clouded by a touch of personal jealousy) he was faithful in the main; for the references of both husband and wife to Irving’s “delirations” are the tears due to the sufferings of errant minds. Their last glimpse of this best friend of earlier days was in October 1834, when he came on horseback to the door of their new home, and left with the benédiction to his lost Jane, “You have made a little Paradise around you.” He died in Glasgow in December of the same year, and his memory is pathetically embalmed in Carlyle’s threnody. The final phases of another old relationship were in some degree similar. During the first years of their settlement, Lord Jeffrey frequently called at Cheyne Row, and sent kind letters to his cousin, received by her husband with the growl, “I am at work stern and grim, not to be interrupted by Jeffrey’s theoretic flourish of epistolary trumpeting.” Carlyle, however, paid more than one visit to Craigerock, seeing his host for the last time in the autumn of 1849, “worn in body and thin in mind,” “grown lunar now and not solar any more.” Three months later he heard of the death of this benefactor of his youth, and wrote the memorial which finds its place in the second volume of the Reminiscences.

The work “stern and grim” was the French Revolution,
the production of which is the dominant theme of the first chapter of Carlyle's London life. Mr. Froude, in the course of an estimate of this work which leaves little room for other criticism, dwells on the fact that it was written for a purpose, i.e. to show that rulers, like those of the French in the eighteenth century, who are solely bent on the pleasures and oblivious of the duties of life, must end by being "burnt up." This, doubtless, is one of the morals of the French Revolution—the other being that anarchy ends in despotism—and unquestionably a writer who never ceased to be a preacher must have had it in his mind. But Carlyle's peculiarity is that he combined the functions of a prophet and of an artist, and that while now the one, now the other, was foremost, he never wholly forgot the one in the other. In this instance he found a theme well fit for both, and threw his heart into it, though under much discouragement. Despite the Essays, into each of which he had put work enough for a volume, the Reviews were shy of him; while his Sartor had, on this side of the Atlantic, been received mainly with jeers. Carlyle, never unconscious of his prerogative and apostolic primogeniture, felt like an aspirant who had performed his vigils, and finding himself still ignored, became a knight of the rueful countenance. Thoroughly equipped, adept enough in ancient tongues to appreciate Homer, a master of German and a fluent reader of French, a critic whose range stretched from Diderot to John Knox, he regarded his treatment as "tragically hard," exclaiming, "I could learn to do all things I have seen done, and am forbidden to try any of them." The efforts to keep the wolf from his own doors were harder than any but a few were till lately aware of. Landed in London with his £200 reserve, he could easily have made way in the usual ruts; but he would have none of them, and refused to accept the employment which is
the most open, as it is the most lucrative, to literary aspirants. To nine out of ten the "profession of literature" means Journalism; while Journalism often means dishonesty, always conformity. Carlyle was, in a sense deeper than that of the sects, essentially a nonconformist; he not only disdained to write a word he did not believe, he would not suppress a word he did believe—a rule of action fatal to swift success. During these years there began an acquaintance, soon ripening into intimacy, the memories of which are enshrined in one of the most beautiful of biographies. Carlyle's relation to John Sterling drew out the sort of affection which best suited him—the love of a master for a pupil, of superior for inferior, of the benefactor for the benefited; and consequently there is no line in the record of it that jars. Sterling once tried to benefit his friend, and perhaps fortunately failed. He introduced Carlyle to his father, then the chief writer in the Times, and the Editor invited the struggling author to contribute to its columns, but, according to Mr. Froude, "on the implied conditions... when a man enlists in the army, his soul as well as his body belong to his commanding officer." Carlyle talked, all his life, about what his greatest disciple calls "The Lamp of Obedience"; but he himself would obey no one, and found it hard to be civil to those who did not see with his eyes. He rejected—we trust in polite terms—the offer of "the Thunderer." "In other respects also," says our main authority, "he was impracticable, unmalleable, and as independent and willful as if he were the heir to a peerage. He had created no 'public' of his own; the public which existed could not understand his writings and would not buy them; and thus it was that in Cheyne Row he was more neglected than he had been in Scotland." Welcome to a limited range of literary society, he astonished and amused by his vehement eloquence, but when crossed he was not only
"sarcastic" but rude, and speaking of people, as he wrote of them, with various shades of contempt, naturally gave frequent offence. Those whose toes are trodden on, not by accident, justifiably retaliate. "Are you looking for your t-t-turban?" Charles Lamb is reported to have said in some entertainer's lobby after listening for an evening to Carlyle's invectives, and the phrase may have rankled in his mind. Living in a glass case, while throwing stones about, super-sensitive to criticism though professing to despise critics, he made at least as many enemies as friends, and by his own confession became an Ishmaelite. In view of the reception of Sartor, we do not wonder to find him writing in 1833—

It is twenty-three months since I earned a penny by the craft of literature, and yet I know no fault I have committed. . . . I am tempted to go to America. . . . I shall quit literature, it does not invite me. Providence warns me to have done with it. I have failed in the Divine Infernal Universe;

or meditating, when at the lowest ebb, to go wandering about the world like Teufelsdrockh, looking for a rest for the sole of his foot. And yet all the time, with incomparable naïveté, he was asserting:—

The longer I live among this people the deeper grows my feeling of natural superiority to them. . . . The literary world here is a thing which I have no other course left me but to defy. . . . I can reverence no existing man. With health and peace for one year, I could write a better book than there has been in this country for generations.

All through his journal and his correspondence there is a perpetual alternation of despair and confidence, always closing with the refrain, "Working, trying is the only remover of doubt," and wise counsels often echoed from Goethe, "Accomplish as well as you can the task on hand, and the next step will become clear;" on the other hand—
A man must not only be able to work but to give over working. . . . If a man wait till he has entirely brushed off his imperfections, he will spin for ever on his axis, advancing no whither. . . . The French Revolution stands pretty fair in my head, nor do I mean to investigate much more about it, but to splash down what I know in large masses of colours, that it may look like a smoke-and-flame conflagration in the distance.

The progress of this work was retarded by the calamity familiar to every reader, but it must be referred to as throwing one of the finest lights on Carlyle’s character. His closest intellectual link with J. S. Mill was their common interest in French politics and literature; the latter, himself meditating a history of the Revolution, not only surrendered in favour of the man whose superior pictorial genius he recognised, but supplied him freely with the books he had accumulated for the enterprise. His interest in the work was unfortunately so great as to induce him to borrow the MS. of the first volume, completed in the early spring of 1835, and his business habits so defective as to permit him to lend it without authority; so that, as appears, it was left lying about by Mrs. Taylor and mistaken by her servant for waste paper: certainly it was destroyed; and Mill came to Cheyne Row to announce the fact in such a desperate state of mind that Carlyle’s first anxiety seems to have been to console his friend. According to Mrs. Carlyle, as reported by Froude, “the first words her husband uttered as the door closed were, ‘Well, Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up; we must endeavour to hide from him how very serious this business is to us.’”

This trait of magnanimity under the first blow of a disaster which seemed to cancel the work of years\(^1\) should be set against his nearly contemporaneous criticisms of

\(^1\) Carlyle had only been writing the volume for five months; but he was preparing for it during much of his life at Craigenputtock.
Coleridge, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sydney Smith, Macaulay, etc.

Mill sent a cheque of £200 as "the slightest external compensation" for the loss, and only, by urgent entreaty, procured the acceptance of half the sum. Carlyle here, as in every real emergency, bracing his resolve by courageous words, as "never tine heart or get provoked heart," set himself to re-write the volume with an energy that recalls that of Scott rebuilding his ruined estate; but the work was at first so "wretched" that it had to be laid aside for a season, during which the author wisely took a restorative bath of comparatively commonplace novels. The re-writing of the first volume was completed in September 1835; the whole book in January 1837. The mood in which it was written throws a light on the excellences as on the defects of the history. The Reminiscences again record the gloom and defiance of "Thomas the Doubter," walking through the London streets "with a feeling similar to Satan's stepping the burning marl," and scowling at the equipages about Hyde Park Corner, sternly thinking, "Yes, and perhaps none of you could do what I am at. I shall finish this book, throw it at your feet, buy a rifle and spade, and withdraw to the Transatlantic wilderness." In an adjacent page he reports himself as having said to his wife—

What they will do with this book none knows, my lass; but they have not had for two hundred years any book that came more truly from a man's very heart, and so let them trample it under foot and hoof as they see best. . . . "They cannot trample that," she would cheerily answer.

This passage points at once to the secret of the writer's spell and to the limits of his lasting power. His works were written seldom with perfect fairness, never with the dry light required for a clear presentation of the truth; they have all "an infusion from the will and the affections"; but
they were all written with a whole sincerity and utter fervour; they rose from his hot heart, and rushed through the air "like rockets dry'd by their own burnin'." Consequently his readers confess that he has never forgot the Horatian maxim—

Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.

About this time Carlyle writes, "My friends think I have found the art of living upon nothing," and there must, despite Mill's contribution, have been "bitter thrift" in Cheyne Row during the years 1835-1837. He struggled through the unremunerative interval of waiting for the sale of a great work by help of fees derived from his essay on the Diamond Necklace (which, after being refused by the Foreign Quarterly, appeared in Fraser, 1837), that on Mirabeau in the Westminster, and in the following year, for the same periodical, the article on Sir Walter Scott. To the last work, undertaken against the grain, he refers in one of the renewed wails of the year: "O that literature had never been devised. I am scourged back to it by the whip of necessity." The circumstance may account for some of the manifest defects of one of the least satisfactory of Carlyle's longer reviews. Frequent references in previous letters show that he never appreciated Scott, to whom he refers as a mere Restaurateur.

Meanwhile the appearance of the French Revolution had brought the name of its author, then in his forty-third year, for the first time prominently before the public. It attracted the attention of Thackeray, who wrote a generous review in the Times, of Southey, Jeffrey, Macaulay, Hallam, and Brougham, who recognised the advent of an equal, if sometimes an adverse power in the world of letters. But, though the book established his reputation, the sale
was slow, and for some years the only substantial profits, amounting to about £400, came from America, through the indefatigable activity and good management of Emerson. It is pleasant to note a passage in the interesting volumes of their Correspondence which shows that in this instance the benefitted understood his financial relation to the benefactor: “A reflection I cannot but make is that, at bottom, this money was all yours; not a penny of it belonged to me by any law except that of helpful friendship. . . . I could not examine it (the account) without a kind of crime.” Others who, at this period, made efforts to assist “the polar Bear” were less fortunate. In several instances good intentions paved the palace of Momus, and in one led a well-meaning man into a notoriously false position. Mr. Basil Montagu being in want of a private secretary offered the post to his former guest, as a temporary makeshift, at a salary of £200, and so brought upon his memory a torrent of contempt. Undeterred by this and similar warnings, the indefatigable philanthropist, Miss Harriet Martineau, who at first conciliated the Carlyles by her affection for “this side of the street,” and was afterwards an object of their joint ridicule, conceived the idea of organising a course of lectures to an audience collected by canvass to hear the strange being from the moors talk for an hour on end about literature, morals, and history. He was then an object of curiosity to those who knew anything about him at all, and lecturing was at that time a lucrative and an honourable employment. The “good Harriet,” so called by Cheyne Row in its condescending mood, aided by other kind friends of the Sterling and Mill circles—the former including Frederick Denison Maurice—made so great a success of the enterprise that it was thrice repeated. The first course of six lectures on “German Literature,” May 1837, delivered in Willis’s Rooms, realised £135; the
second of twelve, on the "History of European Literature," at 17 Edward Street, Portman Square, had a net result of £300; the third, in the same rooms, on "Revolutions," brought £200; the fourth, on "Heroes," the same. In closing this course Carlyle appeared for the last time on a public platform until 1866, when he delivered his Inaugural Address as Lord Rector to the students of Edinburgh.

The impression he produced on his unusually select audiences was that of a man of genius, but roughly clad. The more superficial auditors had a new sensation, those who came to stare remained to wonder; the more reflective felt that they had learnt something of value. Carlyle had no inconsiderable share of the oratorical power which he latterly so derided; he was able to speak from a few notes; but there were comments more or less severe on his manner and style. J. Grant, in his Portraits of Public Characters, says: "At times he distorts his features as if suddenly seized by some paroxysm of pain... he makes mouths; he has a harsh accent and graceless gesticulation." Leigh Hunt, in the Examiner, remarks on the lecturer's power of extemporising; but adds that he often touches only the mountain-tops of the subject, and that the impression left was as if some Puritan had come to life again, liberalized by German philosophy. Bunsen, present at one of the lectures, speaks of the striking and rugged thoughts thrown at people's heads; and Margaret Fuller, afterwards Countess Ossoli, referred to his arrogance redeemed by "the grandeur of a Siegfried melting down masses of iron into sunset red." Carlyle's own comments are for the most part slighting. He refers to his lectures as a mixture of prophecy and play-acting, and says that when about to open his course on "Heroes" he felt like a man going to be hanged. To Emerson, April 17th 1839, he writes:—
My lectures come on this day two weeks. O heaven! I cannot “speak”; I can only gasp and writhe and stutter, a spectacle to gods and fashionables,—being forced to it by want of money. In five weeks I shall be free, and then—! Shall it be Switzerland? shall it be Scotland? nay, shall it be America and Concord?

Emerson had written about a Boston publication of the Miscellanies (first there collected), and was continually urging his friend to emigrate and speak to more appreciative audiences in the States; but the London lectures, which had, with the remittances from over sea, practically saved Carlyle from ruin or from exile, had made him decide “to turn his back to the treacherous Syren”—the temptation to sink into oratory. Mr. Froude’s explanation and defence of this decision may be clenched by a reference to the warning his master had received. He had announced himself as a preacher and a prophet, and been taken at his word; but similarly had Edward Irving, who for a season of sun or glamour gathered around him the same crowd and glitter: the end came; twilight and clouds of night. Fashion had flocked to the sermons of the elder Annandale youth—as to the recitatives of the younger—to see a wild man of the woods and hear him sing; but the novelty gone, they passed on “to Egyptian crocodiles, Iroquois hunters,” and left him stranded with “unquiet fire” and “flaccid face.” “O foulest Circean draft,” exclaimed his old admirer in his fine dirge, “thou poison of popular applause, madness is in thee and death, thy end is Bedlam and the grave,” and with the fixed resolve, “De me fabula non narrabitur,” he shut the book on this phase of his life.

The lectures on “Hero-Worship” (a phrase taken from Hume) were published in 1841, and met with considerable success, the name of the writer having then begun to run
“like wildfire through London.” At the close of the previous year he had published his long pamphlet on Chartism, it having proved unsuitable for its original destination as an article in the Quarterly. Here first he clearly enunciates, “Might is right”—one of the few strings on which, with all the variations of a political Paganini, he played through life. This tract is on the border line between the old modified Radicalism of Sartor and the less modified Conservatism of his later years. In 1840 Carlyle still speaks of himself as a man foiled; but at the close of that year all fear of penury was over, and in the following he was able to refuse a Chair of History at Edinburgh, as later another at St. Andrews. Meanwhile his practical power and genuine zeal for the diffusion of knowledge appeared in his foundation of the London Library, which brought him into more or less close contact with Tennyson, Milman, Forster, Helpes, Spedding, Gladstone, and other leaders of the thought and action of the time.

There is little in Carlyle's life at any time that can be called eventful. From first to last it was that of a retired scholar, a thinker demanding sympathy while craving after solitude, and the frequent inconsistency of the two requirements was the source of much of his unhappiness. Our authorities for all that we do not see in his published works are found in his voluminous correspondence, copious autobiographical jottings, and the three volumes of his wife's letters and journal dating from the commencement of the struggle for recognition in London, and extending to the year of her death. Criticism of these remarkable documents, the theme of so much controversy, belongs rather to a life of Mrs. Carlyle; but a few salient facts may here be noted. It appears on the surface that husband and wife had in common several marked peculiarities; on the intellectual side they had not only an extraordinary amount
but the same kind of ability, superhumanly keen insight, and wonderful power of expression, both with tongue and pen; the same intensity of feeling, thoroughness, and courage to look the ugliest truths full in the face; in both, these high qualities were marred by a tendency to attribute the worst motives to almost every one. Their joint contempt for all whom they called "fools," i.e. the immense majority of mankind, was a serious drawback to the pleasure of their company. It is indeed obvious that, whether or not it be correct to say that "his nature was the soft one, her's the hard," Mrs. Carlyle was the severer cynic of the two. Much of her writing confirms the impression of those who have heard her talk that no one, not even her husband, was safe from the shafts of her ridicule. Her pride in his genius knew no bounds, and it is improbable that she would have tolerated from any outsider a breath of adverse criticism; but she herself claimed many liberties she would not grant. She was clannish as Carlyle himself, yet even her relations are occasionally made to appear ridiculous. There was nothing in her affections, save her memory of her own father, corresponding to his devotion to his whole family. With equal penetration and greater scorn, she had no share of his underlying reverence. Such limited union as was granted to her married life had only soured the mocking-bird spirit of the child that derided her grandfather's accent on occasion of his bringing her back from a drive by another route to "varry the shane."

Carlyle's constant waifings take from him any claim to such powers of endurance as might justify his later attacks on Byron. But neither had his wife any real reticence. Whenever there were domestic troubles—flitting, repairing, building, etc., on every occasion of clamour or worry, he, with scarce pardonable oblivion of physical delicacy greater than his own, went off, generally to visit distinguished
friends, and left behind him the burden and the heat of the day. She performed her unpleasant work and all associated duties with a practical genius that he complimented as “triumphant.” She performed them, ungrudgingly perhaps, but never without complaint; her invariable practice was to endure and tell. “Quelle vie,” she writes in 1837 to John Sterling, whom she seems to have really liked, “let no woman who values peace of soul ever marry an author”; and again to the same in 1839, “Carlyle had to sit on a jury two days, to the ruin of his whole being, physical, moral, and intellectual,” but “one gets to feel a sort of indifference to his growling.” Conspicuous exceptions, as in the case of the Shelleys, the Dobells, and the Brownings, have been seen, within or almost within our memories, but as a rule it is a risk for two supersensitive and nervous people to live together: when they are sensitive in opposite ways the alliance is fatal; fortunately the Carlyles were, in this respect, in the main sympathetic. With most of the household troubles which occupy so exaggerated a space in the letters and journals of both—papering, plastering, painting, deceitful or disorderly domestics—general readers have so little concern that they have reason to resent the number of pages wasted in printing them; but there was one common grievance of wider and more urgent interest, to which we must here again finally refer, premising that it affected not one period but the whole of their lives, i.e. their constant, only half-effectual struggle with the modern Hydra-headed Monster, the reckless and needless Noises produced or permitted, sometimes increased rather than suppressed, by modern civilisation. Mrs. Carlyle suffered almost as much as her husband from these murderers of sleep and assassins of repose; on her mainly fell the task of contending with the cochin-chinas, whose senseless shrieks went “through her
like a sword,” of abating a “Der Freischütz of cats,” or a pandemonium of barrel organs, of suppressing macaws for which Carlyle “could neither think nor live”; now mitigating the scales on a piano, now conjuring away, by threat or bribe, from their neighbours a shoal of “demon fowls”; lastly of superintending the troops of bricklayers, joiners, iron-hammerers employed with partial success to convert the top story of 5 Cheyne Row into a sound-proof room. Her hard-won victories in this field must have agreeably added to the sense of personality to which she resolutely clung. Her assertion, “Instead of boiling up individuals into the species, I would draw a chalk circle round every individuality,” is the essence of much of her mate’s philosophy; but, in the following to Sterling, she somewhat bitterly protests against her own absorption: “In spite of the honestest efforts to annihilate my I—ity or merge it in what the world doubtless considers my better half, I still find myself a self-subsisting, and, alas, self-seeking me.”

The ever-restive consciousness of being submerged is one of the dominant notes of her journal, the other is the sense of being even within the circle unrecognised. “C. is a domestic wandering Jew. . . . When he is at work I hardly ever see his face from breakfast to dinner.” . . . “Poor little wretch that I am, . . . I feel as if I were already half-buried . . . in some intermediate state between the living and the dead. . . . Oh, so lonely.” These are among the suspiria de profundis of a life which her husband compared to “a great joyless stoicism,” writing to the brother, whom he had proposed as a third on their first home-coming:—“Solitude, indeed, is sad as Golgotha, but it is not mad like Bedlam; absence of delirium is possible only for me in solitude”; a sentiment almost literally acted on. In his offering of penitential cypress, referring to his wife’s delight in the ultimate success of his work, he says, “She
flickered round me like a perpetual radiance." But during their joint lives their numerous visits and journeys were made at separate times or apart. They crossed continually on the roads up and down, but when absent wrote to one another often the most affectionate letters. Their attraction increased, contrary to Newton's law, in the direct ratio of the square of the distance, and when it was stretched beyond the stars the long-latent love of the survivor became a worship.

Carlyle's devotion to his own kin, blood of his blood and bone of his bone, did not wait for any death to make itself declared. His veneration for his mother was reciprocated by a confidence and pride in him unruffled from cradle to grave, despite their widening theoretic differences; for with less distinct acknowledgment she seems to have practically shared his belief, "it matters little what a man holds in comparison with how he holds it." But on his wife's side the family bond was less absolute, and the fact adds a tragic interest to her first great bereavement after the settlement in London. There were many callers—increasing in number and eminence as time went on—at Cheyne Row; but naturally few guests. Among these, Mrs. Carlyle's mother paid, in 1838, her first and last visit, unhappily attended by some unpleasant friction. Grace Welsh (through whom her daughter derived the gipsy vein) had been in early years a beauty and a woman of fashion, endowed with so much natural ability that Carlyle, not altogether predisposed in her favour, confessed she had just missed being a genius; but she was accustomed to have her way, and old Walter of Penfillan confessed to having seen her in fifteen different humours in one evening. Welcomed on her arrival, misunderstandings soon arose. Carlyle himself had to interpose with conciliatory advice to his wife to bear with her mother's humours. One
household incident, though often quoted, is too characteristic to be omitted. On occasion of an evening party, Mrs. Welsh, whose ideas of hospitality, if not display, were perhaps larger than those suited for her still struggling hosts, had lighted a show of candles for the entertainment, whereupon the mistress of the house, with an air of authority, carried away two of them, an act which her mother resented with tears. The penitent daughter, in a mood like that which prompted Johnson to stand in the Uttoxeter market-place, left in her will that the candles were to be preserved and lit about her coffin, round which, nearly thirty years later, they were found burning. Carlyle has recorded their last sight of his mother-in-law in a few of his many graphic touches. It was at Dumfries in 1841, where she had brought Jane down from Templand to meet and accompany him back to the south. They parted at the door of the little inn, with deep suppressed emotion, perhaps overcharged by some presentiment; Mrs. Welsh looking sad but bright, and their last glimpse of her was the feather in her bonnet waving down the way to Lochmaben gate. Towards the close of February 1842 news came that she had had an apoplectic stroke, and Mrs. Carlyle hurried north, stopping to break the journey at her uncle’s house in Liverpool; when there she was so prostrated by the sudden announcement of her mother’s death that she was prohibited from going further, and Carlyle came down from London in her stead. On reaching Templand he found that the funeral had already taken place. He remained six weeks, acting as executor in winding up the estate, which now, by the previous will, devolved on his wife. To her during the interval he wrote a series of pathetic letters. Reading these,—which, with others from Haddington in the following years make an anthology of tenderness and ruth, reading them alongside of his angry
invectives, with his wife's own accounts of the bilious earthquakes and peevish angers over petty cares; or worse, with ebullitions of jealousy assuming the mask of contempt, we again revert to the biographer who has said almost all that ought to be said of Carlyle, and more: "It seemed as if his soul was divided, like the Dioscuri, as if one part of it was in heaven, and the other in the place opposite heaven. But the misery had its origin in the same sensitiveness of nature which was so tremulously alive to soft and delicate emotion. Men of genius . . . are like the wind-harp which answers to the breath that touches it, now low and sweet, now rising into wild swell or angry scream, as the strings are swept by some passing gust." This applies completely to men like Burns, Byron, Heine, and Carlyle, less to the Miltons, Shakespeares, and Goethes of the world.

The crisis of bereavement, which promised to bind the husband and wife more closely together, brought to an end a dispute in which for once Mrs. Carlyle had her way. During the eight years over which we have been glancing, Carlyle had been perpetually grumbling at his Chelsea life: the restless spirit, which never found peace on this side of the grave, was constantly goading him with an impulse of flight and change, from land to sea, from shore to hills; anywhere or everywhere, at the time, seemed better than where he was. America and the Teufelsdröckh wanderings abandoned, he reverted to the idea of returning to his own haunts. A letter to Emerson in 1839 best expresses his prevalent feeling:—

This foggy Babylon tumbles along as it was wont; and as for my particular case uses me not worse but better than of old. Nay, there are many in it that have a real friendliness for me. . . . The worst is the sore tear and wear of this huge roaring Niagara of things on such a poor excitable set of nerves as mine.
The velocity of all things, of the very word you hear on the streets, is at railway rate; joy itself is unenjoyable, to be avoided like pain; there is no wish one has so pressingly as for quiet. Ah me! I often swear I will be buried at least in free breezy Scotland, out of this insane hubbub... if ever the smallest competence of worldly means be mine, I will fly this whirlpool as I would the Lake of Maebolge.

The competence had come, the death of Mrs. Welsh leaving to his wife and himself practically from £200 to £300 a year; why not finally return to the home of their early restful secluded life, "in reductâ valle," with no noise around it but the trickle of rills and the nibbling of sheep? Craigenputtock was now their own, and within its "four walls" they would begin a calmer life. Fortunately Mrs. Carlyle, whose shrewd practical instinct was never at fault, saw through the fallacy, and set herself resolutely against the scheme. Scotland had lost much of its charm for her—a year later she refused an invitation from Mrs. Aitken, saying, "I could do nothing at Scotsbrig or Dumfries but cry from morning to night." She herself had enough of the Hill of the Hawks, and she knew that within a year Carlyle would again be calling it the Devil's Den and lamenting Cheyne Row. He gave way with the protest, "I cannot deliberately mean anything that is harmful to you," and certainly it was well for him.

There is no record of an original writer or artist coming from the north of our island to make his mark in the south, succeeding, and then retracing his steps. Had Carlyle done so, he would probably have passed from the growing recognition of a society he was beginning to find on the whole congenial, to the solitude of intellectual ostracism. Scotland may be breezy, but it is not conspicuously free. Erratic opinions when duly veiled are generally allowed; but this concession is of little worth. On the tolerance of those
who have no strong belief in anything, Carlyle, thinking possibly of rose-water Hunt and the litterateurs of his tribe, expressed himself with incisive and memorable truth: “It is but doubt and indifference. Touch the thing they do believe and value, their own self-conceit: they are rattlesnakes then.”

Tolerance for the frank expression of views which clash with the sincere or professed faith of the majority is rare everywhere; in Scotland rarest. English Churchmen, high and broad, were content to condone the grim Calvinism still infiltrating Carlyle’s thoughts, and to smile, at worst, at his idolatry of the iconoclast who said, “the idolater shall die the death.” But the reproach of “Pantheism” was for long fatal to his reception across the Tweed.

Towards the close of this period he acknowledged that London was “among improper places” the best for “writing books, after all the one use of living” for him; its inhabitants “greatly the best” he “had ever walked with,” and its aristocracy—the Marshalls, Stanleys, Hollands, Russells, Ashburtons, Lansdownes, who held by him through life—its “choicest specimens.” Other friendships equally valued he made among the leading authors of the age. Tennyson sought his company, and Connon Thirlwall. Arnold of Rugby wrote in commendation of the French Revolution and hailed Chartism. Thackeray admired him and reviewed him well. In Macaulay, condemned to limbo under the suspicion of having reviewed him ill, he found, when the suspicion was proved unjust, a promise of better things. As early as 1839 Sterling had written an article in the Westminster, which gave him intense pleasure; for while contemning praise in almost the same words as Byron did, he loved it equally well. In 1840 he had crossed the Rubicon that lies between aspiration and attainment. The populace

1 The italics are Mr. Froude’s.
might be blind or dumb, the "rattlesnakes"—the "irresponsible indolent reviewers," who from behind a hedge pelt every wrestler till they found societies for the victor—might still obscurely hiss; but Carlyle was at length safe by the verdict of the "Conscript Fathers."
CHAPTER V
CHEYNE ROW
[1842–1853]

The bold venture of coming to London with a lean purse, few friends, and little fame had succeeded: but it had been a terrible risk, and the struggle had left scars behind it. To this period of his life we may apply Carlyle’s words,—made use of by himself at a later date,—“The battle was over and we were sore wounded.” It is as a maimed knight of modern chivalry, who sounded the réveil for an onslaught on the citadels of sham, rather than as a prophet of the future that his name is likely to endure in the history of English thought. He has also a place with Scott amongst the recreators of bygone ages, but he regarded their annals less as pictures than as lesson-books. His aim was that expressed by Tennyson to “steal fire from fountains of the past,” but his design was to admonish rather than to glorify the present.” This is the avowed object of the second of his distinctly political works, which following on the track of the first, Chartism, and written in a similar spirit, takes higher artistic rank. Past and Present, suggested by a visit to the poorhouse of St. Ives and by reading the chronicle of Jocelin de Brakelond, was undertaken as a duty, while he was mainly engaged on a
greater work,—the duty he felt laid upon him to say something that should bear directly on the welfare of the people, especially of the poor around him. It was an impulse similar to that which inspired *Oliver Twist*, but Carlyle's remedies were widely different from those of Dickens. Not merely more kindness and sympathy, but paternal government, supplying work to the idle inmates of the workhouse, and insisting, by force if need be, on it being done, was his panacea. It had been Abbot Samson's way in his strong government of the Monastery of St. Edmunds, and he resolved, half in parable, half in plain sermon, to recommend it to the Ministers Peel and Russell.

In this mood, the book was written off in the first seven weeks of 1843, a *tour de force* comparable to Johnson's writing of *Rasselas*. Published in April, it at once made a mark by the opposition as well as by the approval it excited. Criticism of the work—of its excellences, which are acknowledged, and its defects as manifold—belongs to a review of the author's political philosophy; it is enough here to note that it was remarkable in three ways. *First*, the object of its main attack, *laissez faire*, being a definite one, it was capable of having and had some practical effect. Mr. Froude exaggerates when he says that Carlyle killed the pseudo-science of orthodox political economy; for the fundamental truths in the works of Turgot, Smith, Ricardo, and Mill cannot be killed: but he pointed out that, like Aristotle's leaden rule, the laws of supply and demand must be made to bend; as Mathematics made mechanical must allow for friction, so must Economics leave us a little room for charity. There is ground to believe that the famous Factory Acts owed some of their suggestions to *Past and Present*. Carlyle always speaks respectfully of the future Lord Shaftesbury. "I heard Milnes saying," notes the Lady Sneerwell of real life, "at the Shuttleworths that..."
Lord Ashley was the greatest man alive: he was the only man that Carlyle praised in his book. I daresay he knew I was overhearing him." But, while supplying arguments and a stimulus to philanthropists, his protests against philanthropy as an adequate solution of the problem of human misery became more pronounced. About the date of the conception of this book we find in the Journal:—

Again and again of late I ask myself in whispers, is it the duty of a citizen to paint mere heroisms? . . . Live to make others happy! Yes, surely, at all times, so far as you can. But at bottom that is not the aim of my life . . . it is mere hypocrisy to call it such, as is continually done nowadays. . . . Avoid cant. Do not think that your life means a mere searching in gutters for fallen figures to wipe and set up.

Past and Present, in the second place, is notable as the only considerable consecutive book—unless we also except the Life of Sterling,—which the author wrote without the accompaniment of wrestlings, agonies, and disgusts. Thirdly, though marking a stage in his mental progress, the fusion of the refrains of Chartism and Hero-Worship, and his first clear breach with Mazzini and with Mill, the book was written as an interlude, when he was in severe travail with his greatest contribution to English history. The last rebuff which Carlyle encountered came, by curious accident, from the Westminster, to which Mill had engaged him to contribute an article on "Oliver Cromwell." While this was in preparation, Mill had to leave the country on account of his health, and gave the review in charge to an Aberdonian called Robertson, who wrote to stop the progress of the essay with the message that he had decided to undertake the subject himself. Carlyle was angry; but, instead of sullenly throwing the MS. aside, he set about constructing on its basis a History of the Civil War.

Numerous visits and tours during the following three
years, though bringing him into contact with new and interesting personalities, were mainly determined by the resolve to make himself acquainted with the localities of the war; and his knowledge of them has contributed to give colour and reality to the finest battle-pieces in modern English prose. In 1842 with Dr. Arnold he drove from Rugby fifteen miles to Naseby, and the same year, after a brief yachting trip to Belgium—in the notes on which the old Flemish towns stand out as clearly as in Longfellow’s verse—he made his pilgrimage to St. Ives and Ely Cathedral, where Oliver two centuries before had called out to the recalcitrant Anglica in the pulpit, “Cease your fooling and come down.” In July 1843 Carlyle made a trip to South Wales; to visit first a worthy devotee called Redwood, and then Bishop Thirlwall near Carmarthen. “A right solid simple-hearted robust man, very strangely swathed,” is the visitor’s meagre estimate of one of our most classic historians.

On his way back he carefully reconnoitred the field of Worcester. Passing his wife at Liverpool, where she was a guest of her uncle, and leaving her to return to London and brush up Cheyne Row, he walked over Snowdon from Llanberis to Beddgelert with his brother John. He next proceeded to Scotsbrig, then north to Edinburgh, and then to Dunbar, which he contrived to visit on the 3rd of September, an anniversary revived in his pictured page with a glow and force to match which we have to revert to Bacon’s account of the sea-fight of the Revenge. From Dunbar he returned to Edinburgh, spent some time with his always admired and admiring friend Erskine of Linlathen, a Scotch broad churchman of the type of F. D. Maurice and Macleod Campbell, and then went home to set in earnest to the actual writing of his work. He had decided to abandon the design of a History, and to make his book a Biography of Cromwell, interlacing with it the main features and events
of the Commonwealth. The difficulties even of this reduced plan were still immense, and his groans at every stage in its progress were "louder and more loud," *e.g.* "My progress in *Cromwell* is frightful." "A thousand times I regretted that this task was ever taken up." "The most impossible book of all I ever before tried," and at the close, "*Cromwell* I must have written in 1844, but for four years previous it had been a continual toil and misery to me; four years of abstruse toil, obscure speculation, futile wrestling, and misery I used to count it had cost me." The book issued in 1845 soon went through three editions, and brought the author to the front as the most original historian of his time. Macaulay was his rival, but in different paths of the same field. About this time Mr. Froude became his pupil, and has left an interesting account (iii. 290-300) of his master's influence over the Oxford of those days, which would be only spoilt by selections. Oxford, like Athens, ever longing after something new, patronised the Chelsea prophet, and then calmed down to her wonted cynicism. But Froude and Ruskin were, as far as compatible with the strong personality of each, always loyal; and the capacity inborn in both, the power to breathe life into dry records and dead stones, had at least an added impulse from their master.

The year 1844 is marked by the publication in the *Foreign Quarterly* of the essay on *Dr. Francia*, and by the death of John Sterling,—loved with the love of David for Jonathan—outside his own family losses, the greatest wrench in Carlyle's life. Sterling's published writings are as inadequate to his reputation as the fragmentary remains of Arthur Hallam; but in friendships, especially unequal friendships, personal fascination counts for more than half, and all are agreed as to the charm in both instances of the inspiring companionships. Arch-
deacon Hare having given a somewhat coldly correct account of Sterling as a clergyman, Carlyle three years later, in 1851, published his own impressions of his friend as a thinker, sane philanthropist, and devotee of truth, in a work that, written in a three months’ fervour, has some claim to rank, though faltering, as prose after verse, with *Adonais, In Memoriam*, and Matthew Arnold’s *Thyrsis*.

These years are marked by a series of acts of unobtrusive benevolence, the memory of which has been in some cases accidentally rescued from the oblivion to which the benefactor was willing to have them consigned. Carlyle never boasted of doing a kindness. He was, like Wordsworth, frugal at home beyond necessity; but often as generous in giving as he was ungenerous in judging. His assistance to Thomas Cooper, author of the *Purgatory of Suicides*, his time spent in answering letters of “anxious enquirers,” —letters that nine out of ten busy men would have flung into the waste-paper basket,—his interest in such works as Samuel Bamford’s *Life of a Radical*, and admirable advice to the writer;¹ his instructions to a young student on the choice of books, and well-timed warning to another against the profession of literature, are sun-riifs in the storm, that show “a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.” The same epoch, however,—that of the start of the

¹ These letters to Bamford, showing a keen interest in the working men of whom his correspondent had written, point to the ideal of a sort of Tory Democracy. Carlyle writes: “We want more knowledge about the Lancashire operatives; their miseries and gains, virtues and vices. Winnow what you have to say, and give us wheat free from chaff. Then the rich captains of workers will be willing to listen to you. Brevity and sincerity will succeed. Be brief and select, omit much, give each subject its proper proportionate space; and be exact without caring to round off the edges of what you have to say.” Later, he declines Bamford’s offer of verses, saying: “verse is a bugbear to booksellers at present. These are prosaic, earnest, practical, not singing times.”
great writer's almost uninterrupted triumph—brings us in face of an episode singularly delicate and difficult to deal with, but impossible to evade.

Carlyle, now generally recognised in London as having one of the most powerful intellects and by far the greatest command of language among his contemporaries, was beginning to suffer some of the penalties of renown in being beset by bores and travestied by imitators; but he was also enjoying its rewards. Eminent men of all shades of opinion made his acquaintance; he was a frequent guest of the genial Maccenas, an admirer of genius though no mere worshipper of success, R. Monckton Milnes; meeting Hallam, Bunsen, Pusey, etc., at his house in London, and afterwards visiting him at Fryston Hall in Yorkshire. The future Lord Houghton was, among distinguished men of letters and society, the one of whom he spoke with the most unvarying regard. Carlyle corresponded with Peel, whom he set almost on a par with Wellington as worthy of perfect trust, and talked familiarly with Bishop Wilberforce, whom he miraculously credits with holding at heart views much like his own. At a somewhat later date, in the circle of his friends, bound to him by various degrees of intimacy, History was represented by Thirlwall, Grote, and Froude; Poetry by Browning, Henry Taylor, Tennyson, and Clough; Social Romance by Kingsley; Biography by James Spedding and John Forster; and Criticism by John Ruskin. His link to the last named was, however, their common distrust of political economy, as shown in Unto This Last, rather than any deep artistic sympathy. In Macaulay, a conversationalist more rapid than himself, Carlyle found a rival rather than a companion; but his prejudiced view of physical science was forgotten in his personal affection for Tyndall and in their congenial politics. His society was from the publication of Cromwell till near his death increasingly
sought after by the aristocracy, several members of which invited him to their country seats, and bestowed on him all acceptable favours. In this class he came to find other qualities than those referred to in the Sartor inscription, and other aims than that of “preserving their game”—the ambition to hold the helm of the State in stormy weather, and to play their part among the captains of industry. In the Reminiscences the aristocracy are deliberately voted to be “for continual grace of bearing and of acting, steadfast honour, light address, and cheery stoicism, actually yet the best of English classes.” There can be no doubt that his intercourse with this class, as with men of affairs and letters, some of whom were his proximate equals, was a fortunate sequel to the duck-pond of Ecclefechan and the lonely rambles on the Border moors.

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,  
Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt.

The life of a great capital may be the crown of education, but there is a danger in homage that comes late and then without reserve. Give me neither poverty nor riches, applies to praise as well as to wealth; and the sudden transition from comparative neglect to

honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,

is a moral trial passing the strength of all but a few of the “irritable race” of writers. The deference paid to Carlyle made him yet more intolerant of contradiction, and fostered his selfishness, in one instance with the disastrous result of clouding a whole decade of his domestic life. In February 1839 he speaks of dining—“an eight-o’clock dinner which ruined me for a week”—with “a certain Baring,” at whose table in Bath House he again met Bunsen, and was introduced to Lord Mahon. This
was the beginning of what, after the death of Sterling, grew into the most intimate friendship of his life. Baring, son of Lord Ashburton of the American treaty so named, and successor to the title on his father’s death in 1848, was a man of sterling worth and sound sense, who entered into many of the views of his guest. His wife was by general consent the most brilliant woman of rank in London, whose grace, wit, refinement, and decision of character had made her the acknowledged leader of society. Lady Harriet, by the exercise of some overpowering though purely intellectual spell, made the proudest of men, the modern Diogenes, our later Swift, so much her slave that for twelve years, whenever he could steal a day from his work, he ran at her beck from town to country, from castle to cot; from Addiscombe, her husband’s villa in Surrey, to the Grange, her father-in-law’s seat in Hampshire; from Loch Luichart and Glen Finnan, where they had Highland shootings, to the Palais Royal. Mr. Froude’s comment in his introduction to the Journal is substantially as follows: Lady Harriet Baring or Ashburton was the centre of a planetary system in which every distinguished public man of genuine worth then revolved. Carlyle was naturally the chief among them, and he was perhaps at one time ambitious of himself taking some part in public affairs, and saw the advantage of this stepping-stone to enable him to do something more for the world, as Byron said, than write books for it. But the idea of entering Parliament, which seems to have once suggested itself to him in 1849, was too vague and transient to have ever influenced his conduct. It is more correct to say that he was flattered by a sympathy not too thorough to be tame, pleased by adulation never gross, charmed by the same graces that charmed the rest, and finally fascinated by a sort of hypnotism. The irritation which this strange alliance produced in the mind of the mistress of
Cheyne Row is no matter of surprise. Pride and affection together had made her bear with all her husband’s humours, and share with him all the toils of the struggle from obscurity. He had emerged, and she was still half content to be systematically set aside for his books, the inanimate rivals on which he was building a fame she had some claim to share. But her fiery spirit was not yet tamed into submitting to be sacrificed to an animate rival, or passively permitting the usurpation of companionship grudged to herself by another woman, whom she could not enjoy the luxury of despising. Lady Harriet’s superiority in finesse and geniality, as well as advantages of station, only aggravated the injury; and this with a singular want of tact Carlyle further aggravated when he insisted on his wife accepting the invitations of his hostess. These visits, always against the grain, were rendered more irritating from a half-conscious antagonism between the chief female actors in the tragi-comedy; the one sometimes innocently unobservant of the wants of her guest, the other turning every accidental neglect into a slight, and receiving every jest as an affront. Carlyle’s “Gloriana” was to the mind of his wife a “heathen goddess,” while Mrs. Carlyle, with reference to her favourite dog “Nero,” was in her turn nicknamed “Agrippina.”

In midsummer of 1846, after an enforced sojourn at Addiscombe in worse than her usual health, she returned to Chelsea with “her mind all churned to froth,” and opened it to her husband with such plainness that “there was a violent scene”: she left the house in a mood like that of the first Mrs. Milton, and took refuge with her friends the Paulets at Seaforth near Liverpool, uncertain whether or not she would return. There were only two persons from whom it seemed natural for her at such a crisis to ask advice; one was Geraldine Jewsbury, a young Manchester lady, authoress of a well-known novel, The Half-Sisters, from
the beginning of their acquaintance in 1841 till the close in
1866 her most intimate associate and chosen confidant,
who, we are told, "knew all" her secrets;¹ the other was
the inspired Italian, pure patriot and Stoic moralist, Joseph
Mazzini. To him she wrote twice—once apparently before
leaving London, and again from Seaford. His letters in
reply, tenderly sympathetic and yet rigidly insistent on the
duty of forbearance and endurance, availed to avert the
threatened catastrophe; but there are sentences which show
how bitter the complaints must have been.

It is only you who can teach yourself that, whatever the
present may be, you must front it with dignity. . . . I could
only point out to you the fulfilment of duties which can make
life—not happy—what can? but earnest, sacred, and resigned.
. . . I am carrying a burden even heavier than you, and have
undergone even bitterer deceptions. Your life proves an empty
thing, you say. Empty! Do not blaspheme. Have you never
done good? Have you never loved? . . . Pain and joy, decep-
tion and fulfilled hopes are just the rain and the sunshine that
must meet the traveller on his way. Bless the Almighty if He
has thought proper to send the latter to you. . . . Wrap your
cloak round you against the first, but do not think a single
moment that the one or the other have anything to do with the
end of the journey.

Carlyle's first letter after the rupture is a mixture of re-
proach and affection. "We never parted before in such a
manner; and all for literally nothing. . . . Adieu, dearest,
for that is, and, if madness prevail not, may for ever be
your authentic title." Another, enclosing the birthday
present which he had never omitted since her mother's
death, softened his wife's resentment, and the storm blew
over for a time. But while the cause remained there was in
the house at best a surface tranquillity, at worst an under-

¹ Carlyle often speaks, sometimes slightly, of Miss Jewsbury, as
a sensational novelist and admirer of George Sand, but he appreciated
her genuine worth.
tone of misery which (October 1855 to May 1856) finds voice in the famous Diary, not merely covered with "black spider webs," but steeped in gall, the publication of which has made so much debate. It is like a page from Othello reversed. A few sentences condense the refrain of the lament. "Charles Buller said of the Duchess de Praslin, 'What could a poor fellow do with a wife that kept a journal but murder her?'" "That eternal Bath House. I wonder how many thousand miles Mr. C. has walked between here and there?" "Being an only child, I never wished to sew men's trousers—no, never!

I gin to think I've sold myself
For very little cash.

"To-day I called on my lady: she was perfectly civil, for a wonder." "Edward Irving! The past is past and gone is gone—

O waly, waly, love is bonnie,
A little while when it is new;"

quotations which, laid alongside the records of the writer's visit to the people at Haddington, "who seem all to grow so good and kind as they grow old," and to the graves in the churchyard there, are infinitely pathetic. The letters that follow are in the same strain, e.g. to Carlyle when visiting his sister at the Gill, "I never forget kindness, nor, alas, unkindness either": to Luichart, "I don't believe thee, wishing yourself at home. . . . You don't, as weakly amiable people do, sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of others"; to Mrs. Russell at Thornhill, "My London doctor's prescription is that I should be kept always happy and tranquil (!!!)."

In the summer of 1856 Lady Ashburton gave a real ground for offence in allowing both the Carlyles, on their way
north with her, to take a seat in an ordinary railway carriage, beside her maid, while she herself travelled in a special saloon. Partly, perhaps in consequence, Mrs. Carlyle soon went to visit her cousins in Fifeshire, and afterwards refused to accompany her ladyship on the way back. This resulted in another quarrel with her husband, who had issued the command from Luichart—but it was their last on the subject, for Gloriana died on the 4th of the following May, 1857, at Paris: "The most queen-like woman I had ever known or seen, by nature and by culture *facile princeps* she, I think, of all great ladies I have ever seen." This brought to a close an episode in which there were faults on both sides, gravely punished: the incidents of its course and the manner in which they were received show, among other things, that railing at the name of "Happiness" does little or nothing to reconcile people to the want of the reality. In 1858 Lord Ashburton married again—a Miss Stuart Mackenzie, who became the attached friend of the Carlyles, and remained on terms of unruffled intimacy with both till the end: she survived her husband, who died in 1864, leaving a legacy of £2000 to the household at Cheyne Row. *Sic transit.*

From this date we must turn back over nearly twenty years to retrace the main steps of the great author's career. Much of the interval was devoted to innumerable visits, in acceptance of endless hospitalities, or in paying his annual devotions to Annandale,—calls on his time which kept him rushing from place to place like a comet. Two facts are notable about those expeditions: they rarely seemed to give him much pleasure, even at Scotsbrig he complained of sleepless nights and farm noises; and he was hardly ever accompanied by his wife. She too was constantly running north to her own kindred in Liverpool or Scotland, but their paths did not run parallel, they almost always intersected,
so that when the one was on the way north the other was homeward bound, to look out alone on "a horizon of zero." Only a few of these visits are worth recording as of general interest. Most of them were paid, a few received. In the autumn of 1846, Margaret Fuller, sent from Emerson, called at Cheyne Row, and recorded her impression of the master as "in a very sweet humour, full of wit and pathos, without being overbearing," adding that she was "carried away by the rich flow of his discourse"; and that "the hearty noble earnestness of his personal bearing brought back the charm of his writing before she wearied of it." A later visitor, Miss Martineau, his old helper in days of struggle, was now thus esteemed: "Broken into utter wearisomeness, a mind reduced to these three elements—imbecility, dogmatism, and unlimited hope. I never in my life was more heartily bored with any creature!" In 1847 there followed the last English glimpse of Jeffrey and the last of Dr. Chalmers, who was full of enthusiasm about Cromwell; then a visit to the Brights, John and Jacob, at Rochdale: with the former he had "a paltry speaking match" on topics described as "shallow, totally worthless to me," the latter he liked, recognising in him a culture and delicacy rare with so much strength of will and independence of thought. Later came a second visit from Emerson, then on a lecturing tour to England, gathering impressions revived in his English Traits. "His doctrines are too airy and thin," wrote Carlyle, "for the solid practical heads of the Lancashire region. We had immense talkings with him here, but found that he did not give us much to chew the cud upon. He is a pure-minded man, but I think his talent is not quite so high as I had anticipated." They had an interesting walk to Stonehenge together, and Carlyle attended one of his friend's lectures, but with modified approval, finding this serene "spiritual son" of his own rather "gone into
philanthropy and moonshine.” Emerson’s notes of this date, on the other hand, mark his emancipation from mere discipleship. “Carlyle had all the kleinstädtlicher traits of an islander and a Scotsman, and reprimanded with severity the rebellious instincts of the native of a vast continent. . . . In him, as in Byron, one is more struck with the rhetoric than with the matter. . . . There is more character than intellect in every sentence, therein strangely resembling Samuel Johnson.” The same year Carlyle perpetrated one of his worst criticisms, that on Keats:—

The kind of man he was gets ever more horrible to me. Force of hunger for pleasure of every kind, and want of all other force. . . . Such a structure of soul, it would once have been very evident, was a chosen “Vessel of Hell”; and in the next an ungenerously contemptuous reference to Macaulay’s History:—

The most popular ever written. Fourth edition already, within perhaps four months. Book to which four hundred editions could not add any value, there being no depth of sense in it at all, and a very great quantity of rhetorical wind.

Landor, on the other hand, whom he visited later at Bath, he appreciated, being “much taken with the gigantic, explosive but essentially chivalrous and almost heroic old man.”¹ He was now at ease about the sale of his books, having, inter alia, received £600 for a new edition of the French Revolution and the Miscellanies. His journal

¹ This is one of the few instances in which further knowledge led to a change for the better in Carlyle’s judgment. In a letter to Emerson, 1840, he speaks disparagingly of Landor as “a wild man, whom no extent of culture had been able to tame! His intellectual faculty seemed to me to be weak in proportion to his violence of temper; the judgment he gives about anything is more apt to be wrong than right,—as the inward whirlwind shows him this side or the other of the object; and sides of an object are all that he sees.” De te fabula. Emerson answers defending Landor, and indicating points of likeness between him and Carlyle.
is full of plans for a new work on Democracy, Organisation of Labour, and Education, and his letters of the period to Thomas Erskine and others are largely devoted to politics.

In 1846 he spent the first week of September in Ireland, crossing from Ardrossan to Belfast, and then driving to Drogheda, and by rail to Dublin, where in Conciliation Hall he saw O'Connell for the first time since a casual glimpse at a radical meeting arranged by Charles Buller—a meeting to which he had gone out of curiosity in 1834. O'Connell was always an object of Carlyle's detestation, and on this occasion he does not mince his words.

Chief quack of the then world . . . first time I had ever heard the lying scoundrel speak . . . Demosthenes of blarney . . . the big beggar-man who had £15,000 a year, and, proh pudor! the favour of English ministers instead of the pillory.

At Dundrum he met by invitation Carleton the novelist, with Mitchell and Gavan Duffy,¹ the Young Ireland leaders whom he seems personally to have liked, but he told Mitchell that he would probably be hanged, and said during a drive about some flourishing and fertile fields of the Pale, "Ah! Duffy, there you see the hoof of the bloody Saxon." He returned from Kingston to Liverpool on the 10th, and so closed his short and unsatisfactory trip. Three years later, July to August 6th 1849, he paid a longer and final visit to the "ragged commonweal" or "common woe," as Raleigh called

¹ Sir C. Gavan Duffy, in the "Conversations and Correspondence," now being published in the Contemporary Review, naturally emphasises Carlyle's polished, more genial side, and prints several expressions of sympathy with the "Tenant Agitations"; but his demur to the Reminiscences of My Irish Journey being accepted as an accurate account of the writer's real sentiments is of little avail in face of the letters to Emerson, more strongly accentuating the same views, e.g. "Bothered almost to madness with Irish balderdash . . . 'Blacklead these two million idle beggars,' I sometimes advised, 'and sell them in Brazil as niggers!'"—perhaps Parliament on sweet constraint will allow you to advance them to be niggers!"
it, landing at Dublin, and after some days there passing on to Kildare, Kilkenny, Lismore, Waterford, beautiful Killarney and its beggar hordes, and then to Limerick, Clare, Castlebar, where he met W. E. Forster, whose acquaintance he had made two years earlier at Matlock. At Gweedore in Donegal he stayed with Lord George Hill, whom he respected, though persuaded that he was on the wrong road to Reform by Philanthropy in a country where it had never worked; and then on to half Scotch Derry. There, August 6th, he made an emphatic after-breakfast speech to a half-sympathetic audience; the gist of it being that the remedy for Ireland was not “emancipation” or “liberty,” but to “cease following the devil, as it had been doing for two centuries.” The same afternoon he escaped on board a Glasgow steamer, and landed safe at 2 A.M. on the morning of the 7th. The notes of the tour, set down on his return to Chelsea and republished in 1882, have only the literary merit of the vigorous descriptive touches inseparable from the author’s lightest writing; otherwise they are mere rough-and-tumble jottings, with no consecutive meaning, of a rapid hawk’s-eye view of the four provinces.

But Carlyle never ceased to maintain the thesis they set forth, that Ireland is, for the most part, a country of semi-savages, whose staple trade is begging, whose practice is to lie, unfit not only for self-government but for what is commonly called constitutional government, whose ragged people must be coerced, by the methods of Raleigh, of Spenser, and of Cromwell, into reasonable industry and respect for law. At Westport, where “human swinery has reached its aeme,” he finds “30,000 paupers in a population of 60,000, and 34,000 kindred hulks on outdoor relief, lifting each an ounce of mould with a shovel, while 5000 lads are pretending to break stones,” and exclaims, “Can it be a charity to keep men alive on these terms? In face
of all the twaddle of the earth, shoot a man rather than
train him (with heavy expense to his neighbours) to be a
deceptive human swine." Superficial travellers generally
praise the Irish. Carlyle had not been long in their
country when he formulated his idea of the Home Rule
that seemed to him most for their good.

Kildare Railway: big blockhead sitting with his dirty feet
on seat opposite, not stirring them for one who wanted to sit
there. "One thing we're all agreed on," said he; "we're very
ill governed: Whig, Tory, Radical, Repealer, all admit we're
very ill-governed!" I thought to myself, "Yes, indeed; you
govern yourself! He that would govern you well would prob-
ably surprise you much, my friend—laying a hearty horse-whip
over that back of yours."

And a little later at Castlebar he declares, "Society
here would have to eat itself and end by cannibalism in a
week, if it were not held up by the rest of our Empire
standing afoot." These passages are written in the spirit
which inspired his paper on "The Nigger Question" and
the aggressive series of assaults to which it belongs, on
what he regarded as the most prominent quackeries, shams,
and pretence philanthropies of the day. His own account of
the reception of this work is characteristic:—

In 1849, after an interval of deep gloom and bottomless
dubitation, came Latter-Day Pamphlets, which unpleasantly
astonished everybody, set the world upon the strangest supposi-
tions—"Carlyle got deep into whisky," said some,—ruined my
reputation according to the friendliest voices, and in effect
divided me altogether from the mob of "Progress-of-the-species"
and other vulgar; but were a great relief to my own conscience
as a faithful citizen, and have been ever since.

These pamphlets alienated Mazzini and Mill, and pro-
vided the assault of the newspapers; which, by the author's
confession, did something to arrest and restrict the sale.
Nor was this indignation wholly unnatural. Once in his life, on occasion of his being called to serve at a jury trial, Carlyle, with remarkable adroitness, coaxed a recalcitrant jurymen into acquiescence with the majority; but coaxing as a rule was not his way. When he found himself in front of what he deemed to be a falsehood his wont was to fly in its face and tear it to pieces. His satire was not like that of Horace, who taught his readers *ridendo dicere verum*, it was rather that of the elder Lucilius or the later Juvenal; not that of Chaucer, who wrote—

That patience is a virtue high is plain,
Because it conquers, as the clerks explain,
Things that rude valour never could attain,

but that of *The Lay*, attributed to Raleigh, or Swift's *Gulliver* or the letters of Junius. The method of direct denunciation has advantages: it cannot be mistaken, nor, if strong enough, ignored; but it must lay its account with consequences, and Carlyle in this instance found them so serious that he was threatened at the height of his fame with dethronement. Men said he had lost his head, gone back to the everlasting "No," and mistaken swearing all round for political philosophy. The ultimate value attached to the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* must depend to a large extent on the view of the critic. It is now, however, generally admitted on the one hand that they served in some degree to counteract the rashness of Philanthropy; on the other, that their effect was marred by more than the writer's usual faults of exaggeration. It is needless to refer the temper they display to the troubles then gathering about his domestic life. A better explanation is to be found in the public events of the time.

The two years previous to their appearance were the Revolution years, during which the European world seemed
to be turned upside down. The French had thrown out their bourgeois king, Louis Philippe—"the old scoundrel," as Carlyle called him,—and established their second Republic. Italy, Hungary, and half Germany were in revolt against the old authorities; the Irish joined in the chorus, and the Chartist monster petition was being carted to Parliament. Upheaval was the order of the day, kings became exiles and exiles kings, dynasties and creeds were being subverted, and empires seemed rocking as on the surface of an earthquake. They were years of great aspirations, with beliefs in all manner of swift regeneration—

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo,

all varieties of doctrinaire idealisms. Mazzini failed at Rome, Kossuth at Pesth; the riots of Berlin resulted in the restoration of the old dull bureaucratic regime; Smith O'Brien's bluster exploded in a cabbage garden; the Railway Bubble burst in the fall of the bloated king Hudson, and the Chartism of the time evaporated in smoke. The old sham gods, with Buonaparte of the stuffed eagle in front, came back; because, concluded Carlyle, there was no man in the front of the new movement strong enough to guide it; because its figure-heads were futile sentimentals, insurgents who could not win. The reaction produced by their failure had somewhat the same effect on his mind that the older French Revolution had on that of Burke; he was driven back to a greater degree than Mr. Froude allows on practical conservatism and on the negations of which the Latter-Day Pamphlets are the expression. To this series of pronunciamentos of political scepticism he meant to add another, of which he often talks under the name of "Exodus from Houndsditch," boldly stating and setting forth the grounds of his now complete divergence from all forms of what either in
England or Europe generally could be called the Orthodox faith in Religion. He was, we are told, withheld from this by the feeling that the teaching even of the priests he saw and derided in Belgium or in Galway was better than the atheistic materialism which he associated with the dominion of mere physical science. He may have felt he had nothing definite enough to be understood by the people to substitute for what he proposed to destroy; and he may have had a thought of the reception of such a work at Scotsbrig. Much of the Life of Sterling, however, is somewhat less directly occupied with the same question, and though gentler in tone it excited almost as much clamour as the Pamphlets, especially in the north. The book, says Carlyle himself, was "utterly revolting to the religious people in particular (to my surprise rather than otherwise). 'Doesn't believe in us either!' Not he for certain; can't, if you will know." During the same year his almost morbid dislike of materialism found vent in denunciations of the "Crystal Palace" Exhibition of Industry; though for its main promoter, Prince Albert, he subsequently entertained and expressed a sincere respect.

In the summer of 1851 the Carlyles went together to Malvern, where they met Tennyson (whose good nature had been proof against some slighting remarks on his verses), Sydney Dobell, then in the fame of his "Roman," and other celebrities. They tried the "Water Cure," under the superintendence of Dr. Gully, who received and treated them as guests; but they derived little good from the process. "I found," says Carlyle, "water taken as medicine to be the most destructive drug I had ever tried." Proceeding northward, he spent three weeks with his mother, then in her eighty-fourth year and at last growing feeble; a quiet time only disturbed by indignation at
"one ass whom I heard the bray of in some Glasgow newspaper," comparing "our grand hater of shams" to Father Gavazzi. His stay was shortened by a summons to spend a few days with the Ashburtons at Paris on their return from Switzerland. Though bound by a promise to respond to the call, Carlyle did not much relish it. Travelling abroad was always a burden to him, and it was aggravated in this case by his very limited command of the language for conversational purposes. Fortunately, on reaching London he found that the poet Browning, whose acquaintance he had made ten years before, was, with his wife, about to start for the same destination, and he prevailed upon them, though somewhat reluctant, to take charge of him. The companionship was therefore not accidental, and it was of great service. "Carlyle," according to Mrs. Browning's biographer, "would have been miserable without Browning," who made all the arrangements for the party, passed luggage through the customs, saw to passports, fought the battles of all the stations, and afterwards acted as guide through the streets of the great city. By a curious irony, two verse-makers and admirers of George Sand made it possible for the would-be man of action to find his way. The poetess, recalling the trip afterwards, wrote that she liked the prophet more than she expected, finding his "bitterness only melancholy, and his scorn sensibility." Browning himself continued through life to regard Carlyle with "affectionate reverence." "He never ceased," says Mrs. Orr, "to defend him against the charge of unkindness to his wife, or to believe that, in the matter of their domestic unhappiness, she was the more responsible of the two. . . . He always thought her a hard unlovable woman, and I believe little liking was lost between them.

1 Mrs. Sutherland Orr's Life of Robert Browning.
Yet Carlyle never rendered him that service—easy as it appears—which one man of letters most justly values from another, that of proclaiming the admiration which he privately professed for his work.” The party started, September 24th, and reached Dieppe by Newhaven, after a rough passage, the effects of which on some fellow-travellers more unfortunate than himself Carlyle describes in a series of recently-discovered jottings made on his return, October 2nd, to Chelsea. On September 25th they reached Paris. Carlyle joined the Ashburtons at Murice’s Hotel; there dined, went in the evening to the Théâtre Français, cursed the play, and commented unpleasantly on General Changarnier sitting in the stalls.

During the next few days he met many of the celebrities of the time, and caricatured, after his fashion, their personal appearance, talk, and manner. These criticisms are for the most part of little value. The writer had in some of his essays shown almost as much capacity of understanding the great Frenchmen of the last century as was compatible with his Puritan vein; but as regards French literature since the Revolution he was either ignorant or alien. What light could be thrown on that interesting era by a man who could only say of the authors of La Comédie Humaine and Consuelo that they were ministers in a Phallus worship? Carlyle seems to have seen most of Thiers, whom he treats with good-natured condescension, but little insight: “round fat body, tapering like a ninepin into small fat feet, placidly sharp fat face, puckered eyeward . . . a frank, sociable kind of creature, who has absolutely no malignity towards any one, and is not the least troubled with self-seekings.” Thiers talked with contempt of Michelet; and Carlyle, uncon-

1 Partially reproduced, Pall Mall Gazette, April 9th 1890, with illustrative connecting comments.
scious of the numerous affinities between that historian of genius and himself, half assented. Prosper Mérimée, on the other hand, incensed him by some freaks of criticism, whether in badinage or in earnest—probably the former. "Jean Paul," he said, getting on the theme of German literature, "was a hollow fool of the first magnitude," and Goethe was "insignificant, unintelligible, a paltry kind of Scribe manqué." "I could stand no more of it, but lighted a cigar, and adjourned to the street. "You impertinent blasphemous blockhead!" this was sticking in my throat: better to retire without bringing it out." Of Guizot he writes, "Tartuffe, gaunt, hollow, resting on the everlasting 'No' with a haggard consciousness that it ought to be the everlasting 'Yea.'" "To me an extremely detestable kind of man." Carlyle missed General Cavaignac, "of all Frenchmen the one" he "cared to see." In the streets of Paris he found no one who could properly be called a gentleman. "The truly ingenious and strong men of France are here (i.e. among the industrial classes) making money, while the politician, literary, etc. etc. class is mere play-actorism." His summary before leaving at the close of a week, rather misspent, is: "Articulate-speaking France was altogether without beauty or meaning to me in my then diseased mood; but I saw traces of the inarticulate . . . much worthier."

Back in London, he sent Mrs. Carlyle to the Grange (distinguishing himself, in an interval of study at home, by washing the back area flags with his own hands), and there joined her till the close of the year. During the early part of the next he was absorbed in reading and planning work. Then came an unusually tranquil visit to Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, during which he had only to

1 The two men were mutually antagonistic; Mérimée tried to read the French Revolution, but flung the book aside in weariness or disdain.
complain that the servants were often obliged to run out of the room to hide their laughter at his humorous bursts. At the close of August 1852 he embarked on board a Leith steamer bound for Rotterdam, on his first trip to Germany. Home once more, in October, he found chaos come, and seas of paint overwhelming everything; “went to the Grange, and back in time to witness from Bath House the funeral, November 18th, of the great Duke,” remarking, “The one true man of official men in England, or that I know of in Europe, concludes his long course. . . . Tennyson’s verses are naught. Silence alone is respectable on such an occasion.” In March, again at the Grange, he met the Italian minister Azeglio, and when this statesman disparaged Mazzini—a thing only permitted by Carlyle to himself—he retorted with the remark, “Monsieur, vous ne le connaissez pas du tout, du tout.” At Chelsea, on his return, the fowl tragic-comedy reached a crisis, “the unprotected male” declaring that he would shoot them or poison them. “A man is not a Chatham nor a Wallenstein; but a man has work too, which the Powers would not quite wish to have suppressed by two and sixpence worth of bantams. . . . They must either withdraw or die.” Ultimately his mother-wife came to the rescue of her “babe of genius”; the cocks were bought off, and in the long-talked-of sound-proof room the last considerable work of his life, though painfully, proceeded. Meanwhile “brother John” had married, and Mrs. Carlyle went to visit the couple at Moffat. While there bad tidings came from Scotsbrig, and she dutifully hurried off to nurse her mother-in-law through an attack from which the strong old woman temporarily rallied. But the final stroke could not be long delayed. When Carlyle was paying his winter visit to the Grange in December news came that his mother was worse, and her recovery despaired of; and, by consent
of his hostess, he hurried off to Scotsbrig,—“mournful
leave given me by the Lady A., mournful encouragement
to be speedy, not dilatory,”—and arrived in time to hear
her last words. “Here is Tom come to bid you good-
night, mother,” said John. “As I turned to go, she said,
‘I’m muckle obleeged to you.’” She spoke no more, but
passed from sleep after sleep of coma to that of death, on
Sunday, Christmas Day, 1853. “We can only have one
mother,” exclaimed Byron on a like event—the solemn close
of many storms. But between Margaret Carlyle and the
son of whom she was so proud there had never been a
shadow. “If,” writes Mr. Froude, “she gloried in his
fame and greatness, he gloried more in being her son,
and while she lived she, and she only, stood between him
and the loneliness of which he so often and so passionately
complained.”

Of all Carlyle’s letters none are more tenderly beautiful
than those which he sent to Scotsbrig. The last, written on
his fifty-eighth birthday, December 4th, which she probably
never read, is one of the finest. The close of their way-
farer together left him solitary; his “soul all hung with
black,” and, for months to come, everything around was
overshadowed by the thought of his bereavement. In his
journal of February 28th 1854, he tells us that he had on
the Sunday before seen a vision of Mainhill in old days,
with mother, father, and the rest getting dressed for the
meeting-house. “They are gone now, vanished all; their
poor bits of thrifty clothes, . . . their pious struggling
efforts; their little life, it is all away. It has all melted
into the still sea, it was rounded with a sleep.” The entry
ends, as fitting, with a prayer: “O pious mother! kind, good,
brave, and truthful soul as I have ever found, and more
than I have elsewhere found in this world. Your poor
Tom, long out of his schooldays now, has fallen very
lonely, very lame and broken in this pilgrimage of his; and you cannot help him or cheer him . . . any more. From your grave in Ecclesfechan kirkyard yonder you bid him trust in God; and that also he will try if he can understand and do."
CHAPTER VI

THE MINOTAUR

[1863–1866]

Carlyle was now engaged on a work which required, received, and wellnigh exhausted all his strength, resulting in the greatest though the least generally read of all his books. Cromwell achieved, he had thrown himself for a season into contemporary politics, condescending even, contrary to his rule, to make casual contributions to the Press; but his temper was too hot for success in that arena, and his letters of the time are full of the feeling that the Latter-Day Pamphlets had set the world against him. Among his generous replies to young men asking advice, none is more suggestive than that in which he writes from Chelsea (March 9th 1860):

If my books teach you anything, don't mind in the least whether other people believe it or not; but lay it to heart ... as a real message left with you, which you must set about fulfilling, whatever others do. ... And be not surprised that "people have no sympathy with you." That is an accompaniment that will attend you all your days if you mean to live an earnest life.

But he himself, though "ever a fighter," felt that, even for him, it was not good to be alone. He decided there "was no use railing in vain like Timon"; he would go back again
from the present to the past, from the latter days of discord to seek countenance in some great figure of history, under whose aegis he might shelter the advocacy of his views. Looking about for a theme, several crossed his mind. He thought of Ireland, but that was too burning a subject; of William the Conqueror, of Simon de Montfort, the Norsemen, the Cid; but these may have seemed to him too remote. Why, ask patriotic Scotsmen, did he not take up his and their favourite Knox? But Knox’s life had been fairly handled by M’Crie, and Carlyle would have found it hard to adjust his treatment of that essentially national “hero” to the “Exodus from Houndsditch.” “Luther” might have been an apter theme; but there too it would have been a strain to steer clear of theological controversy, of which he had had enough. Napoleon was at heart too much of a gamin for his taste. Looking over Europe in more recent times, he concluded that the Prussian monarchy had been the main centre of modern stability, and that it had been made so by its virtual creator, Friedrich II., called the Great. Once entertained, the subject seized him as with the eye of Coleridge’s mariner, and, in spite of manifold efforts to get free, compelled him, so that he could “not choose but” write on it. Again and again, as the magnitude of the task became manifest, we find him doubting, hesitating, recalcitrating, and yet captive. He began reading Jomini, Preuss, the king’s own Memoirs and Despatches, and groaned at the mountains through which he had to dig. “Prussian Friedrich and the Pelion laid on Ossa of Prussian dry-as-dust lay crushing me with the continual question, Dare I try it? Dare I not?” At length, gathering himself together for the effort, he resolved, as before in the case of Cromwell, to visit the scenes of which he was to write. Hence the excursion to Germany of 1852, during which, with the kindly-offered guidance of Mr.
Neuberg, an accomplished German admirer of some fortune resident in London, he made his first direct acquaintance with the country of whose literature he had long been himself the English interpreter. The outlines of the trip may be shortly condensed from the letters written during its progress to his wife and mother. He reached Rotterdam on September 1st; then after a night made sleepless by “noisy nocturnal travellers and the most industrious cocks and clamorous bells” he had ever heard, he sailed up the river to Bonn, where he consulted books, saw “Father Arndt,” and encountered some types of the German professoriate, “miserable creatures lost in statistics.” There he met Neuberg, and they went together to Rolandseck, to the village of Hunef among the Sieben-Gebirge, and then on to Coblenz. After a detour to Ems, which Carlyle, comminating the gaming-tables, compared to Matlock, and making a pilgrimage to Nassau as the birthplace of William the Silent, they rejoined the Rhine and sailed admiringly up the finest reach of the river. From Mainz the philosopher and his guide went on to Frankfort, paid their respects to Goethe’s statue and the garret where Werther was written, the Judengasse, “grimmest section of the Middle Ages,” and the Römer—election hall of the old Kaisers; then to Homburg, where they saw an old Russian countess playing “gowpanfuls of gold pieces every stake,” and left after no long stay, Carlyle, in a letter to Scotsbrig, pronouncing the fashionable Badeort to be the “rallying-place of such a set of empty blackguards as are not to be found elsewhere in the world.” We find him next at Marburg, where he visited the castle of Philip of Hesse. Passing through Cassel, he went to Eisenach, and visited the neighbouring Wartburg, where he kissed the old oaken table, on which the Bible was made an open book for the German race, and noted the hole in the plaster where
the inkstand had been thrown at the devil and his noises: an incident to which eloquent reference is made in the lectures on "Heroes." Hence they drove to Gotha, and lodged in Napoleon's room after Leipzig. Then by Erfurt, with more Luther memories, they took rail to Weimar, explored the houses of Goethe and of Schiller, and dined by invitation with the Augustenburgs; the Grand Duchess, with sons and daughters, conversing in a Babylonish dialect, a melange of French, English, and German. The next stage seems to have been Leipzig, then in a bustle with the Fair. "However," says Carlyle, "we got a book or two, drank a glass of wine in Auerbach's Keller, and at last got off safe to the comparative quiet of Dresden." He ignores the picture galleries; and makes a bare reference to the palaces from which they steamed up the Elbe to the heart of Saxon Switzerland. There he surveyed Lobositz, first battle-field of the Seven Years' War, and rested at the romantic mountain watering-place of Töplitz. "He seems," wrote Mrs. Carlyle, "to be getting very successfully through his travels, thanks to the patience and helpfulness of Neuberg. He makes in every letter frightful misereres over his sleeping accommodations; but he cannot conceal that he is really pretty well." The writer's own misereres are as doleful and nearly as frequent; but she was really in much worse health. From Töplitz the companions proceeded in weary stellwagens to Zittau in Lusatia, and so on to Herrnhut, the primitive city of the Moravian brethren: a place not bigger than Annan, but beautiful, pure, and quiet beyond any town on the earth, I daresay; and, indeed, more like a saintly dream of ideal Calvinism made real than a town of stone and lime.

Onward by "dreary moory Frankfurt" on the Oder, whence they reconnoitred "the field of Kunersdorf, a scraggy village where Fritz received his worst defeat," they
reached the Prussian capital on the last evening of the month. From the British Hotel, Unter den Linden, we have, October 1st:—

I am dead stupid; my heart nearly choked out of me, and my head churned to pieces. ... Berlin is loud almost as London, but in no other way great ... about the size of Liverpool, and more like Glasgow.

They spent a week there (sight-seeing being made easier by an introduction from Lady Ashburton to the Ambassador), discovering at length an excellent portrait of Fritz, meeting Tieck, Cornelius, Ranck, Preuss, etc., and then got quickly back to London by way of Hanover, Cologne, and Ostend. Carlyle’s travels are always interesting, and would be more so without the tiresome, because ever the same, complaints. Six years later (1858) he made his second expedition to Germany, in the company of two friends, a Mr. Foxton—who is made a butt—and the faithful Neuberg. Of this journey, undertaken with a more exclusively business purpose, and accomplished with greater dispatch, there are fewer notes, the substance of which may be here anticipated. He sailed (August 21st) from Leith to Hamburg, admiring the lower Elbe, and then went out of his way to accept a pressing invitation from the Baron Usedom and his wife to the Isle of Rügen, sometimes called the German Isle of Wight. He went there by Stralsund, liked his hosts and their pleasant place, where for cocks crowing he had doves cooing; but in Putbus, the Richmond of the island, he had to encounter brood sows as well as cochin-chinas. From Rügen he went quickly south by Stettin to Berlin, then to Custrin to survey the field of Zorndorf, with what memorable result readers of Friedrich know. His next halt was at Liegnitz, headquarters for exploring the grounds of “Leuthen, the grandest of all the battles,” and Molwitz—first of Fritz’s fights—of which we hear so
much in the Reminiscences. His course lay on to Breslau, "a queer old city as ever you heard of, high as Edinburgh or more so," and, by Landshut, through the picturesque villages of the Riesen-Gebirge into Bohemia. There he first put up at Pardubitz in a vile, big inn, for bed a "trough eighteen inches too short, a mattress forced into it which cocked up at both ends"—such as most travellers in remoter Germany at that period have experienced. Carlyle was unfavourably impressed by the Bohemians; and "not one in a hundred of them could understand a word of German. They are liars, thieves, slatterns, a kind of miserable, subtler-Irish people,—Irish with the addition of ill-nature." He and his friends visited the fields of Chotusitz and Kolin, where they found the "Golden Sun," from which "the last of the Kings" had surveyed the ground, "sunk to be the dirtiest house probably in Europe." Thence he made for Prague, whose picturesque grandeur he could not help extolling. "Here," he writes, enclosing the flower to his wife, "is an authentic wild pink plucked from the battle-field. Give it to some young lady who practises 'the Battle of Prague' on her piano to your satisfaction." On September 15th he dates from Dresden, whence he spent a laborious day over Torgau. Thereafter they sped on, with the usual tribulations, by Hochkirk, Leipzig, Weissenfels, and Rossbach. Hurrying homeward, they were obliged to decline another invitation from the Duchess at Weimar; and, making for Guntershausen, performed the fatiguing journey from there to Aix-la-Chapelle in one day, i.e. travelling often in slow trains from 4 A.M. to 7 P.M., a foolish feat even for the euptict. Carlyle visited the cathedral, but has left a very poor account of the impression produced on him by the simple slab sufficiently inscribed, "Carolo Magno."
"Next morning stand upon the lid of Charlemagne,
abominable monks roaring out their idolatrous grand music within sight." By Ostend and Dover he reached home on the 22nd. A Yankee scamper trip, one might say, but for the result testifying to the enormous energy of the traveller. "He speaks lightly," says Mr. Froude, "of having seen Kolin, Torgau, etc. etc. No one would guess from reading these short notices that he had mastered the details of every field he visited; not a turn of the ground, not a brook, not a wood... had escaped him... There are no mistakes. Military students in Germany are set to learn Frederick's battles in Carlyle's account of them."

During the interval between those tours there are few events of interest in Carlyle's outer, or phases of his inner life which have not been already noted. The year 1854 found the country ablaze with the excitement of the Crimean War, with which he had as little sympathy as had Cobden or Bright or the members of Sturge's deputation. He had no share in the popular enthusiasm for what he regarded as a mere newspaper folly. All his political leaning was on the side of Russia, which, from a safe distance, having no direct acquaintance with the country, he always admired as a seat of strong government, the representative of wise control over barbarous races. Among the worst of these he reckoned the Turk, "a lazy, ugly, sensual, dark fanatic, whom we have now had for 400 years. I would not buy the continuance of him in Europe at the rate of sixpence a century." Carlyle had no more faith in the "Balance of power" than had Byron, who scoffed at it from another, the Republican, side as "balancing straws on kings' noses instead of wringing them off;" e.g.—

As to Russian increase of strength, he writes, I would wait till Russia meddled with me before I drew sword to stop his increase of strength. It is the idle population of editors, etc., that has done all this in England. One perceives clearly that ministers go forward in it against their will.
THE MINOTAUR

Even our heroisms at Alma—"a terrible, almost horrible, operation"—Balaclava, and Inkermann, failed to raise a glow in his mind, though he admitted the force of Tennyson's ringing lines. The alliance with the "scandalous copper captain," elected by the French, as the Jews chose Barabbas,—an alliance at which many patriots winced,—was to him only an added disgrace. Carlyle's comment on the subsequent visit to Osborne of Victor Hugo's "brigand," and his reception within the pale of legitimate sovereignty was, "Louis Bonaparte has not been shot hitherto. That is the best that can be said." Sedan brought most men round to his mind about Napoleon III.: but his approval of the policy of the Czars remains open to the criticism of M. Lanin. In reference to the next great struggle of the age, Carlyle was in full sympathy with the mass of his countrymen. He was as much enraged by the Sepoy rebellion as were those who blew the ringleaders from the muzzles of guns. "Tongue cannot speak," he exclaims, in the spirit of Noel Paton's picture, before it was amended or spoilt, "the horrors that were done on the English by these mutinous hyænas. Allow hyænas to mutiny and strange things will follow." He never seems to have revolved the question as to the share of his admired Muscovy in instigating the revolt. For the barbarism of the north he had ready apologies, for the savagery of the south mere execration; and he writes of the Hindoos as he did, both before and afterwards, of the negroes in Jamaica.

Three sympathetic obituary notices of the period expressed his softer side. In April 1854, John Wilson and Lord Cockburn died at Edinburgh. His estimate of the former is notable as that generally entertained, now that the race of those who came under the personal spell of Christopher North has passed:—
We lived apart as in different centuries; though to say the truth I always loved Wilson, he had much nobleness of heart, and many traits of noble genius, but the central tie-beam seemed always wanting; very long ago I perceived in him the most irreconcilable contradictions — Toryism with Sansculottism, Methodism of a sort with total incredulity, etc. . . . Wilson seemed to me always by far the most gifted of our literary men, either then or still: and yet intrinsically he has written nothing that can endure.

Cockburn is referred to in contrast as “perhaps the last genuinely national type of rustic Scotch sense, sincerity, and humour—a wholesome product of Scotch dialect, with plenty of good logic in it.” Later, Douglas Jerrold is described as “last of the London wits, I hope the last.” Carlyle’s letters during this period are of minor interest: many refer to visits paid to distinguished friends and humble relatives, with the usual complaints about health, servants, and noises. At Farlingay, where he spent some time with Edward FitzGerald, translator of Omar Khayyam, the lowing of cows took the place of cocks crowing. Here and there occurs a criticism or a speculation. That on his dreams is, in the days of “insomnia,” perhaps worth noting (F. iv. 154, 155); inter alia he says:—“I have an impression that one always dreams, but that only in cases where the nerves are disturbed by bad health, which produces light imperfect sleep, do they start into such relief as to force themselves on our waking consciousness.” Among posthumously printed documents of Cheyne Row, to this date belongs the humorous appeal of Mrs. Carlyle for a larger allowance of house money, entitled “Budget of a Femme Incomprise.” The arguments and statement of accounts, worthy of a bank auditor, were so irresistible that Carlyle had no resource but to grant the request, i.e. practically to raise the amount to £230, instead of £200 per annum. It has been calculated that his reliable
income even at this time did not exceed £400, but the rent of the house was kept very low, £30: he and his wife lived frugally, so that despite the expenses of the noise-proof room and his German tour he could afford in 1857 to put a stop to her travelling in second-class railway carriages; in 1860, when the success of the first instalment of his great work made an end of financial fears, to keep two servants; and in 1863 to give Mrs. Carlyle a brougham. Few men have left on the whole so unimpeachable a record in money matters.

In November 1854 there occurred an incident hitherto unrecorded in any biography. The Lord Rectorship of the University of Glasgow having fallen vacant, the “Conservative Club” of the year had put forward Mr. Disraeli as successor to the honorary office. A small body of Mr. Carlyle’s admirers among the senior students on the other side nominated him, partly as a tribute of respect and gratitude, partly in opposition to a statesman whom they then distrusted. The nomination was, after much debate, adopted by the so-called “Liberal Association” of that day; and, with a curious irony, the author of the Latter-Day Pamphlets and Friedrich II. was pitted, as a Radical, against the future promotor of the Franchise of 1867 as a Tory. It soon appeared that his supporters had underestimated the extent to which Mr. Carlyle had offended Scotch theological prejudice and outraged the current Philanthropy. His name received some sixty adherents, and had ultimately to be withdrawn. The nomination was received by the Press, and other exponents of popular opinion, with denunciations that came loudest and longest from the leaders of orthodox Dissent, then arrogating to themselves the profession of Liberalism and the initiation of Reform. Among the current expressions in reference to his social and religious creeds were the following:—
Carlyle's philanthropy is not that of Howard, his cure for national distress is to bury our paupers in peat bogs, driving wooden boards on the top of them. His entire works may be described as reiterating the doctrine that "whatever is is wrong." He has thrown off every form of religious belief and settled down into the conviction that the Christian profession of Englishmen is a sham. . . . Elect him and you bid God-speed to Pantheism and spiritualism. Mr. Carlyle neither possesses the talent nor the distinction, nor does he occupy the position which entitle a man to such an honour as the Rectorial Chair. The Scotch Guardian writes: But for the folly exhibited in bringing forward Mr. Disraeli, scarcely any party within the College or out of it would have ventured to nominate a still more obnoxious personage. This is the first instance we have been able to discover in which the suffrages of the youth of the University have been sought for a candidate who denied in his writings that the revealed Word of God is "the way, the truth, the life." It is impossible to separate Mr. Carlyle from that obtrusive feature of his works in which the solemn verities of our holy religion are sneered at as worn-out "biblicalities," "unbelievabilities," and religious profession is denounced as "dead putrescent cant." The reader of the Life of Sterling is not left to doubt for a moment the author's malignant hostility to the religion of the Bible. In that work, saving faith is described as "stealing into heaven by the modern method of sticking ostrich-like your head into fallacies on earth," that is to say, by believing in the doctrines of the Gospels. Now, after this, could the Principal and Professors of the University, the guardians of the faiths and morals of its inexperienced youth, accompany to the Common Hall, and allow to address the students a man who has degraded his powers to the life-labour of sapping and mining the foundations of the truth, and opened the fire of his fiendish raillery against the citadel of our best aspirations and dearest hopes?

In the result, two men of genius—however diverse—

1 Mr. Wylie states that "twice before his election by his own University he (Carlyle) had been invited to allow himself to be nominated for the office of Lord Rector, once by students in the University of Glasgow and once by those of Aberdeen: but both of these invitations he had declined." This as regards Glasgow is incorrect.

2 For the elucidation of some points of contact between Carlyle and Lord Beaconsfield, vide Mr. Froude's Life of the latter.
were discarded, and a Scotch nobleman of conspicuous talent, always an active, if not intrusive, champion of orthodoxy, was returned by an “overwhelming majority.” In answer to intelligence transmitted to Mr. Carlyle of these events, the president of the Association of his supporters—who had nothing on which to congratulate themselves save that only the benches of the rooms in which they held their meetings had been riotously broken,—received the following previously unpublished letter:—

CHELSEA, 16th December 1854.

DEAR SIR—I have received your Pamphlet; and return many thanks for all your kindness to me. I am sorry to learn, as I do for the first time from this narrative, what angry nonsense some of my countrymen see good to write of me. Not being much a reader of Newspapers, I had hardly heard of the Election till after it was finished; and I did not know that anything of this melancholy element of Heterodoxy, “Pantheism,” etc. etc., had been introduced into the matter. It is an evil, after its sort, this of being hated and denounced by fools and ignorant persons; but it cannot be mended for the present, and so must be left standing there.

That another wiser class think differently, nay, that they alone have any real knowledge of the question, or any real right to vote upon it, is surely an abundant compensation. If that be so, then all is still right; and probably there is no harm done at all!—To you, and the other young gentlemen who have gone with you on this occasion, I can only say that I feel you have loyally meant to do me a great honour and kindness; that I am deeply sensible of your genial recognition, of your noble enthusiasm (which reminds me of my own young years); and that in fine there is no loss or gain of an Election which can in the least alter these valuable facts, or which is not wholly insignificant to me in comparison with them. “Elections” are not a thing transacted by the gods, in general; and I have known very unbeautiful creatures “elected” to be kings, chief-priests, railway kings, etc., by the “most sweet voices,” and the spiritual virtue that inspires these, in our time!

Leaving all that, I will beg you all to retain your honourable
good feelings towards me; and to think that if anything I have
done or written can help any one of you in the noble problem
of living like a wise man in these evil and foolish times, it will
be more valuable to me than never so many Elections or Non-
elections.

With many good wishes and regards I heartily thank you
all, and remain—Yours very sincerely,

T. Carlyle.

Carlyle's letters to strangers are always valuable, for
they are terse and reticent. In writing to weavers, like
Bamford; to men in trouble, as Cooper; to students, states-
men, or earnest inquirers of whatever degree, a genuine
sympathy for them takes the place of the sympathy for
himself, often too prominent in the copious effusions to his
intimates. The letter above quoted is of special interest,
as belonging to a time from which comparatively few sur-
vive; when he was fairly under weigh with a task which
seemed to grow in magnitude under his gaze. The Life
of Friedrich could not be a succession of dramatic scenes, like
the French Revolution, nor a biography like Cromwell, illus-
trated by the surrounding events of thirty years. Carlyle
found, to his dismay, that he had involved himself in writ-
ing the History of Germany, and in a measure of Europe,
during the eighteenth century, a period perhaps the most
tangled and difficult to deal with of any in the world's
annals. He was like a man who, with intent to dig up a
pine, found himself tugging at the roots of an Igrasil
that twined themselves under a whole Hercynian forest.
His constant cries of positive pain in the progress of the
work are distressing, as his indomitable determination to
wrestle with and prevail over it is inspiring. There is no
imaginable image that he does not press into his service
in rattling the chains of his voluntary servitude. Above
all, he groans over the unwieldy mass of his authorities—
"anti-solar systems of chaff."

I read old German books dull as stupidity itself—nay superannuated stupidity—gain with labour the dreariest glimpses of unimportant extinct human beings ... but when I begin operating: how to reduce that widespread black desert of Brandenburg sand to a small human garden! ... I have no capacity of grasping the big chaos that lies around me, and reducing it to order. Order! Reducing! It is like compelling the grave to give up its dead!"

Elsewhere he compares his travail with the monster of his own creation to "Balder's ride to the death kingdoms, through frozen rain, sound of subterranean torrents, leaden-coloured air"; and in the retrospect of the Reminiscences touchingly refers to his thirteen years of rarely relieved isolation. "A desperate dead-lift pull all that time; my whole strength devoted to it ... withdrawn from all the world." He received few visitors and had few correspondents, but kept his life vigorous by riding on his horse Fritz (the gift of the Marshalls), "during that book, some 30,000 miles, much of it, all the winter part of it, under cloud of night, sun just setting when I mounted. All the rest of the day I sat, silent, aloft, insisting upon work, and such work, inviüssima Minerva, for that matter." Mrs. Carlyle had her usual share of the sufferings involved in "the awful Friedrich." "That tremendous book," she writes, "made prolonged and entire devastation of any satisfactory semblance of home life or home happiness." But when at last, by help of

1 Carlyle himself writes: "I felt well enough how it was crushing down her existence, as it was crushing down my own; and the thought that she had not been at the choosing of it, and yet must suffer so for it, was occasionally bitter to me. But the practical conclusion always was, Get done with it, get done with it! For the saving of us both that is the one outlook. And sure enough, I did stand by that dismal task with all my time and all my means; day and night wrestling with it, as with the ugliest dragon, which blotted out the daylight and the rest of the world to me till I should get it slain."
Neuber and of Mr. Larkin, who made the maps of
the whole book, the first two volumes were in type (they
appeared in autumn 1858), his wife hailed them in a letter
sent from Edinburgh to Chelsea: "Oh, my dear, what a
magnificent book this is going to be, the best of all your
books, forcible, clear, and sparkling as the French Re-
volution; compact and finished as Cromwell. Yes, you
shall see that it will be the best of all your books, and
small thanks to it, it has taken a doing." On which the
author naively purrs: "It would be worth while to write
books, if mankind would read them as you." Later he
speaks of his wife's recognition and that of Emerson—who
wrote enthusiastically of the art of the work, though much
of it was across his grain—as "the only bit of human
criticism in which he could discern lineaments of the
thing." But the book was a swift success, two editions of
2000 and another of 1000 copies being sold in a com-
paratively brief space. Carlyle's references to this—
after his return from another visit to the north and the
second trip to Germany—seem somewhat ungracious:

Book . . . much babbled over in newspapers . . . no better
to me than the barking of dogs . . . officious people put
reviews into my hands, and in an idle hour I glanced partly
into these; but it would have been better not, so sordidly
ignorant and impertinent were they, though generally laudatory.

But these notices recall the fact familiar to every
writer, that while the assailants of a book sometimes read
it, favourable reviewers hardly ever do; these latter save
their time by payment of generally superficial praise, and
a few random quotations.

Carlyle scarcely enjoyed his brief respite on being dis-
charged of the first instalment of his book: the remainder
lay upon him like a menacing nightmare; he never ceased
to feel that the work must be completed ere he could be
free, and that to accomplish this he must be alone. Never absent from his wife without regrets, lamentations, contrite messages, and childlike entreaties for her to "come and protect him," when she came it was to find that they were better apart; for his temper was never softened by success. "Living beside him," she writes in 1858, is "the life of a weathercock in high wind." During a brief residence together in a hired house near Aberdour in Fife-shire, she compares herself to a keeper in a madhouse; and writes later from Sunnybank to her husband, "If you could fancy me in some part of the house out of sight, my absence would make little difference to you, considering how little I do see of you, and how preoccupied you are when I do see you." Carlyle answers in his touching strain, "We have had a sore life pilgrimage together, much bad road. Oh, forgive me!" and sends her beautiful descriptions; but her disposition, not wholly forgiving, received them somewhat sceptically. "Byron," said Lady Byron, "can write anything, but he does not feel it"; and Mrs. Carlyle on one occasion told her "harsh spouse" that his fine passages were very well written for the sake of future biographers; a charge he almost indignantly repudiates. He was then, August 1860, staying at Thurso Castle, the guest of Sir George Sinclair; a visit that terminated in an unfortunate careless mistake about a sudden change of plans, resulting in his wife, then with the Stanleys at Alderley, being driven back to Chelsea and deprived of her promised pleasure and requisite rest with her friends in the north.

The frequency of such incidents,—each apart capable of being palliated by the same fallacy of division that has attempted in vain to justify the domestic career of Henry VIII,—points to the conclusion of Miss Gully that Carlyle, though often nervous on the subject, acted to his wife as if he were "totally inconsiderate of her health," so much so.
that she received medical advice not to be much at home when he was in the stress of writing. In January 1858 he writes to his brother John an anxious letter in reference to a pain about a hand-breadth below the heart, of which she had begun to complain, the premonitory symptom of the disease which ultimately proved fatal; but he was not sufficiently impressed to give due heed to the warning; nor was it possible, with his long-engrained habits, to remove the Marah spring that lay under all the wearisome bickerings, repentances, and renewals of offence. The "very little herring" who declined to be made a part of Lady Ashburton's luggage now suffered more than ever from her inanimate rival. The highly-endowed wife of one of the most eminent philanthropists of America, whose life was devoted to the awakening of defective intellects, thirty-five years ago murmured, "If I were only an idiot!" Similarly Mrs. Carlyle might have remonstrated, "Why was I not born a book?" Her letters and journal teem to tiresomeness with the refrain, "I feel myself extremely neglected for unborn generations." Her once considerable ambitions had been submerged, and her own vivid personality overshadowed by a man she was afraid to meet at breakfast, and glad to avoid at dinner. A woman of immense talent and a spark of genius linked to a man of vast genius and imperious will, she had no choice but to adopt his judgments, intensify his dislikes, and give a sharper edge to his sneers.

Mr. Froude, who for many years lived too near the sun to see the sun, and inconsistently defends many of the inconsistencies he has himself inherited from his master, yet admits that Carlyle treated the Broad Church party in the English Church with some injustice. His recorded estimates of the leading theologians of the age, and personal relation to them, are hopelessly bewildering. His lifelong friendship for Erskine of Linlathen is intelligible, though he did
not extend the same charity to what he regarded as the middle-headedness of Maurice (Erskine's spiritual son), and keenly ridiculed the reconciliation pamphlet entitled "Subscription no Bondage." The Essayists and Reviewers, "Septem contra Christum," "should," he said, "be shot for deserting their posts"; even Dean Stanley, their amicus curiae, whom he liked, came in for a share of his sarcasm; "there he goes," he said to Froude, "boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England." Of Colenso, who was doing as much as any one for the "Exodus from Houndsditch," he spoke with open contempt, saying, "he mistakes for fame an extended pillory that he is standing on"; and was echoed by his wife, "Colenso isn't worth talking about for five minutes, except for the absurdity of a man making arithmetical onslaughts on the Pentateuch with a bishop's little black silk apron on." This is not the place to discuss the controversy involved; but we are bound to note the fact that Carlyle was, by an inverted Scotch intolerance, led to revile men rowing in the same boat as himself, but with a different stroke. To another broad Churchman, Charles Kingsley, partly from sympathy with this writer's imaginative power, he was more considerate; and one of the still deeply religious freethinkers of the time was among his closest friends. The death of Arthur Clough in 1861 left another blank in Carlyle's life: we have had in this century to lament the comparatively early loss of few men of finer genius. Clough had not, perhaps, the practical force of Sterling, but his work is of a higher order than any of the fragments of the earlier favourite. Among High Churchmen Carlyle commended Dr. Pusey as "solid and judicious," and fraternised with the Bishop of Oxford; but he called Keble "an ape," and said of Cardinal Newman that he had "no more brains than an ordinary-sized rabbit."
These years are otherwise marked by his most glaring political blunder. The Civil War, then raging in America, brought, with its close, the abolition of Slavery throughout the States, a consummation for which he cared little, for he had never professed to regard the negroes as fit for freedom; but this result, though inevitable, was incidental. As is known to every one who has the remotest knowledge of Transatlantic history, the war was in great measure a struggle for the preservation of National Unity: but it was essentially more; it was the vindication of Law and Order against the lawless and disorderly violence of those who, when defeated at the polling-booth, flew to the bowie knife; an assertion of Right as Might for which Carlyle cared everything; yet all he had to say of it was his "Ilias Americana in nuce," published in Macmillan's Magazine, August 1863.

*Peter of the North* (to Paul of the South): "Paul, you unaccountable scoundrel, I find you hire your servants for life, not by the month or year as I do. You are going straight to Hell, you——"

*Paul*: "Good words, Peter. The risk is my own. I am willing to take the risk. Hire you your servants by the month or the day, and get straight to Heaven; leave me to my own method."

*Peter*: "No, I won't. I will beat your brains out first!" [And is trying dreadfully ever since, but cannot yet manage it.]

This, except the *Prinzenraub*, a dramatic presentation of a dramatic incident in old German history, was his only side publication during the writing of *Friedrich*.

After the war ended and Emerson's letters of remonstrance had proved prophetic, Carlyle is said to have confessed to Mr. Moncure Conway as well as to Mr. Froude that he "had not seen to the bottom of the matter." But his republication of this nadir of his nonsense was an offence,
emphasising the fact that, however inspiring, he is not always a safe guide, even to those content to abide by his own criterion of success.

There remains of this period the record of a triumph and of a tragedy. After seven years more of rarely interrupted toil, broken only by a few visits, trips to the seaside, etc., and the distress of the terrible accident to his wife,—her fall on a curbstone and dislocation of a limb,—which has been often sufficiently detailed, he had finished his last great work. The third volume of Friedrich was published in May 1862, the fourth appeared in February 1864, the fifth and sixth in March 1865. Carlyle had at last slain his Minotaur, and stood before the world as a victorious Theseus, everywhere courted and acclaimed, his hard-earned rest only disturbed by a shower of honours. His position as the foremost prose writer of his day was as firmly established in Germany, where his book was at once translated and read by all readers of history, as in England, Scotland, now fully awake to her reflected fame, made haste to make amends. Even the leaders of the sects, bond and “free,” who had denounced him, were now eager to proclaim that he had been intrinsically all along, though sometimes in disguise, a champion of their faith. No men knew better how to patronise, or even seem to lead, what they had failed to quell. The Universities made haste with their burnt-offerings. In 1856 a body of Edinburgh students had prematurely repeated the attempt of their forerunners in Glasgow to confer on him their Lord Rectorship, and failed. In 1865 he was elected, in opposition again to Mr. Disraeli, to succeed Mr. Gladstone, the genius of elections being in a jesting mood. He was prevailed on to accept the honour, and, later, consented to deliver in the spring of 1866 the customary Inaugural Address. Mrs. Carlyle’s anxiety on this occasion as to his success and his health is a tribute
to her constant and intense fidelity. He went north to his Installation, under the kind care of encouraging friends, imprimis of Professor Tyndall,¹ one of his truest; they stopped on the road at Fryston, with Lord Houghton, and there met Professor Huxley, who accompanied them to Edinburgh. Carlyle, having resolved to speak and not merely to read what he had to say, was oppressed with nervousness; and of the event itself he writes: "My speech was delivered in a mood of defiant despair, and under the pressure of nightmare. Some feeling that I was not speaking lies alone sustained me. The applause, etc., I took for empty noise, which it really was not altogether." The address, nominally on the "Reading of Books," really a rapid autobiography of his own intellectual career, with references to history, literature, religion, and the conduct of life, was, as Tyndall telegraphed to Mrs. Carlyle,—save for some difficulty the speaker had in making himself audible —"a perfect triumph." His reception by one of the most enthusiastic audiences ever similarly assembled marked the climax of a steadily-increasing fame. It may be compared to the late welcome given to Wordsworth in the Oxford Theatre. After four days spent with Erskine and his own brother James in Edinburgh, he went for a week’s quiet to Scotsbrig, and was kept there, lingering longer than he had intended, by a sprained ankle, "blessed in the country stillness, the purity of sky and earth, and the absence of all babble." On April 20th he wrote his last letter to his wife, a letter which she never read. On the evening of Saturday the 21st, when staying on the way south at his sister’s house at Dumfries, he received a telegram inform-

¹ For the most interesting, loyally sympathetic, and characteristic account of Carlyle’s journey north on this occasion, and of the incidents which followed, we may refer to New Fragments, by John Tyndall, just published.
ing him that the close companionship of forty years—companionship of struggle and victory, of sad and sweet so strangely bent—was for ever at an end. Mrs. Carlyle had been found dead in her carriage when driving round Hyde Park on the afternoon of that day, her death (from heart-disease) being accelerated by an accident to a favourite little dog. Carlyle felt as "one who hath been stunned," hardly able to realise his loss. "They took me out next day... to wander in the green sunny Sabbath fields, and ever and anon there rose from my sick heart the ejaculation, 'My poor little woman,' but no full gust of tears came to my relief, nor has yet come." On the following Monday he set off with his brother for London. "Never for a thousand years shall I forget that arrival here of ours, my first unwelcomed by her. She lay in her coffin, lovely in death. Pale death and things not mine or ours had possession of our poor darling." On Wednesday they returned, and on Thursday the 26th she was buried in the nave of the old Abbey Kirk at Haddington, in the grave of her father. The now desolate old man, who had walked with her over many a stony road, paid the first of his many regretful tributes in the epitaph inscribed over her tomb: in which follows, after the name and date of birth:

**In her bright existence she had more sorrows than are common, but also a soft invincibility, a capacity of discernment, and a noble loyalty of heart which are rare. For 40 years she was the true and loving helpmate of her husband, and by act and word unweariedly forwarded him as none else could in all of worthy that he did or attempted. She died at London, 21st April 1866, suddenly snatched from him, and the light of his life as if gone out.**
CHAPTER VII
DECADENCE
[1866–1881]

After this shock of bereavement Carlyle's days went by "on broken wing," never brightening, slowly saddening to the close; but lit up at intervals by flashes of the indomitable energy that, starting from no vantage, had conquered a world of thought, and established in it, if not a new dynasty, at least an intellectual throne. Expressions of sympathy came to him from all directions, from the Queen herself downwards, and he received them with the grateful acknowledgment that he had, after all, been loved by his contemporaries. When the question arose as to his future life, it seemed a natural arrangement that he and his brother John, then a childless widower who had retired from his profession with a competence, should take up house together. The experiment was made, but, to the discredit of neither, it proved a failure. They were in some respects too much alike. John would not surrender himself wholly to the will or whims even of one whom he revered, and the attempt was by mutual consent abandoned; but their affectionate correspondence lasted through the period of their joint lives. Carlyle, being left to himself in his "gaunt and lonesome home," after a short visit to Miss
Bromley, an intimate friend of his wife, at her residence in Kent, accepted the invitation of the second Lady Ashburton to spend the winter in her house at Mentone. There he arrived on Christmas Eve 1866, under the kind convoy of Professor Tyndall, and remained breathing the balmy air and gazing on the violet sea till March of the following year. During the interval he occupied himself in writing his Reminiscences, drawing pen-and-ink pictures of the country, steeped in beauty fit to soothe any sorrow save such as his, and taking notes of some of the passers-by. Of the greatest celebrity then encountered, Mr. Gladstone, he writes in his journal, in a tone intensified as time went on: "Talk copious, ingenious, . . . a man of ardent faculty, but all gone irrecoverably into House of Commons shape. . . . Man once of some wisdom or possibility of it, but now possessed by the Prince, or many Princes, of the Air." Back in Chelsea, he was harassed by heaps of letters, most of which, we are told, he answered, and spent a large portion of his time and means in charities.

Amid Carlyle's irreconcilable inconsistencies of theory, and sometimes of conduct, he was through life consistent in practical benevolence. The interest in the welfare of the working classes that in part inspired his Sartor, Chartism, and Past and Present never failed him. He was among the foremost in all national movements to relieve and solace their estate. He was, further, with an amiable disregard of his own maxims, overlenient towards the waifs and strays of humanity, in some instances careless to inquire too closely into the causes of their misfortune or the degree of their demerits. In his latter days this disposition grew upon him: the gray of his own evening skies made him fuller of compassion to all who lived in the shade. Sad himself, he mourned with those who mourned; afflicted, he held out hands to all in affliction. Consequently "the poor
were always with him,” writing, entreating, and personally soliciting all sorts of alms, from advice and help to ready money. His biographer informs us that he rarely gave an absolute refusal to any of these various classes of beggars. He answered a letter which is a manifest parody of his own surface misanthropy; he gave a guinea to a ticket-of-leave convict, pretending to be a decayed tradesman; and a shilling to a blind man, whose dog took him over the crossing to a gin shop. Froude remonstrated; “Poor fellow,” was the answer, “I daresay he is cold and thirsty.” The memory of Wordsworth is less warmly cherished among the dales of Westmoreland than that of Carlyle in the lanes of Chelsea, where “his one expensive luxury was charity.”

His attitude on political questions, in which for ten years he still took a more or less prominent part, represents him on his stern side. The first of these was the controversy about Governor Eyre, who, having suppressed the Jamaica rebellion by the violent and, as alleged, cruel use of martial law, and hung a quadroon preacher called Gordon—the man whether honest or not being an undoubted incendiary—without any law at all, was by the force of popular indignation dismissed in disgrace, and then arraigned for misgovernment and illegality. In the movement, which resulted in the governor’s recall and impeachment, there was doubtless the usual amount of exaggeration—represented by the violent language of one of Carlyle’s minor biographers: “There were more innocent people slain than at Jeffreys’ Bloody Assize”; “The massacre of Glencoe was nothing to it”; “Members of Christian Churches were flogged,” etc. etc.—but among its leaders there were so many men of mark and celebrity, men like John S. Mill, T. Hughes, John Bright, Fawcett, Cairnes, Goldwin Smith, Herbert Spencer, and Frederick Harrison, that it could not be set aside as a mere unreasoning clamour. It was a hard
test of Carlyle's theory of strong government; and he stood to his colours. Years before, on John Sterling suggesting that the negroes themselves should be consulted as to making a permanent engagement with their masters, he had said, "I never thought the rights of the negroes worth much discussing in any form. Quashee will get himself made a slave again, and with beneficent whip will be compelled to work." On this occasion he regarded the black rebellion in the same light as the Sepoy revolt. He organised and took the chair of a "Defence Committee," joined or backed by Ruskin, Henry Kingsley, Tyndall, Sir R. Murchison, Sir T. Gladstone, and others. "I never," says Mr. Froude, "knew Carlyle more anxious about anything." He drew up a petition to Government and exerted himself heart and soul for the "brave, gentle, chivalrous, and clear man," who when the ship was on fire "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, and deserved to be made "dictator of Jamaica for the next twenty-five years," to govern after the model of Dr. Francia in Paraguay. The committee failed to get Eyre reinstalled or his pension restored; but the impeachment was unsuccessful.

The next great event was the passing of the Reform Bill of 1867, by the Tories, educated by Mr. Disraeli to this method of "dishing the Whigs," by outbidding them in the scramble for votes. This instigated the famous tract called Shooting Niagara, written in the spirit of the Latter-Day Pamphlets—Carlyle's final and unqualified denunciation of this concession to Democracy and all its works. But the upper classes in England seemed indifferent to the warning. "Niagara, or what you like," the author quotes as the saying of a certain shining countess, "we
will at least have a villa on the Mediterranean when Church and State have gone." A mot emphatically of the decadence.

Later he fulminated against the Clerkenwell explosions being a means of bringing the Irish question within the range of practical politics.

I sit in speechless admiration of our English treatment of those Fenians first and last. It is as if the rats of a house had decided to expel and extirpate the human inhabitants, which latter seemed to have neither rat-catchers, traps, nor arsenic, and are trying to prevail by the method of love.

Governor Eyre, with Spenser's Essay on Ireland for text and Cromwell's storm of Drogheda for example, or Otto von Bismarck, would have been, in his view, in place at Dublin Castle.

In the next great event of the century, the close of the greatest European struggle since Waterloo, the cause which pleased Cato pleased also the gods. Carlyle, especially in his later days, had a deepening confidence in the Teutonic, a growing distrust of the Gallic race. He regarded the contest between them as one between Ormuzd and Ahriman, and wrote of Sedan, as he had written of Rossbach, with exultation. When a feeling spread in this country, naming itself sympathy for the fallen,—really half that, the other half, as in the American war, being jealousy of the victor,—and threatened to be dangerous, Carlyle wrote a decisive letter to the Times, November 11th 1870, tracing the sources of the war back to the robberies of Louis XIV., and ridiculing the prevailing sentiment about the recaptured provinces of Lothringen and Elsass. With a possible reference to Victor Hugo and his clients, he remarks—

They believe that they are the "Christ of Nations." . . . I wish they would inquire whether there might not be a Cartouche of nations. Cartouche had many gallant qualities—had many
fine ladies begging locks of his hair while the indispensable gibbet was preparing. Better he should obey the heavy-handed Teutsch police officer, who has him by the windpipe in such frightful manner, give up part of his stolen goods, altogether cease to be a Cartouche, and try to become again a Chevalier Bayard. All Europe does not come to the rescue in gratitude for the heavenly illumination it is getting from France: nor could all Europe if it did prevent that awful Chancellor from having his own way. Metz and the boundary-fence, I reckon, will be dreadfully hard to get out of that Chancellor's hands again. . . . Considerable misconception as to Herr von Bismarck is still prevalent in England. He, as I read him, is not a person of Napoleonic ideas, but of ideas quite superior to Napoleonic. . . . That noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany should be at length welded into a nation, and become Queen of the Continent, instead of vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome, restless, and over-sensitive France, seems to me the hopefulest fact that has occurred in my time.

Carlyle seldom wrote with more force, or with more justice. Only, to be complete, his paper should have ended with a warning. He has done more than any other writer to perpetuate in England the memories of the great thinkers and actors—Fichte, Richter, Arndt, Körner, Stein, Goethe,—who taught their countrymen how to endure defeat and retrieve adversity. Who will celebrate their yet undefined successors, who will train Germany gracefully to bear the burden of prosperity? Two years later Carlyle wrote or rather dictated, for his hand was beginning to shake, his historical sketch of the Early Kings of Norway, showing no diminution of power either of thought or expression, his estimates of the three Hakons and of the three Olafs being especially notable; and a paper on The Portraits of John Knox, the prevailing dull gray of which is relieved by a radiant vision of Mary Stuart.

He was incited to another public protest, when, in May 1877, towards the close of the Russo-Turkish war, he had got, or imagined himself to have got, reliable information
that Lord Beaconsfield, then Prime Minister, having sent our fleet to the Dardanelles, was planning to seize Gallipoli and throw England into the struggle. Carlyle never seems to have contemplated the possibility of a Slavo-Gallic alliance against the forces of civilised order in Europe, and he chose to think of the Czars as the representatives of an enlightened autocracy. We are here mainly interested in the letter he wrote to the Times, as “his last public act in this world,”—the phrase of Mr. Froude, who does not give the letter, and unaccountably says it “was brief, not more than three or four lines.” It is as follows:—

Sir—A rumour everywhere prevails that our miraculous Premier, in spite of the Queen’s Proclamation of Neutrality, intends, under cover of care for “British interests,” to send the English fleet to the Baltic, or do some other feat which shall compel Russia to declare war against England. Latterly the rumour has shifted from the Baltic and become still more sinister, on the eastern side of the scene, where a feat is contemplated that will force, not Russia only, but all Europe, to declare war against us. This latter I have come to know as an indisputable fact; in our present affairs and outlooks surely a grave one.

As to “British interests” there is none visible or conceivable to me, except taking strict charge of our route to India by Suez and Egypt, and for the rest, resolutely steering altogether clear of any copartnery with the Turk in regard to this or any other “British interest” whatever. It should be felt by England as a real ignominy to be connected with such a Turk at all. Nay, if we still had, as we ought to have, a wish to save him from perdition and annihilation in God’s world, the one future for him that has any hope in it is even now that of being conquered by the Russians, and gradually schooled and drilled into peaceable attempt at learning to be himself governed. The newspaper outcry against Russia is no more respectable to me than the howling of Bedlam, proceeding as it does from the deepest ignorance, egoism, and paltry national jealousy.

These things I write, not on hearsay, but on accurate knowledge, and to all friends of their country will recommend immediate attention to them while there is yet time, lest in a
few weeks the maddest and most criminal thing that a British
government could do, should be done and all Europe kindle into
flames of war.—I am, etc.

T. CARLYLE.

5 CHEyne RoW, CHELSEA,
May 4th.

Meanwhile honours without stint were being rendered to
the great author and venerable sage. In 1868 he had by
request a personal interview with the Queen, and has left,
in a letter, a graphic account of the interview at the Dean-
ery of Westminster. Great artists as Millais, Watts, and
Boehm vied with one another, in painting or sculpture, to
preserve his lineaments; prominent reviews to record their
impression of his work, and disciples to show their grati-
tude. One of these, Professor Masson of Edinburgh, in
memory of Carlyle's own tribute to Goethe, started a sub-
scription for a medal, presented on his eightieth birthday;
but he valued more a communication of the same date from
Prince Bismarck. Count Bernstof from Berlin wrote him
(1871) a semi-official letter of thanks for the services he
had conferred on Germany, and in 1874 he was prevailed
on to accept the Prussian "Ordre pour le mérite." In
the same year Mr. Disraeli proposed, in courteous oblivion
of bygone hostilities, to confer on him a pension and the
"Order of the Grand Cross of Bath," an emolument
and distinction which Carlyle, with equal courtesy, declined.
To the Countess of Derby, whom he believed to be the
originator of the scheme, he (December 30th) expressed his
sense of the generosity of the Premier's letter: "It reveals
to me, after all the hard things I have said of him, a new
and unexpected stratum of genial dignity and manliness
of character." To his brother John he wrote: "I do, how-
ever, truly admire the magnanimity of Dizzy in regard to
me. He is the only man I almost never spoke of without
contempt... and yet see here he comes with a pan of
hot coals for my guilty head.” That he was by no means
aggred by personal feeling or seduced in matters of policy
is evident from the above-quoted letter to the Times; but he
liked Disraeli better than he did his great rival; the one may
have bewildered his followers, the other, according to his
critic's view, deceived himself—the lie, in Platonic phrase,
had got into the soul, till, to borrow an epigram, “he made
his conscience not his guide but his accomplice.” “Carlyle,”
says Mr. Froude, “did not regard Mr. Gladstone merely as
an orator who, knowing nothing as it ought to be known,
had flung his force into specious sentiments, but as the
representative of the numerous cants of the age . . .
differing from others in that the cant seemed true to him.
He in fact believed him to be one of those fatal figures
created by England’s evil genius to work irreparable mis-
chief.” It must be admitted that Carlyle’s censures are so
broadcast as to lose half their sting. In uncontroversial
writing, it is enough to note that his methods of reforming
the world and Mr. Gladstone’s were as far as the poles
asunder; and the admirers of the latter may console them-
selves with the reflection that the censor was, at the same
time, talking with equal disdain of the scientific discoverers
of the age—conspicuously of Mr. Darwin, whom he de-
scribes as “evolving man’s soul from frog spawn,” adding,
“I have no patience with these gorilla damnifications of
humanity.” Other criticisms, as those of George Eliot,
whose Adam Bede he pronounced “simply dull,” display a
curious limitation or obtuseness of mind.

One of the pleasantest features of his declining years is
the ardour of his attachment to the few staunch friends who
helped to cheer and console them. He had a sincere regard
for Fitzjames Stephen, “an honest man with heavy strokes”; for
Sir Garnet Wolseley, to whom he said in effect, “Your
duty one day will be to take away that bauble and close
the doors of the House of Discord"; for Tyndall always; for Lecky, despite their differences; for Moncure Conway, athwart the question of "nigger" philanthropies; for Kingsley and Tennyson and Browning, the last of whom was a frequent visitor till near the end. Froude he had bound to his soul by hoops of steel; and a more faithful disciple and apostle, in intention always, in practice in the main (despite the most perplexing errors of judgment), no professed prophet ever had. But Carlyle's highest praise is reserved for Ruskin, whom he regarded as no mere art critic, but as a moral power worthy to receive and carry onward his own "cross of fire." The relationship between the two great writers is unchequered by any shade of patronage on the one hand, of jealousy or adulation on the other. The elder recognised in the younger an intellect as keen, a spirit as fearless as his own, who in the Eyre controversy had "plunged his rapier to the hilt in the entrails of the Blatant Beast," i.e. Popular Opinion. He admired all Ruskin's books; the *Stones of Venice*, the most solid structure of the group, he named "Sermons in Stones"; he resented an attack on *Sesame and Lilies* as if the book had been his own; and passages of the *Queen of the Air* went into his heart "like arrows." The *Order of the Rose* has attempted a practical embodiment of the review contemplated by Carlyle, as a counteractive to the money making practice and expediency-worships of the day.

Meanwhile he had been putting his financial affairs in order. In 1867, on return from Mentone, he had recorded his bequest of the revenues of Craigenputtock for the endowment of three John Welsh bursaries in the University of Edinburgh. In 1873 he made his will, leaving John Forster and Froude his literary executors: a legacy of trust which, on the death of the former, fell to the latter, to whose discretion, by various later bequests, less and less
limited, there was confined the choice—at last almost made a duty—of editing and publishing the manuscripts and journals of himself and his wife.

Early in his seventy-third year (December 1867) Carlyle quotes, "Youth is a garland of roses," adding, "I did not find it such. 'Age is a crown of thorns.' Neither is this altogether true for me. If sadness and sorrow tend to loosen us from life, they make the place of rest more desirable." The talk of Socrates in the Republic, and the fine phrases in Cicero's De Senectute, hardly touch on the great grief, apart from physical infirmities, of old age—its increasing solitariness. After sixty, a man may make disciples and converts, but few new friends, while the old ones die daily; the "familiar faces" vanish in the night to which there is no morning, and leave nothing in their stead.

During these years Carlyle's former intimates were falling round him like the leaves from an autumn tree, and the kind care of the few survivors, the solicitous attention of his niece, nurse, and amanuensis, Mary Aitken, yet left him desolate. Clough had died, and Thomas Erskine, and John Forster, and Wilberforce, with whom he thought he agreed, and Mill, his old champion and ally, with whom he so disagreed that he almost maligned his memory—calling one of the most interesting of autobiographies "the life of a logic-chopping machine." In March 1876 he attended the funeral of Lady Augusta Stanley; in the following month his brother Aleck died in Canada; and in 1878 his brother John at Dumfries. He seemed destined to be left alone; his physical powers were waning. As early as 1868 he and his last horse had their last ride together; later, his right hand failed, and he had to write by dictation. In the gathering gloom he began to look on death as a release from the shreds of life, and to envy the old Roman mode of shuffling off the coil. His thoughts
turned more and more to Hamlet's question of the possible dreams hereafter, and his longing for his lost Jeannie made him beat at the iron gates of the "Undiscovered Country." with a yearning cry; but he could get no answer from reason, and would not seek it in any form of superstition, least of all the latest, that of stealing into heaven "by way of mesmeric and spiritualistic trances." His question and answer are always—

Strength quite a stranger to me. . . . Life is verily a weariness on those terms. Oftest I feel willing to go, were my time come. Sweet to rejoin, were it only in eternal sleep, those that are away. That . . . is now and then the whisper of my worn-out heart, and a kind of solace to me. "But why annihilation or eternal sleep?" I ask too. They and I are alike in the will of the Highest.

"When," says Mr. Froude, "he spoke of the future and its uncertainties, he fell back invariably on the last words of his favourite hymn—

Wir heissen euch hoffen.

His favourite quotations in those days were Macbeth's "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow"; Burns's line, "Had we never lo'ed sae kindly,"—thinking of the tomb which he was wont to kiss in the gloamin' in Haddington Church,—the lines from "The Tempest" ending, "our little life is rounded with a sleep," and the dirge in "Cymbeline."

He lived on during the last years, save for his quiet walks with his biographer about the banks of the Thames, like a ghost among ghosts, his physical life slowly ebbing till, on February 4th 1881, it ebbed away. His remains were, by his own desire, conveyed to Ecclefechan and laid under the snow-clad soil of the rural churchyard, beside the dust of his kin. He had objected to be buried, should the request be made (as it was by Dean Stanley), in Westminster Abbey: ἔνδρων γάρ ἐπιφανῶν πάσα γῆ τάφος.
Of no man whose life has been so laid bare to us is it more difficult to estimate the character than that of Thomas Carlyle; regarding no one of equal eminence, with the possible exception of Byron, has opinion been so divided. After his death there was a carnival of applause from his countrymen in all parts of the globe, from Canton to San Francisco. Their hot zeal, only equalled by that of their revelries over the memory of Burns, was unrestrained by limit, order, or degree. No nation is warmer than the Scotch in worship of its heroes when dead and buried: one per fervid enthusiast says of the former “Atheist, Deist, and Pantheist”: “Carlyle is gone; his voice, pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, will be heard no more”: the Scotsman newspaper writes of him as “probably the greatest of modern literary men; . . . before the volcanic glare of his French Revolution all Epics, ancient and modern, grow pale and shadowy, . . . his like is not now left in the world.” More recently a stalwart Aberdonian, on helping to put a bust into a monument, exclaims in a strain of genuine ardour, “I knew Carlyle, and I aver to you that his heart was as large and generous as his brain was powerful; that he was essentially a most lovable man, and that there were depths of tenderness, kindliness, benevolence, and most delicate courtesy in him, with all his seeming ruggedness and sternness, such as I have found throughout my life rarely in any human being.”

On the other side, a little later, after the publication of the Reminiscences, Blackwood denounced the “old man eloquent” as “a blatant impostor, who speaks as if he were the only person who knew good from bad. . . . Every one and every thing dealt with in his History is treated in the tone of a virtuous Mephistopheles.” The World remarks that Carlyle has been made to pay the penalty of a posthumous depreciation for a factitious fame; “but the game
of venomous retribution was begun by himself. . . . There is little that is extraordinary, still less that is heroic in his character. He had no magnanimity about him. . . . he was full of littleness and weakness, of shallow dogmatism and of blustering conceit.” The Quarterly, after alluding to Carlyle’s style “as the eccentric expression of eccentricity,” denounces his choice of “heroes” as reckless of morality. According to the same authority, he “was not a deep thinker, but he was a great word-painter . . . he has the inspiration as well as the contortions of the Sibyl, the strength as well as the nodosities of the oak. . . . In the French Revolution he rarely condescends to plain narrative . . . it resembles a drama at the Porte St. Martin, in so many acts and tableaux. . . . The raisers of busts and statues in his honour are winging and pointing new arrows aimed at the reputation of their most distinguished contemporaries, and doing their best to perpetuate a baneful influence.” Fraser, no longer edited by Mr. Froude, swells the chorus of dissent: “Money, for which he cared little, only came in quantity after the death of his wife, when everything became indifferent to an old and life-weary man. Who would be great at such a price? Who would buy so much misery with so much labour? Most men like their work. In his Carlyle seems to have found the curse imposed upon Adam . . . He cultivated contempt of the kindly race of men.”

Ample texts for these and similar censures are to be found in the pages of Mr. Froude, and he has been accused by Carlyle’s devotees of having supplied this material of malice propense. No accusation was ever more ridiculously unjust. To the mind of every impartial reader, Froude appears as one of the loyallest if one of the most infatuated of friends. Living towards the close in almost daily communion with his master, and in inevitable contact
with his numerous frailties, he seems to have revered him with a love that passeth understanding, and attributed to him in good faith, as Dryden did in jest to the objects of his mock heroics, every mental as well as every moral power, e.g., "Had Carlyle turned his mind to it he would have been a great philologer." "A great diplomatist was lost in Carlyle." "He would have done better as a man of action than a man of words." By kicking the other diplomatists into the sea, as he threatened to do with the urchins of Kirkcaldy† Froude's panegyrics are in style and tone worthy of that put into the mouth of Pericles by Thucydides, with which the modern biographer closes his only too faithful record. But his claims for his hero—amounting to the assertions that he was never seriously wrong; that he was as good as he was great; that "in the weightier matters of the law his life had been without speck or flaw"; that "such faults as he had were but as the vapours which hang about a mountain, inseparable from the nature of the man"; that he never, in their intercourse, uttered a "trivial word, nor one which he had better have left unuttered"—these claims will never be honoured, for they are refuted in every third page after that on which they appear:—e.g. in the Biography, vol. iv. p. 258, we are told that Carlyle's "knowledge was not in points or lines but complete and solid": facing the remark we read, "He liked ill men like Humboldt, Laplace, or the author of the Vestiges. He refused Darwin's transmutation of species as unproved; he fought against it, though I could see he dreaded that it might turn out true." The statement that "he always spoke respectfully of Macaulay" is soon followed by criticisms that make us exclaim, "Save us from such respect." The extraordinary assertion that Carlyle was "always just in speaking of living men" is safeguarded by the quotation of large utterances of in-
justice and contempt for Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Comte, Balzac, Hugo, Lamb, George Eliot, and disparaging patronage\(^1\) of Scott, of Jeffrey, of Mazzini, and of Mill. The dog-like fidelity of Boswell and Eckermann was fitting to their attitude and capacity; but the spectacle of one great writer surrendering himself to another is a new testimony to the glamour of conversational genius.

Carlyle was a great man, but a great man spoiled, that is, largely soured. He was never a Timon; but, while at best a Stoic, he was at worst a Cynic, emulous though disdainful, trying all men by his own standard, and intolerant of a rival on the throne. To this result there contributed the bleak though bracing environment of his early years, amid kindred more noted for strength than for amenity, whom he loved, trusted, and revered, but from whose grim creed, formally at least, he had to tear himself with violent wrenches apart; his purgatory among the border-ruffians of Annan school; his teaching drudgeries; his hermit college days; ten years’ struggle for a meagre competence; a life-long groaning under the Nessus shirt of the irritable yet stubborn constitution to which genius is often heir; and above all his unusually late recognition. There is a good deal of natural bitterness in reference to the long refusal by the publishers of his first original work—an idyll like Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield*, and our finest prose poem in philosophy. “Popularity,” says Emerson, “is for dolls”; but it remains to find the preacher, prophet, or poet wholly impervious to unjust criticism. Neglect which crushes

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\(^1\) This patronage of men, some quite, others nearly on his own level, whom he delights in calling “small,” “thin,” and “poor,” as if he were the only big, fat, and rich, is more offensive than spurts of merely dyspeptic abuse. As regards the libels on Lamb, Dr. Ireland has endeavoured to establish that they were written in ignorance of the noble tragedy of “Elia’s” life; but this contention cannot be made good as regards the later attacks.
dwarfs only exasperates giants, but to the latter also there is great harm done. Opposition affected Carlyle as it affected Milton, it made him defiant, at times even fierce, to those beyond his own inner circle. When he triumphed, he accepted his success without a boast, but not without reproaches for the past. He was crowned; but his coronation came too late, and the death of his wife paralysed his later years.

Let those who from the Clyde to the Isis, from the Dee to the Straits, make it their pastime to sneer at living worth, compare Ben Jonson’s lines,

Your praise and dispraise are to me alike,
One does not stroke me, nor the other strike,

with Samuel Johnson’s, “It has been delayed till most of those whom I wished to please are sunk into the grave, and success and failure are empty sounds,” and then take to heart the following:—

The “recent return of popularity greater than ever,” which I hear of, seems due alone to that late Edinburgh affair; especially to the Edinburgh “Address,” and affords new proof of the singularly dark and feeble condition of “public judgment” at this time. No idea, or shadow of an idea, is in that Address but what had been set forth by me tens of times before, and the poor gaping sea of prurient blockheadism receives it as a kind of inspired revelation, and runs to buy my books (it is said), now when I have got quite done with their buying or refusing to buy. If they would give me £10,000 a year and bray unanimously their hosannas heaven-high for the rest of my life, who now would there be to get the smallest joy or profit from it? To me I feel as if it would be a silent sorrow rather, and would bring me painful retrospections, nothing else.

We require no open-sesame, no clumsy confidence from attachés flaunting their intimacy, to assure us that there were “depths of tenderness” in Carlyle. His susceptibility to the softer influences of nature, of family
life, of his few chosen friends, is apparent in almost every page of his biography, above all in the *Reminiscences*, those supreme records of regret, remorse, and the inspiration of bereavement. There is no surge of sorrow in our literature like that which is perpetually tossed up in the second chapter of the second volume, with the never-to-be-forgotten refrain—

Cherish what is dearest while you have it near you, and wait not till it is far away. Blind and deaf that we are; oh, think, if thou yet love anybody living, wait not till death sweep down the paltry little dust clouds and dissonances of the moment, and all be at last so mournfully clear and beautiful, when it is too late!

Were we asked to bring together the three most pathetic sentences in our tongue since Lear asked the question, “And have his daughters brought him to this pass?” we should select Swift’s comment on the lock of Stella, “Only a woman’s hair”; the cry of Tennyson’s Rizpah, “The bones had moved in my side”; and Carlyle’s wall, “Oh that I had you yet but for five minutes beside me, to tell you all!” But in answer we hear only the flapping of the folds of Isis, “streptitumque Acherontis avari.”

All of sunshine that remained in my life went out in that sudden moment. All of strength too often seems to have gone.

... Were it permitted, I would pray, but to whom? I can well understand the invocation of saints. One’s prayer now has to be voiceless, done with the heart still, but also with the hands still more. ... Her birthday. She not here—I cannot keep it for her now, and send a gift to poor old Betty, who next to myself remembers her in life-long love and sacred sorrow. This is all I can do. ... Time was to bring relief, said everybody; but Time has not to any extent, nor, in truth, did I much wish him

_Eurydicens vox ipsa et frigida lingua,_
_Eurydicens toto referenbant flumine ripae._
Carlyle's pathos, far from being confined to his own calamity, was ready to awake at every touch. "I was walking with him," writes Froude, "one Sunday afternoon in Battersea Park. In the open circle among the trees was a blind man and his daughter, she singing hymns, he accompanying her on some instrument. We stood listening. She sang Faber's 'Pilgrims of the Night.' The words were trivial, but the air, though simple, had something weird and unearthly about it. 'Take me away,' he said, after a few minutes, 'I shall cry if I stay longer.'"

The melancholy, "often as of deep misery frozen torpid," that runs through his writing, that makes him forecast death in life and paint the springs of nature in winter hue, the "hoarse sea," the "bleared skies," the sunsets "beautiful and brief and wae," compels our compassion in a manner quite different from the pictures of Sterne, and De Quincey, and other colour dramatists, because we feel it is as genuine as the melancholy of Burns. Both had the relief of humour, but Burns only of the two was capable of gaiety. "Look up there," said Leigh Hunt, pointing to the starry skies, "look at that glorious harmony that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man." "Eh, it's a sair sight," was the reply.

We have referred to a few out of a hundred instances of Carlyle's practical benevolence. To all deserving persons in misfortune he was a good Samaritan, and like all benefactors the dupe of some undeserving. Charity may be, like maternal affection, a form of self-indulgence, but it is so only to kind-hearted men. In all that relates to money Carlyle's career is exemplary. He had too much common sense to affect to despise it, and was restive when he was underpaid; he knew that the labourer was worthy of his hire. But, after hacking for Brewster he cannot be said to have ever worked for wages, his concern was rather
with the quality of his work, and, regardless of results, he always did his best. A more unworldly man never lived; from his first savings he paid ample tributes to filial piety and fraternal kindness, and to the end of his life retained the simple habits in which he had been trained. He hated waste of all kinds, save in words, and carried his home frugalities even to excess. In writing to James Aitken, engaged to his sister, "the Craw," he says, "remember in marriage you have undertaken to do to others as you would wish they should do to you." But this rede he did not reck.

"Carlyle," writes Longfellow, "was one of those men who sacrificed their happiness to their work"; the misfortune is that the sacrifice did not stop with himself. He seemed made to live with no one but himself. Alternately courteous and cross-grained, all his dramatic power went into his creations; he could not put himself into the place of those near him. Essentially perhaps the bravest man of his age, he would not move an inch for threat or flattery; centered in rectitude, conscience never made him a coward. He bore great calamities with the serenity of a Marcus Aurelius: his reception of the loss of his first volume of the French Revolution was worthy of Sidney or of Newton: his letters, when the successive deaths of almost all that were dearest left him desolate, are among the noblest, the most resigned, the most pathetic in biography. Yet, says Mr. Froude, in a judgment which every careful reader must endorse: "Of all men I have ever seen Carlyle was the least patient of the common woes of humanity."

"A positive Christian," says Mrs. Carlyle, "in bearing others' pain, he was a roaring Thor when himself pricked by a pin," and his biographer corroborates this: "If matters went well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with any one else; and, on the
other hand, if he were uncomfortable he required all the world to be uncomfortable along with him.” He did his work with more than the tenacity of a Prescott or a Fawcett, but no man ever made more noise over it than this apostle of silence. “Sins of passion he could forgive, but those of insincerity never.” Carlyle has no tinge of insincerity; his writing, his conversation, his life, are absolutely, dangerously, transparent. His utter genuineness was in the long run one of the sources of his success. He always, if we allow for a habit of rhetorical exaggeration, felt what he made others feel.

Sullen moods, and “words at random sent,” those judging him from a distance can easily condone; the errors of a hot head are pardonable to one who, in his calmer hours, was ready to confess them. “Your temptation and mine,” he writes to his brother Alexander, “is a tendency to imperiousness and indignant self-help; and, if no wise theoretical, yet, practical forgetfulness and tyrannical contempt of other men.” His nicknaming mania was the inheritance of a family failing, always fostered by the mocking-bird at his side. Humour, doubtless, ought to discount many of his criticisms. Dean Stanley, in his funeral sermon, charitably says, that in pronouncing the population of England to be “thirty millions, mostly fools,” Carlyle merely meant that “few are chosen and strait is the gate,” generously adding—“There was that in him, in spite of his contemptuous descriptions of the people, which endeared him to those who knew him best. The idols of their market-place he trampled under foot, but their joys and sorrows, their cares and hopes, were to him revered things.” Another critic pleads for his discontent that it had in it a noble side, like that of Faust, and that his harsh judgments of eminent men were based on the belief that they had allowed meaner to triumph over
higher impulses, or influences of society to injure their moral fibre. This plea, however, fails to cover the whole case. Carlyle's ignorance in treating men who moved in spheres apart from his own, as the leaders of science, definite theological enlightenment, or even poetry and arts, was an intellectual rather than a moral flaw; but in the implied assertion, "what I can't do is not worth doing," we have to regret the influence of an enormous egotism stunting enormous powers, which, beginning with his student days, possessed him to the last. The fame of Newton, Leibnitz, Gibbon, whose works he came to regard as the spoon-meat of his "rude untutored youth," is beyond the range of his or of any shafts. When he trod on Mazzini's pure patriot career, as a "rose-water imbecility," or maligned Mill's intrepid thought as that of a mere machine, he was astray on more delicate ground, and alienated some of his truest friends. Among the many curses of our nineteenth-century literature denounced by its leading Censor, the worst, the want of loyalty among literary men, he fails to denounce because he largely shares in it. "No sadder proof," he declares, "can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men," and no one has done more to retrieve from misconception the memories of heroes of the past; but rarely does either he or Mrs. Carlyle say a good word for any considerable English writer then living. It is true that he criticises, more or less disparagingly, all his own works, from Sartor, of which he remarks that "only some ten pages are fused and harmonious," to his self-entitled "rigmarole on the Norse Kings": but he would not let his enemy say so; nor his friend. Mill's just strictures on the "Nigger Pamphlet" he treats as the impertinence of a boy, and only to Emerson would he grant the privilege to hold his own. Per contra, he overestimated those who were content to be his echoes.
Material help he refused with a red Indian pride; intellectual he used and slighted. He renders scant justice to those who had preceded him in his lines of historical investigation, as if they had been poachers on his premises, e.g. Heath, the royalist writer of the Commonwealth time, is “carrion Heath”: Noble, a former biographer of Cromwell, is “my reverend imbecile friend”: his predecessors in Friedrich, as Schlosser, Preuss, Ranke, Förster, Vehse, are “dark chaotic dullards whose books are mere blotches of printed stupor, tumbled mountains of marine stores”—criticism valueless even when it raises the laughter due to a pantomime. Carlyle assailed three sets of people:—

1. Real humbugs, or those who had behaved, or whom he believed to have behaved, badly to him.
2. Persons from whom he differed, or whom he could not understand—as Shelley, Keats, Lamb, Coleridge, and the leaders of Physics and Metaphysics.
3. Persons who had befriended, but would not give him an unrestricted homage or an implicit following, as Mill, Mazzini, Miss Martineau, etc.

The last series of assaults are hard to pardon. Had his strictures been always just,—so winged with humorous epigram,—they would have blasted a score of reputations: as it is they have only served to mar his own. He was a typical Scotch student of the better class, stung by the στρατιώτης of their ambitious competition and restless push, wanting in repose, never like

a gentleman at ease
With moral breadth of temperament,

too apt to note his superiority with the sneer, “they call this man as good as me.” Bacon, in one of his finest
antitheses, draws a contrast between the love of Excellence and the love of Excelling. Carlyle is possessed by both; he had none of the exaggerated caution which in others of his race is apt to degenerate into moral cowardice: but when he thought himself trod on he became, to use his own figure, “a rattlesnake,” and put out fangs like those of the griffins curiously, if not sardonically, carved on the tombs of his family in the churchyard at Ecclefechan.

Truth, in the sense of saying what he thought, was one of his ruling passions. To one of his brothers on the birth of a daughter, he writes, “Train her to this, as the cornerstone of all morality, to stand by the truth, to abhor a lie as she does hell-fire.” The “gates of hell” is the phrase of Achilles; but Carlyle has no real point of contact with the Greek love of abstract truth. He objects that “Socrates is terribly at ease in Zion”; he liked no one to be at ease anywhere. He is angry with Walter Scott because he hunted with his friends over the breezy heath instead of mooning alone over twilight moors. Read Scott’s Memoirs in the morning, the Reminiscences at night, and dispute if you like about the greater genius, but never about the healthier, better, and larger man.

Hebraism, says Matthew Arnold, is the spirit which obeys the mandate, “walk by your light”; Hellenism the spirit which remembers the other, “have a care your light be not darkness.” The former prefers doing to thinking, the latter is bent on finding the truth it loves. Carlyle is a Hebraist unrelieved and unretrieved by the Hellene. A man of inconsistencies, egotisms, Alpine grandeur and crevasses, let us take from him what the gods or protoplasm have allowed. His way of life,¹ duly admired for its

¹ In the Times of February 7th 1881, there appeared an interesting account of Carlyle’s daily routine. “No book hack could have surpassed the regularity and industry with which he worked early and
stern temperance, its rigidity of noble aim—eighty years spent in contempt of favour, plaudit, or reward,—left him austere to frailty other than his own, and wrap him in the repellent isolation which is the wrong side of uncompromising dignity. He was too great to be, in the common sense, conceited. All his consciousness of power left him with the feeling of Newton, "I am a child gathering shells on the shore": but what sense he had of fallibility arose from his glimpse of the infinite sea, never from any suspicion that, in any circumstances, he might be wrong and another mortal right: Shelley's lines on Byron—

The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.

fit him, like Ruskin's verdict, "What can you say of Carlyle but that he was born in the clouds and struck by the lightning?" which withers while it immortalises.

late in his small attic. A walk before breakfast was part of the day's duties. At ten o'clock in the morning, whether the spirit moved him or not, he took up his pen and laboured hard until three o'clock. Nothing, not even the opening of the morning letters, was allowed to distract him. Then came walking, answering letters, and seeing friends. . . . In the evening he read and prepared for the work of the morrow."
CHAPTER VIII

CARLYLE AS MAN OF LETTERS, CRITIC, AND HISTORIAN

Carlyle was so essentially a Preacher that the choice of a profession made for him by his parents was in some measure justified; but he was also a keen Critic, unamenable to ecclesiastic or other rule, a leader of the revolutionary spirit of the age, even while protesting against its extremes: above all, he was a literary Artist. Various opinions will continue to be held as to the value of his sermons; the excellence of his best workmanship is universally acknowledged. He was endowed with few of the qualities which secure a quick success—fluency, finish of style, the art of giving graceful utterance to current thought; he had in full measure the stronger if slower powers—sound knowledge, infinite industry, and the sympathetic insight of penetrative imagination—that ultimately hold the fastnesses of fame. His habit of startling his hearers, which for a time restricted, at a later date widened their circle. There is much, sometimes even tiresome, repetition in Carlyle's work; the range of his ideas is limited, he plays on a few strings, with wonderfully versatile variations; in reading his later we are continually confronted with the "old familiar faces" of his earlier essays. But, after the perfunctory work for Brewster he wrote nothing wholly commonplace;
occasionally paradoxical to the verge of absurdity, he is never dull.

Setting aside his Translations, always in prose,—often in verse,—masterpieces of their kind, he made his first mark in Criticism, which may be regarded as a higher kind of translation: the great value of his work in this direction is due to his so regarding it. Most criticism has for its aim to show off the critic; good criticism interprets the author. Fifty years ago, in allusion to methods of reviewing, not even now wholly obsolete, Carlyle wrote:—

The first and most convenient is for the reviewer to perch himself resolutely, as it were, on the shoulder of his author, and therefrom to show as if he commanded him and looked down upon him by natural superiority of stature. Whate’er the great man says or does the little man shall treat with an air of knowingness and light condescending mockery, professing with much covert sarcasm that this or that is beyond his comprehension, and cunningly asking his readers if they comprehend it.

There is here perhaps some "covert sarcasm" directed against contemporaries who forgot that their mission was to pronounce on the merits of the books reviewed, and not to patronise their authors; it may be set beside the objection to Jeffrey's fashion of saying, "I like this; I do not like that," without giving the reason why. But in this instance the writer did reck his own rede. The temptation of a smart critic is to seek or select legitimate or illegitimate objects of attack; and that Carlyle was well armed with the shafts of ridicule is apparent in his essays as in his histories; superabundantly so in his letters and conversation. His examination of the German Playwrights, of Taylor's German Literature, and his inimitable sketch of Herr Döring, the hapless biographer of Richter, are as amusing as is Macaulay's coup de grâce to
Robert Montgomery. But the graver critic would have us take to heart these sentences of his essay on Voltaire:—

Far be it from us to say that solemnity is an essential of greatness; that no great man can have other than a rigid vinegar aspect of countenance, never to be thawed or warmed by billows of mirth. There are things in this world to be laughed at as well as things to be admired. Nevertheless, contempt is a dangerous element to sport in; a deadly one if we habitually live in it. The faculty of love, of admiration, is to be regarded as a sign and the measure of high souls; unwisely directed, it leads to many evils; but without it, there cannot be any good. Ridicule, on the other hand, is the smallest of all faculties that other men are at pains to repay with any esteem. . . . Its nourishment and essence is denial, which hovers only on the surface, while knowledge dwells far below, . . . it cherishes nothing but our vanity, which may in general be left safely enough to shift for itself.

We may compare with this one of the writer’s numerous warnings to young men taking to literature, as to drinking, in despair of anything better to do, ending with the exhortation, “Witty above all things, oh, be not witty”; or turn to the passage in the review of Sir Walter Scott:—

Is it with ease or not with ease that a man shall do his best in any shape; above all, in this shape justly named of soul’s travail, working in the deep places of thought? . . . Not so, now nor at any time. . . . Virgil and Tacitus, were they ready writers? The whole Prophecies of Isaiah are not equal in extent to this cobweb of a Review article. Shakespeare, we may fancy, wrote with rapidity; but not till he had thought with intensity, . . . no easy writer he. Neither was Milton one of the mob of gentlemen that write with ease. Goethe tells us he “had nothing sent to him in his sleep,” no page of his but he knew well how it came there. Schiller—“konnte nie fertig werden”—never could get done. Dante sees himself “growing lean”

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1 As an estimate of Voltaire this brilliant essay is inadequate. Carlyle’s maxim, we want to be told “not what is not true but what is true,” prevented him from appreciating the great work of the Encyclopedists.
over his Divine Comedy; in stern solitary death wrestle with it, to prevail over it and do it, if his uttermost faculty may; hence too it is done and prevailed over, and the fiery life of it endures for evermore among men. No; creation, one would think, cannot be easy; your Jove has severe pains and fire flames in the head, out of which an armed Pallas is struggling! As for manufacture, that is a different matter... Write by steam if thou canst contrive it and sell it, but hide it like virtue.

In these and frequent similar passages lies the secret of Carlyle's slow recognition, long struggle, and ultimate success; also of his occasional critical intolerance. Commander-in-chief of the "red artillery," he sets too little store on the graceful yet sometimes decisive charges of the light brigades of literature. He feels nothing but contempt for the banter of men like Jerrold; despises the genial pathos of Lamb; and salutes the most brilliant wit and exquisite lyricist of our century with the Puritanical comment, "Blackguard Heine." He deified work as he deified strength; and so often stimulated his imitators to attempt to leap beyond their shadows. Hard work will not do everything; a man can only accomplish what he was born fit for. Many, in the first flush of ambition doomed to wreck, are blind to the fact that it is not in every ploughman to be a poet, nor in every prize-student to be a philosopher. Nature does half; after all perhaps the larger half. Genius has been inadequately defined as "an infinite capacity for taking trouble"; no amount of pumping can draw more water than is in the well. Himself in "the chamber of little ease," Carlyle travestied Goethe's "worship of sorrow" till it became a pride in pain. He forgot that rude energy requires restraint. Hercules Furens and Orlando Furioso did more than cut down trees; they tore them up; but to no useful end. His power is often almost Miltonic; it is never Shakespearian; and his insistent earnestness would run the risk of fatiguing us were
it not redeemed by his humour. But he errs on the better side; and his example is a salutary counteractive in an age when the dust of so many skirmishers obscures the air, and laughter is too readily accepted as the test of truth. His stern conception of literature accounts for his exaltations of the ideal, and denunciations of the actual, profession of letters in passages which, from his habit of emphasising opposite sides of truth, instead of striking a balance, appear almost side by side in contradiction. The following condenses the ideal:

If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he may have guidance, freedom, immortality? These two in all degrees I honour; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth. Doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself—all these like hell-hounds lie beleaguering the souls of the poor day worker as of every man; but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stifled—all these shrink murmuring far off in their caves.

Against this we have to set innumerable tirades on the crime of worthless writing, e.g.—

No mortal has a right to wag his tongue, much less to wag his pen, without saying something; he knows not what mischief he does, past computation, scattering words without meaning, to afflict the whole world yet before they cease. For thistle-down flies abroad on all winds and airs of wind. . . . Ship-loads of fashionable novels, sentimental rhymes, tragedies, farces . . . tales by flood and field are swallowed monthly into the bottomless pool; still does the press toil, . . . and still in torrents rushes on the great army of publications to their final home; and still oblivion, like the grave, cries give! give! How is it that of all these countless multitudes no one can . . . produce ought that shall endure longer than "snowflake on the river? Because they are foam, because there is no reality in them. . . ." Not by printing ink alone does man live. Literature, as followed at present, is but a species of brewing or cooking, where the cooks use poison and vend it by telling innumerable lies.
These passages owe their interest to the attestation of their sincerity by the writer's own practice. "Do not," he counsels one of his unknown correspondents, "take up a subject because it is singular and will get you credit, but because you love it;" and he himself acted on the rule. Nothing more impresses the student of Carlyle's works than his thoroughness. He never took a task in hand without the determination to perform it to the utmost of his ability; consequently when he satisfied himself that he was master of his subject he satisfied his readers; but this mastery was only attained, as it is only attainable, by the most rigorous research. He seems to have written down his results with considerable fluency: the molten ore flowed freely forth, but the process of smelting was arduous. The most painful part of literary work is not the actual composition, but the accumulation of details, the wearisome compilation of facts, weighing of previous criticisms, the sifting of the grains of wheat from the bushels of chaff. This part of his task Carlyle performed with an admirable conscientiousness. His numerous letters applying for out-of-the-way books to buy or borrow, for every pamphlet throwing light on his subject, bear testimony to the careful exactitude which rarely permitted him to leave any record unread or any worthy opinion untested about any event of which or any person of whom he undertook to write. From Templand (1833) he applies for seven volumes of Beaumarchais, three of Bassompierre, the Memoirs of Abbé Georgel, and every attainable account of Cagliostro and the Countess de la Motte, to fuse into The Diamond Necklace. To write the essay on Werner and the German Playwrights he swam through seas of trash. He digested the whole of Diderot for one review article. He seems to have read through Jean Paul Richter, a feat to accomplish which Germans require a special dictionary. When engaged on
the Civil War he routed up a whole shoal of obscure seventeenth-century papers from Yarmouth, the remnant of a yet larger heap, "read hundredweights of dreary books," and endured "a hundred Museum headaches." In grappling with Friedrich he waded through so many gray historians that we can forgive his sweeping condemnation of their dulness. He visited all the scenes and places of which he meant to speak, from St. Ives to Prague, and explored the battlefields. Work done after this fashion seldom brings a swift return; but if it is utilised and made vivid by literary genius it has a claim to permanence. Bating a few instances where his sense of proportion is defective, or his eccentricity is in excess, Carlyle puts his ample material to artistic use; seldom making ostentation of detail, but skilfully concentrating, so that we read easily and readily recall what he has written. Almost everything he has done has made a mark: his best work in criticism is final, it does not require to be done again. He interests us in the fortunes of his leading characters: first, because he feels with them; secondly, because he knows how to distinguish the essence from the accidents of their lives, what to forget and what to remember, where to begin and where to stop. Hence, not only his set biographies, as of Schiller and of Sterling, but the shorter notices in his Essays, are intrinsically more complete and throw more real light on character than whole volumes of ordinary memoirs.

With the limitations above referred to, and in view of his antecedents, the range of Carlyle's critical appreciation is wonderfully wide. Often perversely unfair to the majority of his English contemporaries, the scales seem to fall from his eyes in dealing with the great figures of other nations. The charity expressed in the saying that we should judge men, not by the number of their faults, but by the amount of their deflection from the circle, great or
small, that bounds their being, enables him often to do justice to those most widely differing in creed, sentiment, and lines of activity from one another and from himself. When treating congenial themes he errs by overestimate rather than by depreciation: among the qualities of his early work, which afterwards suffered some eclipse in the growth of other powers, is its flexibility. It was natural for Carlyle, his successor in genius in the Scotch lowlands, to give an account of Robert Burns which throws all previous criticism of the poet into the shade. Similarly he has strong affinities to Johnson, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, to all his so-called heroes: but he is fair to the characters, if not always to the work, of Voltaire and Diderot, slurs over or makes humorous the escapades of Mirabeau, is undeterred by the mysticism of Novalis, and in the fervour of his worship fails to see the gulf between himself and Goethe.

Carlyle’s Essays mark an epoch, i.e. the beginning of a new era, in the history of British criticism. The able and vigorous writers who contributed to the early numbers of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews successfully applied their taste and judgment to such works as fell within their sphere, and could be fairly tested by their canons; but they passed an alien act on everything that lay beyond the range of their insular view. In dealing with the efforts of a nation whose literature, the most recent in Europe save that of Russia, had only begun to command recognition, their rules were at fault and their failures ridiculous. If the old formulæ have been theoretically dismissed, and a conscientious critic now endeavours to place himself in the position of his author, the change is largely due to the influence of Carlyle’s Miscellanies. Previous to their appearance, the literature of Germany, to which half of these papers are devoted, had been (with the exception of Sir
Walter Scott’s translation of Goetz von Berlichingen, De Quincey’s travesties, and Taylor’s renderings from Lessing) a sealed book to English readers, save those who were willing to breathe in an atmosphere of Coleridgean mist. Carlyle first made it generally known in England, because he was the first fully to apprehend its meaning. The Life of Schiller, which the author himself depreciated, remains one of the best of comparatively short biographies, it abounds in admirable passages (conspicuously the contrast between the elder and the younger of the Dioscuri at Weimar) and has the advantage to some readers of being written in classical English prose.

To the essays relating to Germany, which we may accept as the disjecta membra of the author’s unpublished History, there is little to add. In these volumes we have the best English account of the Nibelungen Lied—the most graphic, and in the main most just analyses of the genius of Heyne, Richter, Novalis, Schiller, and, above all, of Goethe, who is recorded to have said, “Carlyle is almost more at home in our literature than ourselves.” With the Germans he is on his chosen ground; but the range of his sympathies is most apparent in the portrait gallery of eighteenth-century Frenchmen that forms, as it were, a proscenium to his first great History. Among other papers in the same collection the most prominent are the Signs of the Times and Characteristics, in which he first distinctly broaches some of his peculiar views on political philosophy and life.

The scope and some of the limitations of Carlyle’s critical power are exhibited in his second Series¹ of Lect-

¹ Though a mere reproduction of the notes of Mr. Chisholm Austey, this posthumous publication is justified by its interest and obvious authenticity. The appearance in a prominent periodical (while these sheets are passing through the press) of Wotton Reinford is more open to question. This fragment of a romance, partly based on the
tures, delivered in 1833, when (ad. 43) he had reached the maturity of his powers. The first three of these lectures, treating of Ancient History and Literature, bring into strong relief the speaker's inadequate view of Greek thought and civilisation:—

Greek transactions had never anything alive, no result for us, they were dead entirely . . . all left is a few ruined towers, masses of stone and broken statuary. . . . The writings of Socrates are made up of a few wire-drawn notions about virtue; there is no conclusion, no word of life in him.

These and similar dogmatic utterances are comments of the Hebrew on the Hellene. To the Romans, "the men of antiquity," he is more just, dwelling on their agriculture and road-making as their "greatest work written on the planet;" but the only Latin author he thoroughly appreciates is Tacitus, "a Colossus on edge of dark night." Then follows an exaltation of the Middle Ages, in which "we see belief getting the victory over unbelief," in the strain of Newman's Grammar of Assent. On the surrender of Henry to Hildebrand at Canossa his approving comment is, "the clay that is about man is always sufficiently ready to assert its rights; the danger is always the other way, that the spiritual part of man will become overlaid with the bodily part." In the later struggle between the Popes and the Hohenstaufens his sympathy is with Gregory and Innocent. In the same vein is his praise of Peter the Hermit, whose motto was not the "action, action" of Demosthenes, but, "belief, belief." In the brief space of those suggestive though unequal discourses the speaker allows awkward proximity to some of the self-contradictions which, even when scattered farther apart, perplex his readers plan of Wilhelm Meister, with shadowy love episodes recalling the manner of the "Minerva Press," can add nothing to Carlyle's reputation.
and render it impossible to credit his philosophy with more than a few strains of consistent thought.

In one page "the judgments of the heart^1 are of more value than those of the head." In the next "morals in a man are the counterpart of the intellect that is in him." The Middle Ages were "a healthy age," and therefore there was next to no Literature. "The strong warrior disdained to write." "Actions will be preserved when all writers are forgotten." Two days later, apropos of Dante, he says, "The great thing which any nation can do is to produce great men. ... When the Vatican shall have crumbled to dust, and St. Peter's and Strassburg Minster be no more; for thousands of years to come Catholicism will survive in this sublime relic of antiquity—the Divina Commedia."

Passing to Spain, Carlyle salutes Cervantes and the Cid,—calling Don Quixote the "poetry of comedy," "the age of gold in self-mockery,"—pays a more reserved tribute to Calderon, ventures on the assertion that Cortes was "as great as Alexander," and gives a sketch, so graphic that it might serve as a text for Motley's great work, of the way in which the decayed Iberian chivalry, rotten through with the Inquisition, broke itself on the Dutch dykes. After a brief outline of the rise of the German power, which had three avatars—the overwhelming of Rome, the Swiss resistance to Austria, and the Reformation—we have a rough estimate of some of the Reformers. Luther is exalted even over Knox; Erasmus is depreciated, while Calvin and Melanchthon are passed by.

The chapter on the Saxons, in which the writer's love of the sea appears in picturesque reference to the old rover kings, is followed by unusually commonplace remarks on earlier English literature, interspersed with some of Carlyle's refrains.

^1 It has been suggested that Carlyle may have been in this instance a student of Vauvenargues, who in the early years of the much-maligned eighteenth century wrote "Les grandes pensées viennent du cœur."
The mind is one, and consists not of bundles of faculties at all . . . the same features appear in painting, singing, fighting . . . when I hear of the distinction between the poet and the thinker, I really see no difference at all . . . Bacon sees, Shakespeare sees through . . . Milton is altogether sectarian—a Presbyterian one might say—he got his knowledge out of Knox . . . Eve is a cold statue.

Coming to the well-belaboured eighteenth century—when much was done of which the nineteenth talks, and massive books were written that we are content to criticise—we have the inevitable denunciations of scepticism, materialism, argumentation, logic; the quotation, (referred to a motto “in the Swiss gardens”), “Speech is silver, silence is golden,” and a loud assertion that all great things are silent. The age is commended for Watt’s steam engine, Arkwright’s spinning jenny, and Whitfield’s preaching, but its policy and theories are alike belittled. The summaries of the leading writers are interesting, some curious, and a few absurd. On the threshold of the age Dryden is noted “as a great poet born in the worst of times”: Addison as “an instance of one formal man doing great things”: Swift is pronounced “by far the greatest man of that time, not unfeeling,” who “carried sarcasm to an epic pitch”: Pope, we are told, had “one of the finest heads ever known.” Sterne is handled with a tenderness that contrasts with the death sentence pronounced on him by Thackeray, “much is forgiven him because he loved much, . . . a good simple being after all.” Johnson, the “much enduring,” is treated as in the Heroes and the Essay. Hume, with “a far duller kind of sense,” is commended for “noble perseverance and Stoic endurance of failure; but his eye was not open to faith,” etc. On which follows a stupendous criticism of Gibbon, whom Carlyle, returning to his earlier and juster view, ended by admiring.
With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things than he has done of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

The sketch of the Pre-Revolution period is slight, and marked by a somewhat shallow reference to Rousseau. The last lecture on the recent German writers is a mere réchauffé of the Essays. Carlyle closes with the famous passage from Richter, one of those which indicate the influence in style as in thought of the German over the Scotch humorist. "It is now the twelfth hour of the night, birds of darkness are on the wing, the spectres uprear, the dead walk, the living dream. Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn." The whole volume is a testimony to the speaker's power of speech, to his often unsurpassed penetration, and to the hopeless variance of the often rapidly shifting streams of his thought.

Detailed criticism of Carlyle's Histories belongs to the sphere of separate disquisitions. Here it is only possible to take note of their general characteristics. His conception of what history should be is shared with Macaulay. Both writers protest against its being made a mere record of "court and camp," of royal intrigue and state rivalry, of pageants of procession, or chivalric encounters. Both find the sources of these outwardly obtrusive events in the underground current of national sentiment, the conditions of the civilisation from which they were evolved, the prosperity or misery of the masses of the people.

The essence of history does not lie in laws, senate-houses, or battle-fields, but in the tide of thought and action—the world of existence that in gloom and brightness blossoms and fades apart from these.

But Carlyle differs from Macaulay in his passion for the concrete. The latter presents us with pictures to illustrate his political theory; the former leaves his pictures to speak
for themselves. "Give him a fact," says Emerson, "he
loaded you with thanks; a theory, with ridicule or even
abuse." It has been said that with Carlyle History was
philosophy teaching by examples. He himself defines it as
"the essence of innumerable biographies." He individual-
ises everything he meets; his dislike of abstractions is
everywhere extreme. Thus while other writers have ex-
expanded biography into history, Carlyle condenses history
into biography. Even most biographies are too vague
for him. He delights in Boswell: he glides over their
generalisations to pick out some previously obscure record
from Clarendon or Hume. Even in The French Revolution,
where the author has mainly to deal with masses in tumult,
he gives most prominence to their leaders. They march
past us, labelled with strange names, in the foreground of
the scene, on which is being enacted the death wrestle of
old Feudalism and young Democracy. This book is unique
among modern histories for a combination of force and in-
sight only rivalled by the most incisive passages of the
seventh book of Thucydid, of Tacitus, of Gibbon, and
of Michelet.¹

The French Revolution is open to the charge of being a
comment and a prophecy rather than a narrative: the
reader's knowledge of the main events of the period
is too much assumed for the purpose of a school book.
Even Dryas dust will turn when trod on, and this book
has been a happy hunting field to aggressive antiquarians,
to whom the mistake of a day in date, the omission or
insertion of a letter in a name, is of more moment than
the difference between vitalising or petrifying an era.
The lumber merchants of history are the born foes of

¹ Vide a comparison of Carlyle and Michelet in Dr. Oswald's interest-
ing and suggestive little volume of criticism and selection, Thomas
Carlyle, ein Lebensbild und Goldkörner aus seinen Werken.
historians who, like Carlyle and Mr. Froude, have manifested
their dramatic power of making the past present and the
distant near. That the excess of this power is not always
compatible with perfect impartiality may be admitted; for
a poetic capacity is generally attended by heats of enthusi-
asm, and is liable to errors of detail; but without some
share of it—

Die Zeiten der Vergangenheit
Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln.

Mere research, the unearthing and arrangement of what
Sir Philip Sidney calls "old moth-eaten records," supplies
material for the work of the historian proper; and,
ocasionally to good purpose, corrects it, but, as a rule,
with too much flourish. Applying this minute criticism
to The French Revolution, one reviewer has found that the
author has given the wrong number to a regiment: another
esteemed scholar has discovered that there are seven errors
in the famous account of the flight to Varennes, to wit:—
the delay in the departure was due to Bouillé, not to the
Queen; she did not lose her way and so delay the start;
Ste. Menehould is too big to be called a village; on the
arrest, it was the Queen who asked for hot water and eggs;
the King only left the coach once; it went rather faster
than is stated; and, above all, infandum! it was not painted
yellow, but green and black. This criticism does not
in any degree detract from the value of one of the most
vivid and substantially accurate narratives in the range
of European literature. Carlyle's object was to convey the
soul of the Revolution, not to register its upholstery. The
annalist, be he dryasdust or gossip, is, in legal phrase,
"the devil" of the prose artist, whose work makes almost
as great a demand on the imaginative faculty as that of
the poet. Historiography is related to History as the
Chronicles of Holinshed and the Voyages of Hakluyt to the Plays of Shakespeare, plays which Marlborough confessed to have been the main source of his knowledge of English history. Some men are born philologists or antiquarians; but, as the former often fail to see the books because of the words, so the latter cannot read the story for the dates. The mass of readers require precisely what has been contemptuously referred to as the "Romance of History," provided it leaves with them an accurate impression, as well as an inspiring interest. Save in his over-hasty acceptance of the French blague version of "The Sinking of the Vengeur," Carlyle has never laid himself open to the reproach of essential inaccuracy. As far as possible for a man of genius, he was a devotee of facts. He is never a careless, though occasionally an impetuous writer; his graver errors are those of emotional misinterpretation. It has been observed that, while contemning Robespierre, he has extenuated the guilt of Danton as one of the main authors of the September massacres, and, more generally, that "his quickness and brilliancy made him impatient of systematic thought." But his histories remain the best illuminations of fact in our language. The French Revolution is a series of flame-pictures; every page is on fire; we read the whole as if listening to successive volleys of artillery: nowhere has such a motley mass been endowed with equal life. This book alone vindicates Lowell's panegyric: "the figures of most historians seem like dolls stuffed with bran, whose whole substance runs through any hole that criticism may tear in them; but Carlyle's are so real that if you prick them they bleed."

When Carlyle generalises, as in the introductions to his Essays, he is apt to thrust his own views on his subject and on his readers; but, unlike De Quincey, who had a like love of excursus, he comes to the point before the close
The one claimed the privilege, assumed by Coleridge, of starting from no premises and arriving at no conclusion; the other, in his capacity as a critic, arrives at a conclusion, though sometimes from questionable premises. It is characteristic of his habit of concentrating, rather than condensing, that Carlyle abandoned his design of a history of the Civil Wars for Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches. The events of the period, whose issues the writer has firmly grasped, are brought into prominence mainly as they elucidate the career of his hero; but the "elucidations" have been accepted, with a few reservations, as final. No other work has gone so far to reverse a traditional estimate. The old current conceptions of the Protector are refuted out of his own mouth; but it was left for his editor to restore life to the half-forgotten records, and sweep away the clouds that obscured their revelations of a great though rugged character. *Cromwell* has been generally accepted in Scotland as Carlyle's masterpiece—a judgment due to the fact of its being, among the author's mature works, the least apparently opposed to the theological views prevalent in the north of our island. In reality—though containing some of his finest descriptions and battle-pieces, conspicuously that of "Dunbar"—it is the least artistic of his achievements, being overladen with detail and superabounding in extract. A good critic has said that it was a labour of love, like Spedding's *Bacon*; but that the correspondence, lavishly reproduced in both works, has "some of the defects of lovers' letters for those to whom they are not addressed." Carlyle has established that Oliver was not a hypocrite, "not a man of falsehood, but a man of truth": he has thrown doubts on his being a fanatic; but he has left it open to M. Guizot to establish that his later rule was a practical despotism.

1 In *St. James' Gazette*, February 11th, 1881.
In *Friedrich II.*, he undertook a yet greater task; and his work stretching over a wider arena, is, of necessity, more of a history, less of a biography, than any of his others. In constructing and composing it he was oppressed not only by the magnitude and complexity of his theme, but, for the first time, by hesitancies as to his choice of a hero. He himself confessed, "I never was admitted much to *Friedrich's* confidence, and I never cared very much about him." Yet he determined, almost of malice prepense, to exalt the narrow though vivid Prussian as "the last of the kings, the one genuine figure in the eighteenth century," and though failing to prove his case, he has, like a loyal lawyer, made the best of his brief. The book embodies and conveys the most brilliant and the most readable account of a great part of the century, and nothing he has written bears more ample testimony to the writer's pictorial genius. It is sometimes garrulous with the fluency of an old man eloquent; parts of the third volume, with its diffuse extracts from the king's survey of his realm, are hard if not weary reading; but the rest is a masterpiece of historic restoration. The introductory portion, leading us through one of the most tangled woods of genealogy and political adjustment, is relieved from tedium by the procession of the half-forgotten host of German worthies,—St. Adalbert and his mission; old Barbarossa; Leopold's mystery; Conrad and St. Elizabeth; Ptolemy Alphonso; Otto with the arrow; Margaret with the mouth; Sigismund *supra grammaticam*; Augustus the physically strong; Albert Achilles and Albert Aleibiades; Anne of Cleves; Mr. John Kepler,—who move on the pages, more brightly "pictured" than those of Livy, like marionettes inspired with life. In the main body of the book the men and women of the Prussian court are brought before us in fuller light and shade. Friedrich himself, at Sans Souci, with his cocked-hat, walking-stick,
and wonderful gray eyes; Sophia Charlotte's grace, wit, and music; Wilhelmina and her book; the old Hyperborean; the black artists Seekendorf and Grumkow; George I. and his blue-beard chamber; the little drummer; the Old Dessauer; the cabinet Venus; Grävenitz Hecate; Algarotti; Goetz in his tower; the tragedy of Katte; the immeasurable comedy of Maupertuis, the flattener of the earth, and Voltaire; all these and a hundred more are summoned by a wizard's wand from the land of shadows, to march by the central figures of these volumes; to dance, flutter, love, hate, intrigue, and die before our eyes. It is the largest and most varied show-box in all history; a prelude to a series of battle-pieces—Rossbach, Leuthen, Molwitz, Zorndorf—nowhere else, save in the author's own pages, approached in prose, and rarely rivalled out of Homer's verse.

Carlyle's style, in the chiar-oscuro of which his Histories and three-fourths of his Essays are set, has naturally provoked much criticism and some obfurgation. M. Taine says it is "exaggerated and demoniacal." Hallam could not read The French Revolution because of its "abominable" style, and Wordsworth, whose own prose was perfectly limpid, is reported to have said, "No Scotchman can write English. C— is a pest to the language." Carlyle's style is not that of Addison, of Berkeley, or of Helps; its peculiarities are due to the eccentricity of an always eccentric being; but it is neither affected nor deliberately imitated. It has been plausibly asserted that his earlier manner of writing, as in Schiller, under the influence of Jeffrey, was not in his natural voice. "They forget," he said, referring to his critics, "that the style is the skin of the writer, not a coat:

1 Carlyle with equal unfairness disparaged Hallam's Middle Ages:—"Eh, the poor miserable skeleton of a book," and regarded the Literature of Europe as a valley of dry bones.
and the public is an old woman." Erratic, metaphorical, elliptical to excess, and therefore a dangerous model, "the mature oaken Carlylese style," with its freaks, "nodosities and angularities," is as set and engrained in his nature as the Birthmark in Hawthorne's romance. To recast a chapter of the Revolution in the form of a chapter of Macaulay would be like rewriting Tacitus in the form of Cicero, or Browning in the form of Pope. Carlyle is seldom obscure, the energy of his manner is part of his matter; its abruptness corresponds to the abruptness of his thought, which proceeds often as it were by a series of electric shocks, that threaten to break through the formal restraints of an ordinary sentence. He writes like one who must, under the spell of his own winged words; at all hazards, determined to convey his meaning; willing, like Montaigne, to "despire no phrase of those that run in the streets," to speak in strange tongues, and even to coin new words for the expression of a new emotion. It is his fashion to care as little for rounded phrase as for logical argument; and he rather convinces and persuades by calling up a succession of feelings than by a train of reasoning. He repeats himself like a preacher, instead of condensing like an essayist. The American Thoreau writes in the course of an incisive survey:—

Carlyle's . . . mastery over the language is unrivalled; it is with him a keen, resistless weapon; his power of words is endless. All nature, human and external, is ransacked to serve and run his errands. The bright cutlery, after all the dross of Birmingham has been thrown aside, is his style. . . . He has broken the ice, and the torrent streams forth. He drives six-in-hand over ruts and streams and never upsets. . . . With wonderful art he grinds into paint for his picture all his moods and experiences, and crashes his way through shoals of dilettante opinions. It is not in man to determine what his style shall be, if it is to be his own.
But though a rugged, Carlyle was the reverse of a careless or ready writer. He weighed every sentence: if in all his works, from Sartor to the Reminiscences, you pencil-mark the most suggestive passages you disfigure the whole book. His opinions will continue to be tossed to and fro; but as an artist he continually grows. He was, let us grant, though a powerful, a one-sided historian, a twisted though in some aspects a great moralist; but he was, in every sense, a mighty painter, now dipping his pencil "in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse," now etching his scenes with the tender touch of a Millet.

Emerson, in one of his early letters to Carlyle, wrote, "Nothing seems hid from those wonderful eyes of yours; those devouring eyes; those thirsty eyes; those portrait-eating, portrait-painting eyes of thine." Men of genius, whether expressing themselves in prose or verse, on canvas or in harmony, are, save when smitten, like Beethoven, by some malignity of Nature, endowed with keener physical senses than other men. They actually, not metaphorically, see more and hear more than their fellows. Carlyle's supersensitive ear was to him, through life, mainly a torment; but the intensity of his vision was that of a born artist, and to it we owe the finest descriptive passages, if we except those of Mr. Ruskin, in English prose. None of our poets, from Chaucer and Dunbar to Burns and Tennyson, has been more alive to the influences of external nature. His early letters abound in passages like the following, on the view from Arthur's Seat:—

The blue, majestic, everlasting ocean, with the Fife hills swelling gradually into the Grampians behind; rough crags and rude precipices at our feet (where not a hillock rears its head unsung) with Edinburgh at their base clustering proudly over her rugged foundations and covering with a vapoury mantle the jagged black masses of stonework that stretch far and wide, and show like a city of Faeryland. . . . I saw it all last evening when the
sun was going down, and the moon’s fine crescent, like a pretty silver creature as it is, was riding quietly above me.

Compare with this the picture, in a letter to Sterling, of Middlebie burn, “leaping into its cauldron, singing a song better than Pasta’s”; or that of the Scaur Water, that may be compared with Tennyson’s verses in the valley of Cauteretz; or the sketches of the Flemish cities in the tour of 1842, with the photograph of the lace-girl, recalling Sterne at his purest; or the account of the “atmosphere like silk” over the moor, with the phrase, “it was as if Pan slept”; or the few lines written at Thurso, where “the sea is always one’s friend”; or the later memories of Mentone, old and new, in the *Reminiscences* (vol. ii. pp. 335-340).

The most striking of those descriptions are, however, those in which the interests of some thrilling event or crisis of human life or history steal upon the scene, and give it a further meaning, as in the dim streak of dawn rising over St. Abb’s Head on the morning of Dunbar, or in the following famous apostrophe:—

O evening sun of July, how at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful, woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls at the Orangerie at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of an Hôtel-de-Ville.

Carlyle is, here and there, led astray by the love of contrast; but not even Heinrich Heine has employed antithesis with more effect than in the familiar passage on the sleeping city in *Sartor*, beginning, “Ach mein Lieber... it is a true sublimity to dwell here,” and ending, “But I, mein Werther, sit above it all. I am alone with the stars.” His thought, seldom quite original, is often a resuscitation or survival, and owes much of its celebrity to its splendid brocade. *Sartor Resartus* itself escaped the failure that was
at first threatened by its eccentricity partly from its noble
passion, partly because of the truth of the "clothes
philosophy," applied to literature as to life.

His descriptions, too often caricatures, of men are
equally vivid. They set the whole great mass of Friedrich
in a glow; they lighten the tedium of Cromwell's lumbering
despatches; they give a heart of fire to The French
Revolution. Dickens's Tale of Two Cities attempts and fulfils on a
smaller what Carlyle achieved on a greater scale. The
historian makes us sympathise with the real actors, even
more than the novelist does with the imaginary characters
on the same stage. From the account of the dying Louis
XV. to the "whiff of grapeshot" which closed the last
scene of the great drama, there is not a dull page. Théroigne
de Méricourt, Marat, Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Mirabeau,
Robespierre, Talleyrand, Mme. Roland, above all Marie
Antoinette—for whom Carlyle has a strong affection—and
Buonaparte, so kindle and colour the scene that we cannot
pause to feel weary of the phrases with which they are
labelled. The author's letters show the same power of
baptizing, which he used often to unfair excess. We can
no more forget Count d'Orsay as the "Phoebus Apollo
of Dandyism," Daniel Webster's "brows like cliffs and
huge black eyes," or Wordsworth "munching raisins," and
recognising no poet but himself, or Maurice "attacked by
a paroxysm of mental cramp," than we can dismiss from
our memories "The Glass Coachman" or "The Tobacco
Parliament."

Carlyle quotes a saying of Richter, that Luther's words
were half battles; he himself compares those of Burns to
cannon-balls; much of his own writing is a fusilade. All
three were vehement in abuse of things and persons they
did not like; abuse that might seem reckless, if not some-
times coarse, were it not redeemed, as the rogueries of
Falstaff are, by strains of humour. The most Protean quality of Carlyle's genius is his humour: now lighting up the crevices of some quaint fancy, now shining over his serious thought like sunshine over the sea, it is at its best as finely quaint as that of Cervantes, more humane than Swift's. There is in it, as in all the highest humour, a sense of apparent contrast, even of contradiction, in life, of matter for laughter in sorrow and tears in joy. He seems to check himself, and as if afraid of wearing his heart in his sleeve, throws in absurd illustrations of serious propositions, partly to show their universal range, partly in obedience to an instinct of reserve, to escape the reproach of sermonising and to cut the story short. Carlyle's grotesque is a mode of his golden silence, a sort of Socratic irony, in the indulgence of which he laughs at his readers and at himself. It appears now in the form of transparent satire, ridicule of his own and other ages, now in droll reference or mock heroic detail, in an odd conception, a character sketch, an event in parody, in an antithesis or simile,—sometimes it lurks in a word, and again in a sentence. In direct pathos—the other side of humour—he is equally effective. His denunciations of sentiment remind us of Plato attacking the poets, for he is at heart the most emotional of writers, the greatest of the prose poets of England; and his dramatic sympathy extends alike to the actors in real events and to his ideal creations. Few more pathetic passages occur in literature than his "stories of the deaths of kings." The following among the less known of his eloquent passages is an apotheosis of their burials:—

In this manner did the men of the Eastern Counties take up the slain body of their Edmund, where it lay cast forth in the village of Hoxne; seek out the severed head and reverently reunite the same. They embalmed him with myrrh and sweet spices, with love, pity, and all high and awful thoughts; con-
secreting him with a very storm of melodious, adoring admiration, and sun-dried showers of tears; joyfully, yet with awe (as all deep joy has something of the awful in it), commemorating his noble deeds and godlike walk and conversation while on Earth. Till, at length, the very Pope and Cardinals at Rome were forced to hear of it; and they, summing up as correctly as they well could, with Advocatus Diaboli pleadings and other forms of process, the general verdict of mankind, declared that he had in very fact led a hero's life in this world; and, being now gone, was gone, as they conceived, to God above and reaping his reward there. Such, they said, was the best judgment they could form of the case, and truly not a bad judgment.

Carlyle's reverence for the past makes him even more apt to be touched by its sorrows than amused by its follies. With a sense of brotherhood he holds out hands to all that were weary; he feels even for the pedlars climbing the Hohenzollern valley, and pities the solitude of soul on the frozen Schreckhorn of power, whether in a dictator of Paraguay or in a Prussian prince. He leads us to the death chamber of Louis XV., of Mirabeau, of Cromwell, of Sterling, his own lost friend; and we feel with him in the presence of a solemnising mystery. Constantly, amid the din of arms or words, and the sarcasms by which he satirises and contemns old follies and idle strifes, a gentler feeling wells up in his pages like the sound of the Angelus. Such pauses of pathos are the records of real or fanciful situations, as of Teufelsdröckh “left alone with the night” when Blumine and Herr Towgood ride down the valley; of Oliver recalling the old days at St. Ives; of the Electress Louisa bidding adieu to her Elector.

At the moment of her death, it is said, when speech had fled, he felt from her hand, which lay in his, three slight slight pressures—farewell thrice mutely spoken in that manner, not easily to forget in this world.

There is nothing more pathetic in the range of his
works, if in that of our literature, than the account of the relations of father and son in the domestic history of the Prussian Court, from the first estrangement between them—the young Friedrich in his prison at Cüstrin, the old Friedrich gliding about seeking shelter from ghosts, mourning for Absalom—to the reconciliation, the end, and the afterthoughts:—

The last breath of Friedrich Wilhelm having fled, Friedrich hurried to a private room; sat there all in tears; looking back through the guls of the Past, upon such a Father now rapt away for ever. Sad all and soft in the moonlight of memory—the lost Loved One all in the right as we now see, we all in the wrong!—This, it appears, was the Son's fixed opinion. Seven years hence here is how Friedrich concludes the History of his Father, written with a loyal admiration throughout: "We have left under silence the domestic chagrins of this great Prince; readers must have some indulgence for the faults of the children, in consideration of the virtues of such a Father." All in tears he sits at present, meditating these sad things. In a little while the Old Dessauer, about to leave for Dessau, ventures in to the Crown Prince, Crown Prince no longer; "embraces his knees," offers weeping his condolence, his congratulation; hopes withal that his sons and he will be continued in their old posts, and that he the Old Dessauer "will have the same authority as in the late reign." Friedrich's eyes, at this last clause, flash out tearless, strangely Olympian. "In your posts I have no thought of making change; in your posts yes; and as to authority I know of none there can be but what resides in the king that is sovereign," which, as it were, struck the breath out of the Old Dessauer; and sent him home with a painful miscellany of feelings, astonishment not wanting among them. At an after hour the same night Friedrich went to Berlin, met by acclamation enough. He slept there not without tumult of dreams, one may fancy; and on awaking next morning the first sound he heard was that of the regiment Glasenap under his windows, swearing fealty to the new King. He sprang out of bed in a tempest of emotion; bustled distractedly to and fro, wildly weeping. Pöllnitz, who came into the anteroom, found him in this state, "half-dressed, with dishevelled hair, in tears, and as if beside himself." "These
huzzahings only tell me what I have lost,” said the new King. “He was in great suffering,” suggested Pöllnitz; “he is now at rest.” True, he suffered; but he was here with us; and now ——!

Carlyle has said of Dante’s Francesca “that it is a thing woven as of rainbows on a ground of eternal black.” The phrase, well applied to the Inferno, is a perhaps half-conscious verdict on his own tenderness as exhibited in his life and in his works.
CHAPTER IX

CARLYLE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

One of the subtlest of Robert Browning's critics, in the opening sentence of his work, quotes a saying of Hegel's, "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him"; adding, "The condemnation is a double one, and it generally falls heaviest on the great man himself who has to submit to explanation." Cousin, the graceful Eclectic, is reported to have said to the great Philosopher, "will you oblige me by stating the results of your teaching in a few sentences?" and to have received the reply, "It is not easy, especially in French."

The retort applies, with severity, to those who attempt to systematise Carlyle; for he himself was, as we have seen, intolerant of system. His mathematical attainment and his antipathy to logical methods beyond the lines of square and circle, his love of concise fact and his often sweeping assertions are characteristic of the same contradictions in his nature as his almost tyrannical premises and his practically tender-hearted conclusions. A hard thinker, he was never a close reasoner; in all that relates to human affairs he relies on nobility of feeling rather than on continuity of thought. Claiming the full latitude of

1 Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher, by Professor Henry Jones, of St. Andrews.
the prophet to warn, exhort, even to command, he declines either to preach or to accept the rubric of the partisan or of the priest.

In praise of German literature, he remarks, "One of its chief qualities is that it has no particular theory at all on the front of it;" and of its leaders, "I can only speak of the revelations these men have made to me. As to their doctrines, there is nothing definite or precise to be said"; yet he asserts that Goethe, Richter, and the rest, took him "out of the blackness and darkness of death." This is nearly the feeling that his disciples of forty years ago entertained towards himself; but their discipleship has rarely lasted through life. They came to his writings, inspired by the youthful enthusiasm that carries with it a vein of credulity, intoxicated by their fervour as by new wine or mountain air, and found in them the key of the perennial riddle and the solution of the insoluble mystery. But in later years the curtain to many of them became the picture.

When Carlyle was first recognised in London as a rising author, curiosity was rife as to his "opinions"; was he a Chartist at heart or an Absolutist, a Calvinist like Knox, a Deist like Hume, a Feudalist with Scott, or a Democrat with Burns—inquisitions mostly vain. He had come from the Scotch moors and his German studies, a strange element, into the midst of an almost foreign society, not so much to promulgate a new set of opinions as to infuse a new life into those already existing. He claimed to have a "mission," but it was less to controvert any form of creed than to denounce the insufficiency of shallow modes of belief. He raised the tone of literature by referring to higher standards than those currently accepted; he tried to elevate men's minds to the contemplation of something better than themselves, and impress upon them the
vacuity of lip-services; he insisted that the matter of most consequence was the grip with which they held their convictions and their willingness to sacrifice the interests on which they could lay their hands, in loyalty to some nobler faith. He taught that beliefs by hearsay are not only barren but obstructive; that it is only

When half-gods go, the gods arrive.

But his manner of reading these important lessons admitted the retort that he himself was content rather to dwell on what is not than to discover what is true. Belief, he reiterates, is the cure for all the worst of human ills; but belief in what or in whom? In "the eternities and immensities," as an answer, requires definition. It means that we are not entitled to regard ourselves as the centres of the universe; that we are but atoms of space and time, with relations infinite beyond our personalities; that the first step to a real recognition of our duties is the sense of our inferiority to those above us, our realisation of the continuity of history and life, our faith and acquiescence in some universal law. This truth, often set forth

By saint, by sage, by preacher, and by poet,

no one has enforced with more eloquence than Carlyle; but though he founded a dynasty of ideas, they are comparatively few; like a group of strolling players, each with a well-filled wardrobe, and ready for many parts.

The difficulty of defining Carlyle results not merely from his frequent golden nebulousness, but from his love of contradicting even himself. Dr. Johnson confessed to Boswell that when arguing in his dreams he was often worsted and took credit for the resignation with which he
bore these defeats, forgetting that the victor and the vanquished were one and the same. Similarly his successor took liberties with himself which he would allow to no one else, and in doing so he has taken liberties with his reader. His praise and blame of the profession of letters, as the highest priesthood and the meanest trade; his early exaltation of "the writers of newspapers, pamphlets, books," as "the real effective working church of a modern country"; and his later expressed contempt for journalism as "mean and demoralising"—"we must destroy the faith in newspapers"; his alternate faith and unfaith in Individualism; the teaching of the Characteristics and the Signs of the Times that all healthy genius is unconscious, and the censure of Sir Walter Scott for troubling himself too little with mysteries; his commendation of "the strong warrior" for writing no books, and his taking sides with the mediasval monks against the kings—there is no reconciliation of such contradictories. They are the expression of diverse moods and emphatically of different stages of mental progress, the later, as a rule, more negative than the earlier.

This change is most marked in the sphere of politics. At the close of his student days Carlyle was to all intents a Radical, and believed in Democracy; ¹ he saw hungry masses around him, and, justly attributing some of their suffering to misgovernment, vented his sympathetic zeal for the oppressed in denunciation of the oppressors. He began not only by sympathising with the people, but by believing in their capacity to manage best their own affairs; a belief that steadily waned as he grew older until he denied to them even the right to choose their rulers. As late, however, as 1830, he argued against Irving's conservatism in terms recalled in the Reminiscences. "He objected clearly to my Reform Bill notions, found Demo-

¹ Passage quoted (Chap. II.) about the Glasgow Radical rising in 1819.
cracy a thing forbidden, leading even to outer darkness: I a thing inevitable and obliged to lead whithersoever it could.” During the same period he clenched his theory by taking a definite side in the controversy of the age. “This,” he writes to Macvey Napier, “this is the day when the lords are to reject the Reform Bill. The poor lords can only accelerate (by perhaps a century) their own otherwise inevitable enough abolition.”

The political part of Sartor Resartus, shadowing forth some scheme of well-organised socialism, yet anticipates, especially in the chapter on Organic Filaments, the writer’s later strain of belief in dukes, earls, and marshals of men: but this work, religious, ethical, and idyllic, contains mere vague suggestions in the sphere of practical life. About this time Carlyle writes of liberty: “What art thou to the valiant and the brave when thou art thus to the weak and timid, dearer than life, stronger than death, higher than purest love?” and agrees with the verdict, “The slow poison of despotism is worse than the convulsive struggles of anarchy.” But he soon passed from the mood represented by Emily Brontë to that of the famous apostrophe of Madame Roland. He proclaimed that liberty to do as we like is a fatal license, that the only true liberty is that of doing what is right, which he interprets living under the laws enacted by the wise. Mrs. Austin in 1832 wrote to Mrs. Carlyle, “I am that monster made up of all the Whigs hate—a Radical and an Absolutist.” The expression, at the time, accurately defined Carlyle’s own political position: but he shifted from it, till the Absolutist, in a spirit made of various elements, devoured the Radical. The leading counsel against the aristocracy changed his brief and became chief advocate on their side, declaring “we must recognise the hereditary principle if there is to be any fixity in things.” In 1835, he says to Emerson:—
I believe literature to be as good as dead . . . and nothing but hungry Revolt and Radicalism appointed us for perhaps three generations. . . . I suffer also terribly from the solitary existence I have all along had; it is becoming a kind of passion with me to feel myself among my brothers. And then How? Alas, I care not a doit for Radicalism, nay, I feel it to be a wretched necessity unfit for me; Conservatism being not unfit only but false for me; yet these two are the grand categories under which all English spiritual activity, that so much as thinks remuneration possible, must range itself.

And somewhat later—

People accuse me, not of being an incendiary Sansculotte, but of being a Tory, thank Heaven!

Some one has written with a big brush, “He who is not a radical in his youth is a knave, he who is not a conservative in his age is a fool.” The rough, if not rude, generalisation has been plausibly supported by the changes in the mental careers of Burke, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth. But Carlyle was “a spirit of another sort,” of more mixed yarn; and, as there is a vein of Conservatism in his early Radicalism, so there is, as also in the cases of Landor and even of Goethe, still a revolutionary streak in his later Conservatism. Consequently, in his instance, there is a plea in favour of the prepossession (especially strong in Scotland) which leads the political or religious party that a distinguished man has left still to persist in claiming him; while that which he has joined accepts him, if at all, with distrust. Scotch Liberals will not give up Carlyle, one of his biographers keenly asseverating that he was to the last “a democrat at heart”; while the representative organ of northern Conservatism on the same ground continues to assail him—“mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens.” On all questions directly bearing on the physical welfare of the masses of the people, his speech and action remained consistent with his declaration
that he had "never heard an argument for the corn laws which might not make angels weep." From first to last, he was an advocate of Free Trade—though under the constant protest that the greatness of a nation depended in a very minor degree on the abundance of its possessions—and of free, unsectarian, and compulsory Education; while, in theology, though remote from either, he was more tolerant of the dogmatic narrowness of the Low Church of the lower, than of the Ritualism of the upper, classes. His unwavering interest in the poor and his belief that legislation should keep them in constant view, was in accord with the spirit of Bentham's standard: but Carlyle, rightly or wrongly, came to regard the bulk of men as children requiring not only help and guidance but control.

On the question of "the Suffrage" he completely revolved. It appears, from the testimony of Mr. Froude, that the result of the Reform Bill of 1832 disappointed him in merely shifting power from the owners of land to the owners of shops, and leaving the handicraftsmen and his own peasant class no better off. Before a further extension became a point of practical politics he had arrived at the conviction that the ascertainment of truth and the election of the fittest did not lie with majorities. These sentences of 1835 represent a transition stage:—

Conservatism I cannot attempt to conserve, believing it to be a portentous embodied sham. . . . Whether the Tories stay out or in, it will be all for the advance of Radicalism, which means revolt, dissolution, and confusion, and a darkness which no man can see through.

No one had less faith in the pean chanted by Macaulay and others on the progress of the nation or of the race, a progress which, without faith in great men, was to him inevitably downward; no one protested with more emphasis against the levelling doctrines of the French
Revolution. It has been observed that Carlyle's Chartism was "his first practical step in politics"; it is more true to say that it first embodied, with more than his usual precision, the convictions he had for some time held of the dangers of our social system; with an indication of some of the means to ward them off, based on the realisation of the interdependence of all classes in the State. This book is remarkable as containing his last, very partial, concessions to the democratic creed, the last in which he is willing to regard a wide suffrage as a possible, though by no means the best, expedient. Subsequently, in Past and Present and the Latter-Day Pamphlets, he came to hold "that with every extension of the Franchise those whom the voters would elect would be steadily inferior and more unfit." Every stage in his political progress is marked by a growing distrust in the judgment of the multitude, a distrust set forth, with every variety of metaphor, in such sentences as the following:

There is a divine message or eternal regulation of the Universe. How find it? All the world answers me, "Count heads, ask Universal Suffrage by the ballot-box and that will tell!" From Adam's time till now the Universe was wont to be of a somewhat abstruse nature, partially disclosing itself to the wise and noble-minded alone, whose number was not the majority. Of what use towards the general result of finding out what it is wise to do, can the fools be? . . . If of ten men nine are recognisable as fools, which is a common calculation, how in the name of wonder will you ever get a ballot-box to grind you out a wisdom from the votes of these ten men? . . . Only by reducing to zero nine of these votes can wisdom ever issue from your ten. The mass of men consulted at the hustings upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human stupidity as this world sees. . . . If the question be asked and the answer given, I will generally consider in any case of importance, that the said answer is likely to be wrong, and that I have to go and do the reverse of the same . . . for how should I follow a multitude to do evil? Cease to brag to me of America and its model
institutions. . . . On this side of the Atlantic or on that, Democracy is for ever impossible! The Universe is a monarchy and a hierarchy, the noble in the high places, the ignoble in the low; this is in all times and in all places the Almighty Maker's law. Democracy, take it where you will, is found a regulated method of rebellion, it abrogates the old arrangement of things, and leaves zero and vacuity. It is the consummation of no-government and laissez-faire.

Alongside of this train of thought there runs a constant protest against the spirit of revolt. In Sartor we find: "Whoso cannot obey cannot be free, still less bear rule; he that is the inferior of nothing can be the superior of nothing"; and in Chartism—

Men who rebel and urge the lower classes to rebel ought to have other than formulas to go upon, . . . those to whom millions of suffering fellow-creatures are "masses," mere explosive masses for blowing down Bastiles with, for voting at hustings for us—such men are of the questionable species. . . . Obedience . . . is the primary duty of man. . . . Of all "rights of men" this right of the ignorant to be guided by the wiser, gently or forcibly—is the indisputablest. . . . Cannot one discern, across all democratic turbulence, clattering of ballot-boxes, and infinite sorrowful jangle, that this is at bottom the wish and prayer of all human hearts everywhere, "Give me a leader"?

The last sentence indicates the transition from the merely negative aspect of Carlyle's political philosophy to the positive, which is his HERO-WORSHIP, based on the excessive admiration for individual greatness,—an admiration common to almost all imaginative writers, whether in prose or verse; on his notions of order and fealty, and on a reverence for the past, which is also a common property of poets. The Old and Middle Ages, according to his view, had their chiefs, captains, kings, and waxed or waned with the increase or decrease of their Loyalty. Democracy, the new force of our times, must in its turn be dominated by
leaders. Raised to independence over the arbitrary will of a multitude, these are to be trusted and followed, if need be, to death.

Your noblest men at the summit of affairs is the ideal world of poets. . . . Other aim in this earth we have none. That we all reverence "great men" is to me the living rock amid all rushings down whatsoever. All that democracy ever meant lies there, the attainment of a truer Aristocracy or Government of the Best. Make search for the Able man. How to get him is the question of questions.

It is precisely the question to which Carlyle never gives, and hardly attempts, a reply; and his failure to answer it invalidates the larger half of his Politics. Plato has at least detailed a scheme for eliminating his philosopher guardians, though it somewhat pedantically suggests a series of Chinese examinations; his political, though probably unconscious disciple has only a few negative tests. The warrior or sage who is to rule is not to be chosen by the majority, especially in our era, when they would choose the Orators who seduce and "traduce the State"; nor are we ever told that the election is to rest with either Under or Upper House: the practical conclusion is that when we find a man of great force of character, whether representing our own opinions or the reverse, we should take him on trust. This brings us to the central maxim of Carlyle's political philosophy, to which we must, even in our space, give some consideration, as its true meaning has been the theme of so much dispute.

It is a misfortune of original thought that it is hardly ever put in practice by the original thinker. When his rank as a teacher is recognised, his words have already lost half their value by repetition. His manner is aped by those who find an easy path to notoriety in imitation; the belief he held near his heart is worn as a creed like
a badge; the truth he promulgated is distorted in a room of mirrors, half of it is a truism, the other half a falsism. That which began as a denunciation of tea-table morality, is itself the tea-table morality of the next generation; an outcry against cant may become the quintessence of cant; a revolt from tyranny the basis of a new tyranny; the condemnation of sects the foundation of a new sect; the proclamation of peace a bone of contention. There is an ambiguity in most general maxims, and a seed of error which assumes preponderance over the truth when the interpreters of the maxim are men easily led by formulæ. Nowhere is this degeneracy more strikingly manifested than in the history of some of the maxims which Carlyle either first promulgated or enforced by his adoption. When he said, or quoted, “Silence is better than speech,” he meant to inculcate patience and reserve. Always think before you speak: rather lose fluency than waste words: never speak for the sake of speaking. It is the best advice, but they who need it most are the last to take it; those who speak and write not because they have something to say, but because they wish to say or must say something, will continue to write and speak as long as they can spell or articulate. Thoughtful men are apt to misapply the advice, and betray their trust when they sit still and leave the “war of words to those who like it.” When Carlyle condemned self-consciousness, a constant introspection and comparison of self with others, he theoretically struck at the root of the morbid moods of himself and other mental analysts; he had no intention to over-exalt mere masculinity or to deify athletic sports. It were easy to multiply instances of truths clearly conceived at first and parodied in their promulgation; but when we have the distinct authority of the discoverer himself for their correct interpretation, we can at once appeal to it. A yet graver, not
uncommon, source of error arises when a great writer misapplies the maxims of his own philosophy, or states them in such a manner that they are sure to be misapplied.

Carlyle has laid down the doctrine that Might is Right at various times and in such various forms, with and without modification or caveat, that the real meaning can only be ascertained from his own application of it. He has made clear, what goes without saying, that by "might" he does not intend mere physical strength.

Of conquest we may say that it never yet went by brute force; conquest of that kind does not endure. The strong man, what is he? The wise man. His muscles and bones are not stronger than ours; but his soul is stronger, clearer, nobler. . . . Late in man's history, yet clearly at length, it becomes manifest to the dullest that mind is stronger than matter, that not brute Force, but only Persuasion and Faith, is the king of this world. . . . Intellect has to govern this world and will do it.

There are sentences which indicate that he means something more than even mental force; as in his Diary (Froude, iv. 422), "I shall have to tell Lecky, Right is the eternal symbol of Might"; and again in Chartism, "Might and right do differ frightfully from hour to hour; but give them centuries to try it, and they are found to be identical. The strong thing is the just thing. In kings we have either a divine right or a diabolic wrong." On the other hand, we read in Past and Present:—

Savage fighting Heptarchies: their fighting is an ascertainment who has the right to rule over them.

And again—

Clear undeniable right, clear undeniable might: either of these, once ascertained, puts an end to battle.

And elsewhere—

Rights men have none save to be governed justly. . . .
Rights I will permit thee to call everywhere correctly articulated mights. . . . All goes by wager of battle in this world, and it is, well understood, the measure of all worth. . . . By right divine the strong and capable govern the weak and foolish. . . . Strength we may say is Justice itself.

It is not left for us to balance those somewhat indefinite definitions. Carlyle has himself in his Histories illustrated and enforced his own interpretations of the summary views of his political treatises. There he has demonstrated that his doctrine, "Might is Right," is no mere unguarded expression of the truism that moral might is right. In his hands it implies that virtue is in all cases a property of strength, that strength is everywhere a property of virtue; that power of whatever sort having any considerable endurance, carries with it the seal and signal of its claim to respect, that whatever has established itself has, in the very act, established its right to be established. He is never careful enough to keep before his readers what he must himself have dimly perceived, that victory by right belongs not to the force of will alone, apart from clear and just conceptions of worthy ends. Even in its crude form, the maxim errs not so much in what it openly asserts as in what it implicitly denies. Aristotle (the first among ancients to question the institution of slavery, as Carlyle has been one of the last of moderns to defend it) more guardedly admits that strength is in itself a good,—καλ ήτιν δελ το κρατοιν εν επεροχυ δε παθοι τεινοε,—but leaves it to be maintained that there are forms of good which do not show themselves in excess of strength. Several of Carlyle's conclusions and verdicts seem to show that he only acknowledges those types of excellence that have already manifested themselves as powers; and this doctrine (which, if adopted in earlier ages, would practically have left possession with physical strength) colours all his
History and much of his Biography. Energy of any sort compels his homage. Himself a Titan, he shakes hands with all Titans, Gothic gods, Knox, Columbus, the fuliginous Mirabeau, burly Danton dying with “no weakness” on his lips. The fulness of his charity is for the errors of Mohammed, Cromwell, Burns, Napoleon I.,—whose mere belief in his own star he calls sincerity,—the atrocious Francia, the Norman kings, the Jacobins, Brandenburg despots; the fulness of his contempt for the conscientious indecision of Necker, the Girondists, the Moderates of our own Commonwealth. He condones all that ordinary judgments regard as the tyranny of conquest, and has for the conquered only a vs victis. In this spirit, he writes:—

M. Thierry celebrates with considerable pathos the fate of the Saxons; the fate of the Welsh, too, moves him; of the Celts generally, whom a fiercer race swept before them into the mountains, whither they were not worth following. What can we say, but that the cause which pleased the gods had in the end to please Cato also?

When all is said, Carlyle's inconsistent optimism throws no more light than others have done on the apparent relapses of history, as the overthrow of Greek civilisation, the long night of the Dark Ages, the spread of the Russian power during the last century, or of continental Militarism in the present. In applying the tests of success or failure we must bear in mind that success is from its very nature conspicuous. We only know that brave men have failed when they have had a “sacred bard.” The good that is lost is, ipso facto, forgotten. We can rarely tell of greatness unrecognised, for the very fact of our being able to tell of it would imply a former recognition. The might of evil walks in darkness: we remember the martyrs who, by their deaths, ultimately drove the Inquisition from England; not those
whose courage quailed. "It was their fate," as a recent writer remarks, "that was the tragedy." Reading Carlyle's maxim between the lines of his chapter on the Reformation, and noting that the Inquisition triumphed in Spain, while in Austria, Bavaria, and Bohemia Protestantism was stifled by stratagem or by force; that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was successful; and that the revocation of the Edict of Nantes killed the France of Henry IV., we see its limitations even in the long perspective of the past. ¹ Let us, however, grant that in the ultimate issue the Platonic creed, "Justice is stronger than injustice," holds good. It is when Carlyle turns to politics and regards them as history accomplished instead of history in progress that his principle leads to the most serious error. No one has a more withering contempt for evil as meanness and imbecility; but he cannot see it in the strong hand. Of two views, equally correct, "evil is weakness," such evil as sloth, and "corruption optimi pessima," such evil as tyranny—he only recognises the first. Despising the palpable anarchies of passion, he has no word of censure for the more settled form of anarchy which announced, "Order reigns at Warsaw." He refuses his sympathy to all unsuccessful efforts, and holds that if races are trodden under foot, they are φιλοτιθέντω άουσιν . . . δυνάμενοι ἄλλοι ταύτη; they who have allowed themselves to be subjugated deserve their fate. The cry of "oppressed nationalities" was to him mere cant. His Providence is on the side of the big battalions, and forgives very violent means to an orderly end. To his credit he declined to acknowledge the right of Louis Napoleon to rule France; but he accepted the Czars, and ridiculed Mazzini till forced to admit, almost with chagrin, that he had, "after all," substantially succeeded.

¹ Vide Mill's Liberty, chap. ii. pp. 52-54
Treason never prospers, what's the reason?
That when it prospers, none dare call it treason.

Apprehending, on the whole more keenly than any of his contemporaries, the foundations of past greatness, his invectives and teaching lay athwart much that is best as well as much that is most hazardous in the new ideas of the age. Because mental strength, endurance, and industry do not appear prominently in the Negro race, he looks forward with satisfaction to the day when a band of white buccaneers shall undo Toussaint l'Ouverture's work of liberation in Hayti, advises the English to revoke the Emancipation Act in Jamaica, and counsels the Americans to lash their slaves—better, he admits, made serfs and not saleable by auction—not more than is necessary to get from them an amount of work satisfactory to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Similarly he derides all movements based on a recognition of the claims of weakness to consideration and aid.

Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.

The application of the maxim, "Might is Right," to a theory of government is obvious; the strongest government must be the best, i.e. that in which Power, in the last resort supreme, is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler; the weakest, that in which it is most widely diffused, is the worst. Carlyle in his Address to the Edinburgh students commends Machiavelli for insight in attributing the preservation of Rome to the institution of the Dictatorship. In his Friedrich this view is developed in the lessons he directs the reader to draw from Prussian history. The following conveys his final comparative estimate of an absolute and a limited monarchy:

This is the first triumph of the constitutional Principle which has since gone to such sublime heights among us—heights
which we begin at last to suspect may be depths leading down, all men now ask whitherwards. A much-admired invention in its time, that of letting go the rudder or setting a wooden figure expensively to take care of it, and discovering that the ship would sail of itself so much the more easily. Of all things a nation needs first to be drilled, and a nation that has not been governed by so-called tyrants never came to much in the world.

Among the currents of thought contending in our age, two are conspicuously opposed. The one says: Liberty is an end not a mere means in itself; apart from practical results the crown of life. Freedom of thought and its expression, and freedom of action, bounded only by the equal claim of our fellows, are desirable for their own sakes as constituting national vitality; and even when, as is sometimes the case, Liberty sets itself against improvements for a time, it ultimately accomplishes more than any reforms could accomplish without it. The fewer restraints that are imposed from without on human beings the better: the province of law is only to restrain men from violently or fraudulently invading the province of other men. This view is maintained and in great measure sustained by J. S. Mill in his Liberty, the Areopagitica of the nineteenth century, and more elaborately if not more philosophically set forth in the comprehensive treatise of Wilhelm von Humboldt on The Sphere and Duties of Government. These writers are followed with various reserves by Grote, Buckle, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and by Mr. Lecky. Mill writes:

The idea of rational Democracy is not that the people themselves govern; but that they have security for good government. This security they can only have by retaining in their own hands the ultimate control. The people ought to be masters employing servants more skilful than themselves.\(^1\)

\(^1\) It should be noted that Mill lays as great stress on Individualism as Carlyle does, and a more practical stress. He has the same belief in the essential mediocrity of the masses of men whose "think-
To this Carlyle, with at least the general assent of Mr. Froude, Mr. Ruskin, and Sir James Stephen, substantially replies:

In freedom for itself there is nothing to raise a man above a fly; the value of a human life is that of its work done; the prime province of law is to get from its subjects the most of the best work. The first duty of a people is to find—which means to accept—their chief; their second and last to obey him. We see what men have been brought by "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," by the dreams of idealogues, and the purchase of votes.

This, the main drift of Carlyle’s political teaching, rests on his absolute belief in strength (which always grows by concentration), on his unqualified admiration of order, and on his utter disbelief in what his adverse friend Mazzini was wont, with over-confidence, to appeal to as "collective wisdom." Theoretically there is much to be said for this view: but, in practice, it involves another idealism as aerial as that of any "idealogue" on the side of Liberty. It points to the establishment of an Absolutism which must continue to exist, whether wisdom survives in the absolute rulers or ceases to survive. Κρατεῖν ὅτε ἐστὶ καὶ μὴ δικαίως. The rule of Cæsars, Napoleons, Czars may have been beneficent in times of revolution; but their right to rule is apt to pass before their power, and when the latter descends by inheritance, as from M. Aurelius to Commodus, it commonly degenerates. It is well to learn, from a safe distance, the amount of good that may be associated with despotism: its worst evil is lawlessness, it not only suffocates freedom and
induces inertia, but it renders wholly uncertain the life of those under its control. Most men would rather endure the "slings and arrows" of an irresponsible press, the bustle and jargon of many elections, the delay of many reforms, the narrowness of many streets, than have lived from 1814 to 1840, with the noose around all necks, in Paraguay, or even precariously prospered under the paternal shield of the great Fritz's extraordinary father, Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia.

Carlyle's doctrine of the ultimate identity of "might and right" never leads, with him, to its worst consequence, a fatalistic or indolent repose; the withdrawal from the world's affairs of the soul "holding no form of creed but contemplating all." That he was neither a consistent optimist nor a consistent pessimist is apparent from his faith in man's partial ability to mould his fate. Not "belief, belief," but "action, action," is his working motto. On the title-page of the Latter-Day Pamphlets he quotes from Rushworth on a colloquy of Sir David Ramsay and Lord Reay in 1638:

"Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all!'—'Nay, by God, Donald; we must help Him to mend it,' said the other."

"I am not a Tory," he exclaimed, after the clamour on the publication of Chartism, "no, but one of the deepest though perhaps the quietest of Radicals." With the Toryism which merely says "stand to your guns" and, for the rest, "let well alone," he had no sympathy. There was nothing selfish in his theories. He felt for and was willing to fight for mankind, though he could not trust them; even his "king" he defines to be a minister or servant of the State. "The love of power," he says, "if thou understand what to the manful heart power signifies, is a very noble and indispensable love"; that is, the power to raise men above the "Pig Philosophy," the worship of clothes, the acquiescence
in wrong. "The world is not here for me, but I for it." "Thou shalt is written upon life in characters as terrible as thou shalt not"; are protests against the mere negative virtues which religionists are wont unduly to exalt.

Carlyle's so-called Mysticism is a part of his German poetry; in the sphere of common life and politics he made use of plain prose, and often proved himself as shrewd as any of his northern race. An excessively "good hater," his pet antipathies are generally bad things. In the abstract they are always so; but about the abstract there is no dispute. Every one dislikes or professes to dislike shams, hypocrisies, phantoms,—by whatever tiresomely reiterated epithet he may be pleased to address things that are not what they pretend to be. Diogenes's toil with the lantern alone distinguished the cynical Greek, in admiration of an honest man. Similarly the genuine zeal of his successor appears in painstaking search; his discrimination in the detection, his eloquence in his handling of humbugs. Occasional blunders in the choice of objects of contempt and of worship—between which extremes he seldom halts,—demonstrate his fallibility, but outside the sphere of literary and purely personal criticism he seldom attacks any one, or anything, without a show of reason. To all gospels there are two sides; and a great teacher who, by reason of the very fire that makes him great, disdains to halt and hesitate and consider the juste milieu, seldom guards himself against misinterpretation or excess. Mazzini writes, "He weaves and unwraps his web like Penelope, preaches by turns life and nothingness, and wearies out the patience of his readers by continually carrying them from heaven to hell." Carlyle, like Ruskin, keeps himself right not by caveats but by contradictions of himself, and sometimes in a way least to be expected. Much of his writing is a blast of war, or a protest against the philanthropy
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that sets charity before justice. Yet in a letter to the London Peace Congress of 1851, dated 18th July, we find:—

I altogether approve of your object. Clearly the less war and cutting of throats we have among us, it will be the better for us all. As men no longer wear swords in the streets, so neither by and by will nations, ... How many meetings would one expedition to Russia cover the cost of?

He denounced the Americans, in apparent ignorance of their "Constitution," for having no Government; and yet admitted that what he called their anarchy had done perhaps more than anything else could have done to subdue the wilderness. He spoke with scorn of the "rights of women," their demand for the suffrage, and the *cohue* of female authors, expressing himself in terms of ridiculous disparagement of writers so eminent as George Sand and George Eliot; but he strenuously advocated the claim of women to a recognised medical education. He reviled "Model Prisons" as pampering institutes of "a universal sluggard and scoundrel amalgamation society," and yet seldom passed on the streets one of the "Devil's elect" without giving him a penny. He set himself against every law or custom that tended to make harder the hard life of the poor: there was no more consistent advocate of the abolition of the "Game Laws." Emerson says of the medieval architects, "they builded better than they knew." Carlyle felt more softly than he said, and could not have been trusted to execute one of his own Rhadamantine decrees.¹ Scratch the skin of the Tartar and you find beneath the despised humanitarian. Everything that he has written on "The Condition of England Question" has a practical bearing, and many of his suggestions have found a place

¹ Vide a remarkable instance of this in the best short Life of Carlyle, that by Dr. Richard Garnett, p. 147.
on our code, vindicating the assertion of the Times of
the day after his death, that "the novelties and para-
doxes of 1846 are to a large extent nothing but the good
sense of 1881." Such are:—his insistence on affording
every facility for merit to rise from the ranks, embodied
in measures against promotion by Purchase; his advocacy
of State-aided Emigration, of administrative and civil service
Reform,—the abolition of "the circumlocution office" in
Downing Street,—of the institution of a Minister of Educa-
tion; his dwelling on the duties as well as the rights of land-
owners,—the theme of so many Land Acts; his enlarging on
the superintendence of labour,—made practical in Factory
and Limited Hours Bills—on care of the really destitute, on
the better housing of the poor, on the regulation of weights
and measures; his general contention for fixing more exactly
the province of the legislative and the executive bodies.
Carlyle's view that we should find a way to public life for
men of eminence who will not cringe to mobs, has made a
step towards realisation in further enfranchisement of Uni-
versities. Other of his proposals, as the employment of
our army and navy in time of peace, and the forcing of
able-bodied paupers into "industrial regiments," have
become matter of debate which may pave the way to
legislation. One of his desiderata, a practical veto on
"puffing," it has not yet been found feasible, by the
passing of an almost prohibitive duty on advertisements,
to realise.

Besides these specific recommendations, three ideas are
dominant in Carlyle's political treatises. First—a vehement
protest against the doctrine of Laissez faire; which, he says,
"on the part of the governing classes will, we repeat again
and again, have to cease; pacific mutual divisions of the
spoil and a would-let-well-alone will no longer suffice":—
a doctrine to which he is disposed to trace the Trades
Union wars, of which he failed to see the issue. He is so strongly in favour of *Free-trade* between nations that, by an amusing paradox, he is prepared to make it *compulsory*. "All men," he writes in *Past and Present*, "trade with all men when mutually convenient, and are even bound to do it. Our friends of China, who refused to trade, had we not to argue with them, in cannon-shot at last?" But in Free-trade between class and class, man and man, within the bounds of the same kingdom, he has no trust: he will not leave "supply and demand" to adjust their relations. The result of doing so is, he holds, the scramble between Capital for larger interest and Labour for higher wage, in which the rich if unchecked will grind the poor to starvation, or drive them to revolt.

*Second.*—As a corollary to the abolition of *Laissez faire*, he advocates the *Organisation of Labour*, "the problem of the whole future to all who will pretend to govern men." The phrase from its vagueness has naturally provoked much discussion. Carlyle's bigoted dislike of Political Economists withheld him from studying their works; and he seems ignorant of the advances that have been made by the "dismal science," or of what it has proved and disproved. Consequently, while brought in evidence by most of our modern Social idealists, Comtists and Communists alike, all they can say is that he has given to their protest against the existing state of the commercial world a more eloquent expression than their own. He has no compact scheme,—as that of St. Simon or Fourier, or Owen,—few such definite proposals as those of Karl Marx, Bellamy, Hertzka or Gronlund, or even William Morris. He seems to share with Mill the view that "the restraints of communism are weak in comparison with those of capitalists," and with Morris to look far forward to some golden age; he has given emphatic support to a copartnership of employers and employed,
in which the profits of labour shall be apportioned by some rule of equity, and insisted on the duty of the State to employ those who are out of work in public undertakings.

Enlist, stand drill, and become from banditti soldiers of industry. I will lead you to the Irish bogs... English fox-covers... New Forest, Salisbury Plains, and Scotch hill-sides which as yet feed only sheep... thousands of square miles... destined yet to grow green crops and fresh butter and milk and beef without limit:—

an estimate with the usual exaggeration. But Carlyle's later work generally advances on his earlier, in its higher appreciation of Industrialism. He looks forward to the boon of "one big railway right across America," a prophecy since three times fulfilled; and admits that "the new omnipotence of the steam engine is hewing aside quite other mountains than the physical," i.e. bridging the gulf between races and binding men to men. He had found, since writing Sartor, that dear cotton and slow trains do not help one nearer to God, freedom, and immortality.

Carlyle's third practical point is his advocacy of Emigration, or rather his insistence on it as a sufficient remedy for Over-population. He writes of "Malthusianism" with his constant contempt of convictions other than his own:—

A full formed man is worth more than a horse... One man in a year, as I have understood it, if you lend him earth will feed himself and nine others (?)... Too crowded indeed!... What portion of this globe have ye tilled and delved till it will grow no more? How thick stands your population in the Pampas and Savannas—in the Curragh of Kildare? Let there be an Emigration Service... so that every honest willing workman who found England too strait, and the organisation of labour incomplete, might find a bridge to carry him to western lands. Our little isle has grown too narrow for us, but the world is wide enough yet for another six thousand years. If this
small western rim of Europe is over-peopled, does not everywhere else a whole vacant earth, as it were, call to us "Come and till me, come and reap me"?

On this follows an eloquent passage about our friendly Colonies, "overarched by zodiacs and stars, clasped by many-sounding seas." Carlyle would apparently force emigration, and coerce the Australians, Americans, and Chinese, to receive our ship-loads of living merchandise; but the problem of population exceeds his solution of it. He everywhere inclines to rely on coercion till it is over-mastered by resistance, and to overstretch jurisdiction till it snaps.

In Germany, where the latest representative of the Hohenzollerns is ostentatiously laying claim to "right divine," Carlyle's appraisal of Autocracy may have given it countenance. In England, where the opposite tide runs full, it is harmless: but, by a curious irony, our author's leaning to an organised control over social and private as well as public life, his exaltation of duties above rights, may serve as an incentive to the very force he seemed most to dread. Events are every day demonstrating the fallacy of his view of Democracy as an embodiment of laissez faire. Kant with deeper penetration indicated its tendency to become despotic. Good government, according to Aristotle, is that of one, of few, or of many, for the sake of all. A Democracy where the poor rule for the poor alone, may be a deadly engine of oppression; it may trample without appeal on the rights of minorities, and, in the name of the common good, establish and enforce an almost unconditioned tyranny. Carlyle's blindness to this superlative danger—a danger to which Mill, in many respects his unrecognised coadjutor, became alive 1

1 Vide passim the chapter in Liberty entitled "Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual," where Mill denounces the idea of "the majority of operatives in many branches of industry... that bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as good."
—emphasises the limits of his political foresight. He has
consecrated Fraternity with an eloquence unapproached
by his peers, and with equal force put to scorn the supersti-
tion of Equality; but he has aimed at Liberty destructive
shafts, some of which may find a mark the archer little
meant.
CHAPTER X

CARLYLE'S RELIGION AND ETHICS—RELATION TO PREDECESSORS—INFLUENCE

The same advance or retrogression that appears in Carlyle's Politics is traceable in his Religion; though it is impossible to record the stages of the change with even an equal approach to precision. Religion, in the widest sense—faith in some supreme Power above us yet acting for us—was the great factor of his inner life. But when we further question his Creed, he is either bewilderingly inconsistent or designedly vague. The answer he gives is that of Schiller: "Welche der Religionen! Keine von allen. Warum? Aus Religion." In 1870 he writes: "I begin to think religion again possible for whoever will piously struggle upwards and sacredly refuse to tell lies; which indeed will mostly mean refusal to speak at all on that topic." This and other implied protests against intrusive inquisition are valid in the case of those who keep their own secrets: it is impertinence to peer and "interview" among the sanctuaries of a poet or politician or historian who does not himself open their doors. But Carlyle has done this in all his books. A reticent writer may veil his convictions on every subject save that on which he writes. An avowed preacher or prophet cannot escape interrogation as to his text.
With all the evidence before us—his collected works, his friendly confidences, his journals, his fragmentary papers, as the interesting series of jottings entitled "Spiritual Optics," and the partial accounts to Emerson and others of the design of the "Exodus from Houndsditch."—it remains impossible to formulate Carlyle's Theology. We know that he abandoned the ministry, for which he was destined, because, at an early date, he found himself at irreconcilable variance, not on matters of detail but on essentials, with the standards of Scotch Presbyterianism. We know that he never repented or regretted his resolve; that he went, as continuously as possible for a mind so liable to fits and starts, further and further from the faith of his fathers; but that he remained to the last so much affected by it, and by the ineffaceable impress of early associations, that he has been plausibly called "a Calvinist without dogma," "a Calvinist without Christianity," "a Puritan who had lost his creed." We know that he revered the character of Christ, and theoretically accepted the ideal of self-sacrifice: the injunction to return good for evil he never professed to accept; and vicarious sacrifice was contrary to his whole philosophy, which taught that every man must "dree his weird." We know that he not only believed in God as revealed in the larger Bible, the whole history of the human race, but that he threatened, almost with hell-fire, all who dared on this point to give refuge to a doubt. Finally, he believed both in fate and in free-will, in good and evil as powers at internecine war, and in the greater strength and triumph of good at some very far distant date. If we desire to know more of Carlyle's creed we must proceed by "the method of exclusions," and note, in the first place, what he did not believe. This process is simplified by the fact that he assailed all convictions other than his own.
Half his teaching is a protest, in variously eloquent phrase, against all forms of Materialism and Hedonism, which he brands as "worships of Moloch and Astarte," forgetting that progress in physical welfare may lead not only to material, but to mental, if not spiritual, gain. Similarly he denounces Atheism, never more vehemently than in his Journals of 1868-1869:

Had no God made this world it were an insupportable place. Laws without a lawgiver, matter without spirit is a gospel of dirt. All that is good, generous, wise, right... who or what could by any possibility have given it to me, but One who first had it to give! This is not logic, it is axiom. ... Poor "Comtism, ghastliest of algebraic spectralities." ... Canst thou by searching find out God? I am not surprised thou canst not, vain fool. If they do abolish God from their poor bewildered hearts, there will be seen such a world as few are dreaming of.

Carlyle calls evidence from all quarters, appealing to Napoleon's question, "Who made all that?" and to Friedrich's belief that intellect "could not have been put into him by an entity that had none of its own," in support of what he calls the Eternal Fact of Facts, to which he clings as to the Rock of Ages, the sole foundation of hope and of morality to one having at root little confidence in his fellow-men.

If people are only driven upon virtuous conduct... by association of ideas, and there is no "Infinite Nature of Duty," the world, I should say, had better count its spoons to begin with, and look out for hurricanes and earthquakes to end with.

Carlyle hazardously confessed that as regards the foundations of his faith and morals, with Napoleon and Friedrich II. on his side, he had against him the advancing tide of modern Science. He did not attempt to disprove its facts, or, as Emerson, to sublimate them into a new idealism; he scoffed at and made light of them, e.g.—
Geology has got rid of Moses, which surely was no very sublime achievement either. I often think . . . it is pretty much all that science in this age has done. . . . Protoplasm (unpleasant doctrine that we are all, soul and body, made of a kind of blubber, found in nettles among other organisms) appears to be delightful to many. . . . Yesterday there came a pamphlet published at Lewes, a hallelujah on the advent of Atheism. . . . The real joy of Julian (the author) was what surprised me, like the shout of a hyena on finding that the whole universe was actually carrion. In about seven minutes my great Julian was torn in two and lying in the place fit for him. . . . Descended from Gorillas! Then where is the place for a Creator? Man is only a little higher than the tadpoles, says our new Evangelist. . . . Nobody need argue with these people. Logic never will decide the matter, or will seem to decide it their way. He who traces nothing of God in his own soul, will never find God in the world of matter—mere circlings of force there, of iron regulation, of universal death and merciless indifference. . . . Matter itself is either Nothing or else a product due to man's mind. . . . The fast-increasing flood of Atheism on me takes no hold—does not even wet the soles of my feet.¹

"Carlyle," says one of his intimates, "speaks as if Darwin wished to rob or to insult him." Scepticism proper fares as hardly in his hands as definite denial. It is, he declares, "a fatal condition," and, almost in the spirit of the inquisitors, he attributes to it moral vice as well as intellectual weakness, calling it an "atrophy, a disease of the whole soul," "a state of mental paralysis," etc. His fallacious habit of appeal to consequences, which in others he would have scouted as a commonplace of the pulpit, is conspicuous in his remark on Hume's view of life as "a most melancholy theory," according to which, in the words of Jean Paul, "heaven becomes a gas, God a force, and the second world a grave." He fails to see that all such

¹ Cf. Othello, "Not a jot, not a jot." Carlyle writes on this question with the agitation of one himself not quite at ease, with none of the calmness of a faith perfectly secure.
appeals are beside the question; and deserts the ground of his answer to John Sterling's expostulation, "that is downright Pantheism": "What if it were Pot-theism if it is true?" It is the same inconsistency which, in practice, led his sympathy for suffering to override his Stoic theories; but it vitiated his reasoning, and made it impossible for him to appreciate the calm, yet legitimately emotional, religiosity of Mill. Carlyle has vetoed all forms of so-called Orthodoxy—whether Catholic or Protestant, of Churches High or Low; he abhorred Puseyism, Jesuitry, spoke of the "Free Kirk and other rubbish," and recorded his definite disbelief, in any ordinary sense, in Revelation and in Miracles. "It is as certain as Mathematics that no such thing has ever been on earth." History is a perpetual revelation of God's will and justice, and the stars in their courses are a perpetual miracle, is his refrain. This is not what Orthodoxy means, and no one was more intolerant than Carlyle of all shifts and devices to slur the difference between "Yes" and "No." But having decided that his own "Exodus from Houndsditch" might only open the way to the wilderness, he would allow no one else to take in hand his uncompleted task; and disliked Strauss and Renan even more than he disliked Colenso. "He spoke to me once," says Mr. Froude, "with loathing of the Vie de Jésus." I asked if a true life could be written. He said, "Yes, certainly, if it were right to do so; but it is not." Still more strangely he writes to Emerson:—

You are the only man of the Unitarian persuasion whom I could unostensibly like. The others that I have seen were all a kind of half-way-house characters, who I thought should, if they had not wanted courage, have ended in unbelief, in faint possible Theism; which I like considerably worse than Atheism. Such, I could not but feel, deserve the fate they find here; the bat fate; to be killed among the bats as a bird, among the birds as a bat.
What then is left for Carlyle's Creed? Logically little, emotionally much. If it must be defined, it was that of a Theist with a difference. A spirit of flame from the empyrean, he found no food in the cold Deism of the eighteenth century, and brought down the marble image from its pedestal, as by the music of the "Winter's Tale," to live among men and inspire them. He inherited and cœlle que cœlle determined to persist in the belief that there was a personal God—"a Maker, voiceless, formless, within our own soul." To Emerson he writes in 1836, "My belief in a special Providence grows yearly stronger, unsubduable, impregnable"; and later, "Some strange belief in a special Providence was always in me at intervals." Thus, while asserting that "all manner of pulpits are as good as broken and abolished," he clings to the old Eccleftechans days.

"To the last," says Mr. Froude, "he believed as strongly as ever Hebrew prophet did in spiritual religion;" but if we ask the nature of the God on whom all relies, he cannot answer even with the Apostles' Creed. Is He One or Three? "Wer darf ihn nennen." Carlyle's God is not a mere "tendency that makes for righteousness"; He is a guardian and a guide, to be addressed in the words of Pope's Universal Prayer, which he adopted as his own. A personal God does not mean a great Figure Head of the Universe,—Heine's fancy of a venerable old man, before he became "a knight" of the Holy Ghost,—it means a Supreme Power, Love, or Justice having relations to the individual man: in this sense Carlyle believed in Him, though more as Justice, exacting "the terriblest penalties," than as Love, preaching from the Mount of Olives. He never entered into controversies about the efficacy of prayer; but, far from deriding, he recommended it as "a turning of one's soul to the Highest." In 1869 he writes:—
I occasionally feel able to wish, with my whole softened heart—it is my only form of prayer—"Great Father, oh, if Thou canst, have pity on her and on me and on all such!" In this at least there is no harm.

And about the same date to Erskine:—

"Our Father;" in my sleepless tossings, these words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind with an altogether new emphasis; as if written and shining for me in mild pure splendour on the black bosom of the night there; when I as it were read them word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was much unexpected. Not for perhaps thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer: nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is, the inmost inspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature, right worthy to be recommended with an "After this manner pray ye."

Carlyle holds that if we do our duty—the best work we can—and faithfully obey His laws, living soberly and justly, God will do the best for us in this life. As regards the next we have seen that he ended with Goethe's hope. At an earlier date he spoke more confidently. On his father's death (Reminiscences, vol. i. p. 65) he wrote:—

Man follows man. His life is as a tale that has been told: yet under time does there not lie eternity? . . . Perhaps my father, all that essentially was my father, is even now near me, with me. Both he and I are with God. Perhaps, if it so please God, we shall in some higher state of being meet one another, recognise one another. . . . The possibility, nay (in some way) the certainty, of perennial existence daily grows plainer to me.

On the death of Mrs. Welsh he wrote to his wife: "We shall yet go to her. God is great. God is good": and earlier, in 1835-1836, to Emerson on the loss of his brother:—

What a thin film it is that divides the living and the dead.
Your brother is in very deed and truth with God, where both you and I are. ... Perhaps we shall all meet yonder, and the tears be wiped from all eyes. One thing is no perhaps: surely we shall all meet, if it be the will of the Maker of us. If it be not His will, then is it not better so?

After his wife's death, naturally, the question of Immortality came uppermost in his mind; but his conclusions are, like those of Burns, never dogmatic:

The truth about the matter is absolutely hidden from us. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Yes, if you are God you may have a right to say so; if you are a man what do you know more than I, or any of us?

And later—

What if Omnipotence should actually have said, "Yes, poor mortals, such of you as have gone so far shall be permitted to go farther"?

To Emerson in 1867 he writes:

I am as good as without hope and without fear; a gloomily serious, silent, and sad old man, gazing into the final chasm of things in mute dialogue with "Death, Judgment, and Eternity" (dialogue mute on both sides), not caring to discourse with poor articulate speaking mortals, on their sorts of topics—disgusted with the world and its roaring nonsense, which I have no further thought of lifting a finger to help, and only try to keep out of the way of, and shut my door against.

There can be no question of the sincerity of Carlyle's conviction that he had to make war on credulity and to assail the pretences of a formal Belief (which he regards as even worse than Atheism) in order to grapple with real Unbelief. After all explanations of Newton or Laplace, the Universe is, to him, a mystery, and we ourselves the miracle of miracles; sight and knowledge leave us no "less forlorn," and beneath all the soundings of science there is a deeper deep. It is this frame of mind that qualified him to be the exponent of the religious epochs in history. "By this
alone," wrote Dr. Chalmers, "he has done so much to vindicate and bring to light the Augustan age of Christianity in England," adding that it is the secret also of the great writer's appreciation of the higher Teutonic literature. His sombre rather than consolatory sense of "God in History," his belief in the mission of righteousness to constrain unrighteousness, and his Stoic view that good and evil are absolute opposites, are his links with the Puritans, whom he habitually exalts in variations of the following strain:

The age of the Puritans has gone from us, its earnest purpose awakens now no reverence in our frivolous hearts. Not the body of heroic Puritanism alone which was bound to die, but the soul of it also, which was and should have been, and yet shall be immortal, has, for the present, passed away.

Yet Goethe, the only man of recent times whom he regarded with a feeling akin to worship, was in all essentials the reverse of a Puritan.

To Carlyle's, as to most substantially emotional works, may be applied the phrase made use of in reference to the greatest of all the series of ancient books—

Hic liber est in quo quisquis sua dogmata querit,
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.

From passages like those above quoted—his complaints of the falling off of old Scotch faith; his references to the kingdom of a God who has written "in plain letters on the human conscience a Law that all may read"; his insistence that the great soul of the world is just; his belief in religion as a rule of conduct, and his sympathy with the divine depths of sorrow—from all these many of his Scotch disciples persist in maintaining that their master was to the end essentially a Christian. The question between them and other critics who assert that "he had renounced Christianity" is to some extent, not wholly,
a matter of nomenclature; it is hard exactly to decide it in the case of a man who so constantly found again in feeling what he had abandoned in thought. Carlyle's Religion was to the last an inconsistent mixture, not an amalgam, of his mother's and of Goethe's. The Puritan in him never dies; he attempts in vain to tear off the husk that cannot be separated from its kernel. He believes in no historical Resurrection, Ascension, or Atonement, yet hungers and thirsts for a supramundane source of Law, and holds fast by a faith in the Nemesis of Greek, Goth, and Jew. He abjures half-way houses; but is withheld by pathetic memories of the church spires and village graveyards of his youth from following his doubts to their conclusion; yet he gives way to his negation in his reference to "old Jew lights now burnt out," and in the half-despair of his expression to Froude about the Deity Himself, "He does nothing." Professor Masson says that "Carlyle had abandoned the Metaphysic of Christianity while retaining much of its Ethnic." To reverse this dictum would be an overstrain on the other side: but the Metaphysic of Calvinism is precisely what he retained; the alleged Facts of Revelation he discarded; of the Ethnic of the Gospels he accepted perhaps the lesser half, and he distinctly ceased to regard the teaching of Christ as final.¹ His doctrine of Renunciation (suggested by the Three Reverences in Wilhelm Meister's Travels) is Carlyle's transmutation, if not transfiguration, of Puritanism; but it took neither in him nor in Goethe any very consistent form, save that it meant Temperance, keeping the body well under the control of the head, the will strong, and striving, through all the lures of sense, to attain to some ideal life.

¹ A passage in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's Life and Letters of Robert Browning, p. 173, is decisive on this point, and perhaps too emphatic for general quotation.
Both write of Christianity as "a thing of beauty," a perennial power, a spreading tree, a fountain of youth; but Goethe was too much of a Greek—though, as has been said, "a very German Greek"—to be, in any proper sense of the word, a Christian; Carlyle too much of a Goth. His Mythology is Norse; his Ethics, despite his prejudice against the race, are largely Jewish. He proclaimed his code with the thunders of Sinai, not in the reconciling voice of the Beatitudes. He gives or forces on us world-old truths splendidly set, with a leaning to strength and endurance rather than to advancing thought. He did not, says a fine critic of morals, recognise that "morality also has passed through the straits." He did not really believe in Content, which has been called the Catholic, nor in Progress, more questionably styled the Protestant virtue. His often excellent practical rule to "do the duty nearest to hand" may be used to gag the intellect in its search after the goal; so that even his Everlasting Yea, as a predetermined affirmation, may ultimately result in a deeper negation.¹

"Duty," to him as to Wordsworth, "stern daughter of the voice of God," has two aspects, on each of which he dwells with a persistent iteration. The first is Surrender to something higher and wider than ourselves. That he has nowhere laid the line between this abnegation and the self-assertion which in his heroes he commends, partly means that correct theories of our complex life are impossible; but Matthew Arnold's criticism, that his Ethics "are made paradoxical by his attack on Happiness, which he should rather have referred to as the result of Labour and of Truth," can only be rebutted by the assertion that the pursuit of pleasure as an end defeats itself. The second

¹ Vide Professor Jones's *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, pp. 66-90.
aspect of his “Duty” is Work. His master Goethe is to him as Apollo to Hercules, as Shakespeare to Luther; the one entire as the chrysolite, the other like the Schreckhorn rent and riven; the words of the former are oracles, of the latter battles; the one contemplates and beautifies truth, the other wrestles and fights for it. Carlyle has a limited love of abstract truth; of action his love is unlimited. His lyre is not that of Orpheus, but that of Amphion which built the walls of Thebes. Laborare est orare. He alone is honourable who does his day’s work by sword or plough or pen. Strength is the crown of toil. Action converts the ring of necessity that girds us into a ring of duty, frees us from dreams, and makes us men.

The midnight phantoms feel the spell,  
The shadows sweep away,

There are few grander passages in literature than some of those litanies of labour. They have the roll of music that makes armies march, and if they have been made so familiar as to cease to seem new, it is largely owing to the power of the writer which has compelled them to become common property.

Carlyle’s practical Ethics, though too little indulgent to the light and play of life, in which he admitted no δωδεκάμα and only the relaxation of a rare genial laugh, are more satisfactory than his conception of their sanction, which is grim. His “Duty” is a categorical imperative, imposed from without by a taskmaster who has “written in flame across the sky, ‘Obey, unprofitable servant.’” He saw the infinite above and around, but not in the finite. He insisted on the community of the race, and struck with a bolt any one who said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

All things, the minutest that man does, influence all men, the very look of his face blesses or curses. ... It is a mathe-
matical fact that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the universe.

But he left a great gulf fixed between man and God, and so failed to attain to the Optimism after which he often strove. He held, with Browning, that “God’s in His heaven,” but not that “All’s right with the world.” His view was the Zoroastrian ἀθάνατος θανάτος, “in God’s world presided over by the prince of the powers of the air,” a “divine infernal universe.” The Calvinism of his mother, who said “The world is a lie, but God is truth,” landed him in an impasse; he could not answer the obvious retort,—Did then God make and love a lie, or make it hating it? There must have been some other power ἄλλο τέρατον, or, as Mill in his Apologia for Theism puts it, a limit to the assumed Omnipotence. Carlyle, accepting neither alternative, in consequence halts between them; and his prevailing view of mankind adds to his dilemma. He imposes an “infinite duty on a finite being,” as Calvin imposes an infinite punishment for a finite fault. He does not see that mankind sets its hardest tasks to itself; or that, as Emerson declares, “the assertion of our weakness and deficiency is the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim.” Hence, according to Mazzini, “He stands between the individual and the infinite without hope or guide, and crushes the human being by comparing him with God. From his lips, so daring, we seem to hear every instant the cry of the Breton mariner, ‘My God, protect me; my bark is so small and Thy ocean so vast.’” Similarly, the critic of Browning above referred to concludes of the great prose writer, whom he has called the poet’s twin:

1 Some one remarked to Friedrich II. that the philanthropist Sulzer said, “Men are by nature good.” “Ach, mein lieber Sulzer,” ejaculated Fritz, as quoted approvingly by Carlyle, “er kennt nicht diese verdammte Rasse.”
"He has let loose confusion upon us. He has brought us within sight of the future; he has been our guide in the wilderness; but he died there and was denied the view from Pisgah."

Carlyle's Theism is defective because it is not sufficiently Pantheistic; but, in his view of the succession of events in the "roaring loom of time," of the diorama of majesty girt by mystery, he has found a cosmic Pantheism and given expression to it in a passage which is the culmination of the English prose eloquence, as surely as Wordsworth's great Ode is the high-tide\(^1\) mark of the English verse, of this century:—

Are we not spirits shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific fact: we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us as round the veriest spectre is Eternity, and to Eternity minutes are as years and eons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again do we not squeak and gibber and glide, bodeful and feeble and fearful, and revel in our mad dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon; does the steel host that yelled in fierce battle shouts at Issus and Arbela remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed goblins must? Napoleon, too, with his Moscow retreats and Austerlitz campaigns, was it all other than the veriest spectre hunt; which has now with its howling tumult that made night hideous flitted away? Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the earth openly at noontide; some half hundred have vanished from it, some half hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once. O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future ghost within him, but are in very deed ghosts.\(^2\) These limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning

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1 A phrase applied by Emerson to the Ode.

2 Cf. "Tempest," "We are such stuff as dreams are made of."
passion? They are dust and shadow; a shadow system gathered round our me, wherein through some moments or years the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the form of a body; and forth issuing from Cimmerian Night on Heaven's mission appears. What force and fire there is in each he expends, one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife in war with his fellow, and then the heavensent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished shadow. Thus, like some wild flaming, wild thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious Mankind thunder and flame in long-drawn, quicksucceeding grandeur through the unknown deep. Thus, like a God-created fire-breathing spirit host, we emerge from the Inane, haste stormfully across the astonished earth, then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled and her seas filled up. On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped; the rear of the host read traces of the earliest van. But whence, O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not. Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

Volumes might be written on Carlyle's relations, of sentiment, belief, opinion, method of thought, and manner of expression, to other thinkers. His fierce independence, and sense of his own prophetic mission to the exclusion of that of his predecessors and compeers, made him often unconscious of his intellectual debts, and only to the Germans, who impressed his comparatively plastic youth, is he disposed adequately to acknowledge them. Outside the Hebrew Scriptures he seems to have been wholly unaffected by the writings and traditions of the East, which exercised so marked an influence on his New England disciples. He never realised the part played by the philosophers of Greece in moulding the speculations of modern Europe. He knew Plato mainly through the Socratic dialogues. There is, however, a passage in a letter to
Emerson (March 13th 1853) which indicates that he had read, comparatively late in life, some portions of The Republic. "I was much struck with Plato last year, and his notions about Democracy—mere Latter-Day Pamphlets, saevia et faces, . . . refined into empyrean radiance and the lightning of the gods." The tribute conveyed in the comparison is just; for there is nothing but community of political view between the bitter acorns dropped from the gnarled border oak and the rich fruit of the finest olive in Athene's garden. But the coincidences of opinion between the ancient and the modern writer are among the most remarkable in literary history. We can only refer, without comments, to a few of the points of contact in this strange conjunction of minds far as the poles asunder. Plato and Carlyle are both possessed with the idea that they are living in a degenerate age, and they attribute its degeneracy to the same causes:—Laissez faire; the growth of luxury; the effeminate preference of Lydian to Dorian airs in music, education, and life; the decay of the Spartan and growth of the Corinthian spirit; the habit of lawlessness culminating in the excesses of Democracy, which they describe in language as nearly identical as the difference of the ages and circumstances admit. They propose the same remedies:—a return to simpler manners, and stricter laws, with the best men in the State to regulate and administer them. Philosophers, says Plato, are to be made guardians, and they are to govern, not for gain or glory, but for the common weal. They need not be happy in the ordinary sense, for there is a higher than selfish happiness, the love of the good. To this love they must be systematically educated till they are fit to be kings and priests in the ideal state; if they refuse they must, when their turn comes, be made to govern. Compare the following declarations of Carlyle:—
Aristocracy and Priesthood, a Governing class and a Teaching class—these two sometimes combined in one, a Pontiff King—there did not society exist without those two vital elements, there will none exist. Whenever there are born Kings of men you had better seek them out and breed them to the work... The few wise will have to take command of the innumerable foolish, they must be got to do it.

The Ancient and the Modern, the Greek and the Teuton, are further curiously at one:—in their dislike of physical or mental Valetudinarianism (cf. Rep. Bs. ii. and iii. and Characteristics); in their protests against the morality of consequences, of rewards and punishments as motives for the highest life (the just man, says Plato, crucified is better than the unjust man crowned); in their contempt for the excesses of philanthropy and the pampering of criminals (cf. Rep. B. viii.); in their strange conjunctions of free-thinking and intolerance. Plato in the Laws enacts that he who speaks against 1 the gods shall be first fined, then imprisoned, and at last, if he persists in his impiety, put to death; yet he had as little belief in the national religion as Carlyle. They both accept Destiny,—the Parcae or the Norns spin the threads of life,—and yet both admit a sphere of human choice. In the Republic the souls select their lots: with Carlyle man can modify his fate. The juxtaposition in each of Humour and Pathos (cf. Plato’s account of the dogs in a Democracy, and Carlyle’s “Nigger gone masterless among the pumpkins,” and, for pathos, the image of the soul en-crusted by the world as the marine Glaucus, or the Vision of Er and Natural Supernaturalism) is another contact. Both held that philosophers and heroes were few, and yet both leant to a sort of Socialism, under State control; they both assail Poetry and deride the Stage (cf. Rep. B. ii. and

1 Rousseau, in the “Contrat Social,” also assumes this position; allowing freedom of thought, but banishing the citizen who shows disrespect to the State Religion.
B. x. with Carlyle on "The Opera"), while each is the greatest prose poet of his race; they are united in hatred of orators, who "would circumvent the gods," and in exalting action and character over "the most sweet voices"—the one enforcing his thesis in the "language of the gods," the other preaching silence in forty volumes of eloquent English speech.

Carlyle seems to have known little of Aristotle. His Stoicism was indigenous; but he always alludes with deference to the teaching of the Porch. Marcus Aurelius, the nearest type of the Philosophic King, must have riveted his regard as an instance of the combination of thought and action; and some interesting parallels have been drawn between their views of life as an arena on which there is much to be done and little to be known, a passage from time to a vague eternity. They have the same mystical vein, alongside of similar precepts of self-forgetfulness, abnegation, and the swerving of desire, the same confidence in the power of the spirit to defy or disdain vicissitudes, ideas which brought both in touch with the ethical side of Christianity; but their tempers and manner are as far as possible apart. Carlyle speaks of no one with more admiration than of Dante, recognising in the Italian his own intensity of love and hate and his own tenacity; but beyond this there is little evidence of the "Divina Commedia" having seriously attuned his thought: nor does he seem to have been much affected by any of the elder English poets. He scarcely refers to Chaucer; he alludes to Spenser here and there with some homage, but hardly ever, excepting Shakespeare, to the Elizabethan dramatists.

Among writers of the seventeenth century, he may have found in Hobbes some support of his advocacy of a strong government; but his views on this theme came rather from
a study of the history of that age. Milton he appreciates inadequately. To Dryden and Swift he is just; the latter, whether consciously to Carlyle or not, was in some respects his English master, and the points of resemblance in their characters suggest detailed examination. Their styles are utterly opposed, that of the one resting almost wholly on its Saxon base, that of the other being a coat of many colours; but both are, in the front rank of masters of prose satire, inspired by the same audacity of "noble rage." Swift's humour has a subtler touch and yet more seething scorn; his contempt of mankind was more real; his pathos equally genuine but more withdrawn; and if a worse foe he was a better friend. The comparisons already made between Johnson and Carlyle have exhausted the theme; they remain associated by their similar struggle and final victory, and sometimes by their tyrannous use of power; they are dissociated by the divergence of their intellectual and in some respects even their moral natures; both were forces of character rather than discoverers, both rulers of debate; but the one was of sense, the other of imagination, "all compact." The one blew the blast of doom" of the old patronage; the other, against heavier odds, contended against the later tyranny of uninformed and insolent popular opinion. Carlyle did not escape wholly from the influence of the most infectious, if the most morbid, of French writers, J. J. Rousseau. They are alike in setting Emotion over Reason: in referring to the Past as a model; in subordinating mere criticism to ethical, religious or irreligious purpose; in being avowed propagandists; in their "deep unrest"; and in the diverse conclusions that have been drawn from their teaching.

Carlyle's enthusiasm for the leaders of the new German literature was, in some measure, inspired by the pride in a treasure-trove, the regard of a foster-father or chaperon who
first substantially took it by the hand and introduced it to English society: but it was also due to the feeling that he had found in it the fullest expression of his own perplexities, and at least their partial solution. His choice of its representatives is easily explained. In Schiller he found intellectually a younger brother, who had fought a part of his own fight and was animated by his own aspirations; in dealing with his career and works there is a shade of patronage. Goethe, on the other hand, he recognised across many divergencies as his master. The attachment of the belated Scotch Puritan to the greater German has provoked endless comment; but the former has himself solved the riddle. The contrasts between the teacher and pupil remain, but they have been exaggerated by those who only knew Goethe as one who had attained, and ignored the struggle of his hot youth on the way to attainment. Carlyle justly commends him, not for his artistic mastery alone, but for his sense of the reality and earnestness of life, which lifts him to a higher grade among the rulers of human thought than such more perfect artists and more passionate lyricists as Heine. He admires above all his conquest over the world, without concession to it, saying:—

With him Anarchy has now become Peace ... the once perturbed spirit is serene and rich in good fruits. ... Neither, which is most important of all, has this Peace been attained by a surrender to Necessity, or any compact with Delusion—a seeming blessing, such as years and dispiritment will of themselves bring to most men, and which is indeed no blessing, since ever-continued battle is better than captivity. Many gird on the harness, few bear it warrior-like, still fewer put it off with triumph. Euphorion still asserts, "To die in strife is the end of life."

Goethe ceased to fight only when he had won; his want of sympathy with the so-called Apostles of Freedom, the stump orators of his day, was genuine and shared by
Carlyle. In the apologue of the Three Reverences in Meister
the master indulges in humanitarian rhapsody and, unlike
his pupil, verges on sentimental paradox, declaring through
the lips of the Chief in that imaginary pedagogic province
—which here and there closely recalls the New Atlantis—
that we must recognise "humility and poverty, mockery and
despite, disgrace and suffering, as divine—nay, even on sin
and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour them,
as furtherances of what is holy." In answer to Emerson's
Puritanic criticisms Carlyle replies:

Believe me, it is impossible you can be more a Puritan than
I; nay, I often feel as if I were far too much so, but John
Knox himself, could he have seen the peaceable impregnable
fidelity of that man's mind, and how to him also Duty was
infinite,—Knox would have passed on wondering, not reproach-
ing. But I will tell you in a word why I like Goethe. His is
the only healthy mind, of any extent, that I have discovered in
Europe for long generations; it was he who first convincingly
proclaimed to me... "Behold even in this scandalous Sceptico-
Epicurean generation, when all is gone but hunger and cant, it
is still possible that man be a man." And then as to that dark
ground on which you love to see genius paint itself: consider
whether misery is not ill health too, also whether good fortune
is not worse to bear than bad, and on the whole whether the
glorious serene summer is not greater than the wildest hurri-
cane—as Light, the naturalists say, is stronger than Lightning.

Among German so-called mystics the one most nearly in
accord with Carlyle was Novalis, who has left a sheaf of
sayings—as "There is but one temple in the universe, and
that is the body of man," "Who touches a human hand
touches God"—that especially commended themselves to his
commentator. Among philosophers proper, Fichte, in his
assertion of the Will as a greater factor of human life and
a nearer indication of personality than pure Thought, was
Carlyle's nearest tutor. The Vocation of the Scholar and
The Way to a Blessed Life anticipated and probably suggested
much of the more speculative part of *Sartor.* But to show
their relation would involve a course of Metaphysics.

We accept Carlyle's statement that he learnt most of
the secret of life and its aims from his master Goethe;
but the closest of his kin, the man with whom he shook
hands more nearly as an equal, was Richter—*Jean Paul der
einsige,* lord of the empire of the air, yet with feet firmly
planted on German earth, a colossus of reading and in-
dustry, the quaintest of humorists, not excepting either
Sir Thomas Browne or Laurence Sterne, a lover and
painter of Nature unsurpassed in prose. He first seems to
have influenced his translator's style, and set to him the
mode of queer titles and contortions, fantastic imaginary
incidents, and endless digressions. His Ezekiel visions as the
dream in the first *Flower Piece* from the life of Siebenkäs, and
that on *New Year's Eve,* are like pre-visions of *Sartor,* and we
find in the fantasies of both authors much of the same
machinery. It has been asserted that whole pages of
*Schmelze's Journey to Flütz* might pass current for Carlyle's
own; and it is evident that the latter was saturated with
*Quintus Fizlein.* The following can hardly be a mere
coincidence. Richter writes of a dead brother, "For he
chanced to leap on an ice-board that had jammed itself
among several others; but these recoiled, and his shot
forth with him, melted away as it floated under his feet,
and so sank his heart of fire amid the ice and waves"; while in *Cui Bono* we have—

What is life? a thawing ice-board
On a sea with sunny shore.

Similarly, the eloquently pathetic close of *Fizlein,* especially
the passage, "Then began the Æolian harp of Creation,"
recalls the deepest pathos of *Sartor.* The two writers, it
has been observed, had in common "reverence, humour,
vehemence, tenderness, gorgeousness, grotesqueness, and pure conduct of life." Much of Carlyle's article in the Foreign Quarterly of 1830 might be taken for a criticism of himself.

Enough has been said of the limits of Carlyle's magnanimity in estimating his English contemporaries; but the deliberate judgments of his essays were often more genial than those of his letters and conversation; and perhaps his overestimate of inferiors, whom in later days he drew round him as the sun draws the mist, was more hurtful than his severity; it is good for no man to live with satellites. His practical severance from Mazzini was mainly a personal loss: the widening of the gulf between him and Mill was a public calamity, for seldom have two men been better qualified the one to correct the excesses of the other. Carlyle was the greater genius; but the question which was the greater mind must be decided by the conflict between logic and emotion. They were related proximately as Plato to Aristotle, the one saw what the other missed, and their hold on the future has been divided. Mill had "the dry light," and his meaning is always clear; he is occasionally open to the charge of being a formalist, allowing too little for the "infusion of the affections," save when touched, as Carlyle was, by a personal loss; yet the critical range indicated by his essay on "Coleridge" on the one side, that on "Bentham" on the other, is as wide as that of his friend; and while neither said anything base, Mill alone is clear from the charge of having ever said anything absurd. His influence, though more indirect, may prove, save artistically, more lasting. The two teachers, in their assaults on laissez faire, curiously combine in giving sometimes undesigned support to social movements with which the elder at least had no sympathy.

Carlyle's best, because his most independent, friend
lived beyond the sea. He has been almost to weariness compared with Emerson, initial pupil later ally, but their contrasts are more instructive than their resemblances. They have both at heart a revolutionary spirit, marked originality, uncompromising aversion to illusions, disdain of traditional methods of thought and stereotyped modes of expression; but in Carlyle this is tempered by greater veneration for the past, in which he holds out models for our imitation; while Emerson sees in it only fingerposts for the future, and exhorts his readers to stay at home lest they should wander from themselves. The one loves detail, hates abstraction, delights to dwell on the minutiae of biography, and waxes eloquent even on dates. The other, a brilliant though not always a profound generaliser, tells us that we must “leave a too close and lingering adherence to facts, and study the sentiment as it appeared in hope not in history. . . with the ideal is the rose of joy. But grief cleaves to names and persons, and the partial interests of to-day and yesterday.” The one is bent under a burden, and pores over the riddle of the earth, till, when he looks up at the firmament of the unanswering stars, he can but exclaim, “It is a sad sight.” The other is blown upon by the fresh breezes of the new world; his vision ranges over her clear horizons, and he leaps up elastic under her light atmosphere, exclaiming, “Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous.” Carlyle is a half-Germanised Scotchman, living near the roar of the metropolis, with thoughts of Weimar and reminiscences of the Covenanting hills. Emerson studies Swedenborg and reads the Phaedo in his garden, far enough from the din of cities to enable him in calm weather to forget them. “Boston, London, are as fugitive as any whiff of smoke; so is society, so is the world.” The one is strong
where the other is weak. Carlyle keeps his abode in the murk of clouds illumined by bolts of fire; he has never seen the sun unveiled. Emerson’s “Threnody” shows that he has known the shadow; but he has fought with no Apollyons, reached the Celestial City without crossing the dark river, and won the immortal garland “without the dust and heat.” Self-sacrifice, inconsistently maintained, is the watchword of the one: self-reliance, more consistently, of the other. The art of the two writers is in strong contrast. The charm of Emerson’s style is its precision; his sentences are like medals each hung on its own string; the fields of his thought are combed rather than ploughed: he draws outlines, as Flaxman, clear and colourless. Carlyle’s paragraphs are like streams from Pactolus, that roll nuggets from their source on their turbid way. His expressions are often grotesque, but rarely offensive. Both writers are essentially ascetic,—though the one swallows Mirabeau, and the other says that Jane Eyre should have accepted Rochester and “left the world in a minority.” But Emerson is never coarse, which Carlyle occasionally is; and Carlyle is never flippant, as Emerson often is. In condemning the hurry and noise of mobs the American keeps his temper, and insists on justice without vindictiveness: wars and revolutions take nothing from his tranquillity, and he sets Hafiz and Shakespeare against Luther and Knox. Careless of formal consistency—“the hobgoblin of little minds”—he balances his aristocratic reserve with a belief in democracy, in progression by antagonism, and in collective wisdom as a limit to collective folly. Leaving his intellectual throne as the spokesman of a practical liberty, Emerson’s wisdom was justified by the fact that he was always at first on the unpopular, and ultimately on the winning, side. Casting his vote for the diffusion of popular literature, a wide suffrage,
a mild penal code, he yet endorsed the saying of an old American author, "A monarchy is a merchantman which sails well but will sometimes strike on a rock and go to the bottom; whilst a republic is a raft that will never sink, but then your feet are always in water." Maintaining that the State exists for its members, he holds that the enervating influences of authority are least powerful in popular governments, and that the tyranny of a public opinion not enforced by law need only be endured by voluntary slaves. Emerson confides in great men, "to educate whom the State exists"; but he regards them as inspired mouthpieces rather than controlling forces: their prime mission is to "fortify our hopes," their indirect services are their best. The career of a great man should rouse us to a like assertion of ourselves. We ought not to obey, but to follow, sometimes by not obeying, him. "It is the imbecility not the wisdom of men that is always inviting the impudence of power."

It is obvious that many of these views are in essential opposition to the teaching of Carlyle; and it is remarkable that two conspicuous men so differing and expressing their differences with perfect candour should have lived so long on such good terms. Their correspondence, ranging over thirty-eight years (begun in 1834, after Emerson's visit to Craigenputtock, and ending in 1872, before his final trip to England), is on the whole one of the most edifying in literary history. The fundamental accord, unshaken by the ruffle of the visit in 1847, is a testimony to the fact that the common preservation of high sentiments amid

1 Carlyle, on the other hand, holds "that," as has been said, "we are entitled to deal with criminals as relics of barbarism in the midst of civilisation." His protest, though exaggerated, against leniency in dealing with atrocities, emphatically requisite in an age apt to ignore the rigour of justice, has been so far salutary, and may be more so.
the irksome discharge of ordinary duties may survive and override the most distinct antagonisms of opinion. Matthew Arnold has gone so far as to say that he "would not wonder if Carlyle lived in the long run by such an invaluable record as that correspondence between him and Emerson and not by his works." This is paradoxical; but the volumes containing it are in some respects more interesting than the letters of Goethe and Schiller, as being records of "two noble kinsmen" of nearer intellectual claims. The practical part of the relationship on the part of Emerson is very beautiful; he is the more unselfish, and on the whole appears the better man, especially in the almost unlimited tolerance that passes with a smile even such violences as the "Ilias in nuce"; but Carlyle shows himself to be the stronger. Their mutual criticisms were of real benefit. Emerson succeeded in convincing his friend that so-called anarchy might be more effective in subduing the wilderness than any despotism; while the advice to descend from "Himalaya peaks and indigo skies" to concrete life is accepted and adopted in the later works of the American, Society and Solitude and the Conduct of Life, which Carlyle praises without stint. Keeping their poles apart they often meet half-way; and in matters of style as well as judgment tinge and tend to be transfused into each other, so that in some pages we have to look to the signature to be sure of the writer. Towards the close of the correspondence Carlyle in this instance admits his debt.

I do not know another man in all the world to whom I can speak with clear hope of getting adequate response from him. Truly Concord seems worthy of the name: no dissonance comes to me from that side. Ah me! I feel as if in the wide world there were still but this one voice that responded intelligently to my own: as if the rest were all hearsays... echoes: as if this alone were true and alive. My blessings on you, good Ralph Waldo.
Emerson answers in 1872, on receipt of the completed edition of his friend’s work: “You shall wear the crown at the Pan-Saxon games, with no competitor in sight . . . well earned by genius and exhaustive labour, and with nations for your pupils and praisers.”

The general verdict on Carlyle’s literary career assigns to him the first place among the British authors of his time. No writer of our generation, in England, has combined such abundance with such power. Regarding his rank as a writer there is little or no dispute; it is admitted that the irregularities and eccentricities of his style are bound up with its richness. In estimating the value of his thought we must discriminate between instruction and inspiration. If we ask what new truths he has taught, what problems he has definitely solved, our answer must be, “few.” This is a perhaps inevitable result of the manner of his writing, or rather of the nature of his mind. Aside from political parties, he helped to check their exaggerations by his own; seeing deeply into the under-current evils of the time, even when vague in his remedies he was of use in his protest against leaving these evils to adjust themselves—what has been called “the policy of drifting”—or of dealing with them only by catchwords. No one set a more incisive brand on the meanness that often marks the unrestrained competition of great cities; no one was more effective in his insistence that the mere accumulation of wealth may mean the ruin of true prosperity; no one has assailed with such force the mammon-worship and the frivolity of his age. Everything he writes comes home to the individual conscience: his claim to be regarded as a moral exemplar has been diminished, his hold on us as an ethical teacher remains unrelaxed. It has been justly observed that he helped to modify “the thought rather than the opinion of two generations.” His message, as
that of Emerson, was that "life must be pitched on a higher plane." Goethe said to Eckermann in 1827 that Carlyle was a moral force so great that he could not tell what he might produce. His influence has been, though not continuously progressive, more marked than that of any of his compatriots, among whom he was, if not the greatest, certainly the most imposing personality. It had two culminations; shortly after the appearance of The French Revolution, and again towards the close of the seventh decade of the author’s life. To the enthusiastic reception of his works in the Universities, Mr. Froude has borne eloquent testimony, and the more reserved Matthew Arnold admits that "the voice of Carlyle, overstrained and misused since, sounded then in Oxford fresh and comparatively sound," though, he adds, "The friends of one's youth cannot always support a return to them." In the striking article in the St. James’ Gazette of the date of the great author’s death we read: "One who had seen much of the world and knew a large proportion of the remarkable men of the last thirty years declared that Mr. Carlyle was by far the most impressive person he had ever known, the man who conveyed most forcibly to those who approached him [best on resistance principles] that general impression of genius and force of character which it is impossible either to mistake or to define." Thackeray, as well as Ruskin and Froude, acknowledged him as, beyond the range of his own métier, his master, and the American Lowell, penitent for past disparagement, confesses that "all modern Literature has felt his influence in the right direction"; while the Emersonian hermit Thoreau, a man of more intense though more restricted genius than the poet politician, declares—"Carlyle alone with his wide humanity has, since Coleridge, kept to us the promise of England. His wisdom provokes rather than informs. He blows down narrow walls, and struggles, in a
lurid light, like the Jothuns, to throw the old woman Time; in his work there is too much of the anvil and the forge, not enough hay-making under the sun. He makes us act rather than think: he does not say, know thyself, which is impossible, but know thy work. He has no pillars of Hercules, no clear goal, but an endless Atlantic horizon. He exaggerates. Yes; but he makes the hour great, the picture bright, the reverence and admiration strong; while mere precise fact is a coil of lead.” Our leading journal on the morning after Carlyle’s death wrote of him in a tone of well-tempered appreciation: “We have had no such individuality since Johnson. Whether men agreed or not, he was a touchstone to which truth and falsehood were brought to be tried. A preacher of Doric thought, always in his pulpit and audible, he denounced wealth without sympathy, equality without respect, mobs without leaders, and life without aim.” To this we may add the testimony of another high authority in English letters, politically at the opposite pole: “Carlyle’s influence in kindling enthusiasm for virtues worthy of it, and in stirring a sense of the reality on the one hand and the unreality on the other, of all that men can do and suffer, has not been surpassed by any teacher now living. Whatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion . . . here is the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark; here the prophet who first smote the rock.” Carlyle, writes one of his oldest friends, “may be likened to a fugleman; he stood up in the front of Life’s Battle and showed in word and action his notion of the proper attitude and action of men. He was, in truth, a prophet, and he has left his gospels.” To those who contest that these gospels are for the most part negative, we may reply that to be taught what not to do is to be far advanced on the way to do.
In nothing is the generation after him so prone to be unjust to a fresh thinker as with regard to his originality. A physical discovery, as Newton's, remains to ninety-nine out of a hundred a mental miracle; but a great moral teacher "labours to make himself forgotten." When he begins to speak he is suspected of insanity; when he has won his way he receives a Royal Commission to appoint the judges; as a veteran he is shelved for platitude. So Horace is regarded as a mere jewelry store of the Latin, Bacon in his *Essays*, of the English, wisdom, which they each in fact helped to create. Carlyle's paradoxes have been exaggerated, his partialities intensified, in his followers; his critical readers, not his disciples, have learnt most from him; he has helped across the Slough of Despond only those who have also helped themselves. When all is said of his dogmatism, his petulance, his "evil behaviour," he remains the master spirit of his time, its Censor, as Macaulay is its Panegyrist, and Tennyson its Mirror. He has saturated his nation with a wholesome tonic, and the practice of any one of his precepts for the conduct of life is ennobling. More intense than Wordsworth, more intelligible than Browning, more fervid than Mill, he has indicated the pitfalls in our civilisation. His works have done much to mould the best thinkers in two continents, in both of which he has been the Greatheart to many pilgrims. Not a few could speak in the words of the friend whose memory he has so affectionately preserved, "Towards me it is still more true than towards England that no one has been and done like you." A champion of ancient virtue, he appeared in his own phrase applied to Fichte, as "a Cato Major among degenerate men." Carlyle had more than the shortcomings of a Cato; he had all the inconsistent vehemence of an imperfectly balanced mind; but he had a far wider range and deeper sympathies. The message of the
modern preacher transcended all mere applications of the text *delenda est*. He denounced, but at the same time nobly exhorted, his age. A storm-tossed spirit, “tempest-buffeted,” he was “citadel-crowned” in his unflinching purpose and the might of an invincible will.
APPENDIX

CARLYLE'S RELIGION

The St. James' Gazette, February 11, 1881, writes:—

"It is obvious that from an early age he entirely ceased to believe, in its only true sense, the creed he had been taught. He never affected to believe it in any other sense, for he was far too manly and simple-hearted to care to frame any of those semi-honest transmutations of the old doctrines into new-fangled mysticism which had so great a charm for many of his weaker contemporaries. On the other hand, it is equally true that he never plainly avowed his unbelief. The line he took up was that Christianity, though not true in fact, had a right to be regarded as the noblest aspiration after a theory of the Universe and of human life ever formed; and that the Calvinistic version of Christianity was on the whole the best it ever assumed; and the one which represented the largest proportion of truth and the least amount of error. He also thought that the truths which Calvinism tried to express, and succeeded in expressing in an imperfect or partially mistaken manner, were the ultimate governing principles of morals and politics, of whose systematic neglect in this age nothing but evil could come.

"Unwilling to take up the position of a rebel or revolutionist by stating his views plainly—indeed if he had done so sixty years ago he might have starved—the only resource left to him was that of approaching all the great subjects of life from the point of view of grim humour, irony, and pathos. This
was the real origin of his unique style; though no doubt its special peculiarities were due to the wonderful power of his imagination, and to some extent—to a less extent we think than has been usually supposed—to his familiarity with German.

"What then was his creed? What were the doctrines which in his view Calvinism shadowed forth and which were so infinitely true, so ennobling to human life? First, he believed in God; secondly, he believed in an absolute opposition between good and evil; thirdly, he believed that all men do, in fact, take sides more or less decisively in this great struggle, and ultimately turn out to be either good or bad; fourthly, he believed that good is stronger than evil, and by infinitely slow degrees gets the better of it, but that this process is so slow as to be continually obscured and thrown back by evil influences of various kinds—one of which he believed to be specially powerful in the present day.

"God in his view was not indeed a personal Being, like the Christian God—still less was He in any sense identified with Jesus Christ; who, though always spoken of with rather conventional reverence in his writings, does not appear to have specially influenced him. The God in which Mr. Carlyle believed is, as far as can be ascertained, a Being possessing in some sense or other will and consciousness, and personifying the elementary principles of morals—Justice, Benevolence (towards good people), Fortitude, and Temperance—to such a pitch that they may be regarded, so to speak, as forming collectively the will of God. . . . That there is some one who—whether by the earthquake, or the fire, or the still small voice—is continually saying to mankind—'Discite justitiam moniti'; and that this Being is the ultimate fact at which we can arrive . . . is what Mr. Carlyle seems to have meant by believing in God. And if any one will take the trouble to refer to the first few sentences of the Westminster Confession, and to divest them of their references to Christianity and to the Bible, he will find that between the God of Calvin and of Carlyle there is the closest possible similarity. . . . The great fact about each particular
man is the relation, whether of friendship or enmity, in which he stands to God. In the one case he is on the side which must ultimately prevail; . . . in the other . . . he will, in due time, be crushed and destroyed. . . . Our relation to the universe can be ascertained only by experiment. We all have to live out our lives. . . . One man is a Cromwell, another a Frederick, a third a Goethe, a fourth a Louis XV. God hates Louis XV. and loves Cromwell. Why, if so, He made Louis XV., and indeed whether He made him or not, are idle questions which cannot be answered and should not be asked. There are good men and bad men, all pass alike through this mysterious hall of doom called life; most show themselves in their true colours under pressure. The good are blessed here and hereafter; the bad are accursed. Let us bring out as far as may be possible such good as a man has had in him since his origin. Let us strike down the bad to the hell that gapes for him. This, we think, or something like this, was Mr. Carlyle's translation of election and predestination into politics and morals. . . . There is not much pity and no salvation worth speaking of in either body of doctrine; but there is a strange, and what some might regard as a terrible parallelism between these doctrines and the inferences that may be drawn from physical science. The survival of the fittest has much in common with the doctrine of election, and philosophical necessity, as summed up in what we now call evolution, comes practically to much the same result as predestination."
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MACAULAY
MACAULAY.

CHAPTER I.

SKETCH OF MACAULAY'S LIFE UP TO THE FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF LORD MELBOURNE.

(A.D. 1800—1841.)

The prosperity which attended Macaulay all through life may be said to have begun with the moment of his birth. Of all good gifts which it is in the power of fortune to bestow, none can surpass the being born of wise, honourable, and tender parents: and this lot fell to him. He came of a good stock, though not of the kind most recognized by Colleges of Arms. Descended from Scotch Presbyterians—ministers many of them—on his father's side, and from a Quaker family on his mother's, he probably united as many guarantees of "good birth" in the moral sense of the words, as could be found in these islands at the beginning of the century. His mother (née Selina Mills) appears to have been a woman of warm-hearted and affectionate temper, yet clear-headed and firm withal, and with a good eye for the influences which go to the formation of character. Though full of a young mother's natural pride at the talent and mental precocity of her eldest son, the subject of this volume, Thomas Babing-
ton Macaulay (born October 25, 1800), she was wise enough to eschew even the semblance of spoiling. The boy found, like many studious children, that he could spend his time with more pleasure, and probably with more profit, in reading at home than in lessons at school, and consequently exerted daily that passive resistance against leaving home which many mothers have not the strength to overcome. Mrs. Macaulay always met appeals grounded on the unfavourableness of the weather, with the stoical answer: "No, Tom; if it rains cats and dogs you shall go."

As a mere infant, his knowledge, and his power of working it up into literary form, were equally extraordinary. Compositions in prose and verse, histories, epics, odes, and hymns flowed with equal freedom, and correctness in point of language, from his facile pen. He was regarded, as he well deserved to be, as a prodigy, not only by his parents, but by others who might be presumed to be less partial critics. Mrs. Hannah More, who in certain circles almost assumed the character of a female Dr. Johnson, and director of taste, pronounced little Macaulay's hymns "quite extraordinary for such a baby." The wise mother treasured these things in her heart, but carefully shielded her child from the corrupting influences of early flattery. "You will believe," she writes, "that we never appear to regard anything he does as anything more than a schoolboy's amusement." Genuine maternal tenderness, without a trace of weak indulgence, seems to have marked this excellent woman's treatment of her children. When once he fell ill at school, she came and nursed him with such affection that years afterwards he referred to the circumstance with vivid emotion:—

There is nothing I remember with so much pleasure as the time when you nursed me at Aspenden. How sick and sleepless
and weak I was, lying in bed, when I was told that you were come. How well I remember with what an ecstasy of joy I saw that face approaching me. The sound of your voice, the touch of your hand, are present to me now, and will be, I trust in God, to my last hour.

But many a devoted mother could watch by the sick-bed of her son for weeks without sleep, who would not have the courage to keep him up to a high standard of literary performance. When he was not yet thirteen she wrote to him:—

I know you write with great ease to yourself, and would rather write ten poems than prune one. All your pieces are much mended after a little reflection; therefore, take your solitary walks and think over each separate thing. Spare no time or trouble, and render each piece as perfect as you can, and then leave the event without one anxious thought. I have always admired a saying of one of the old heathen philosophers; when a friend was condoling with him that he so well deserved of the gods, and yet they did not shower their favours on him as on some others less worthy, he answered, “I will continue to deserve well of them.” So do you, my dearest.

Deep, sober, clear-eyed love watched over Macaulay's childhood. His mother lived long enough to see her son on the high road to honour and fame, and died almost immediately after he had made his first great speech on the Reform Bill in 1831.

His father, Zachary, was a man cast in an heroic mould, who reproduced, one might surmise, the moral features of some stern old Scotch Covenanter among his ancestors, and never quite fitted into the age in which it was his lot to live. There was a latent faculty in him which, in spite of his long and laborious life, he was never able completely to unfold. A silent, austere, earnest, patient, enduring man,
almost wholly without the gift of speech, and the power of uttering the deep, involved thought that was in him—a man after Carlyle’s own heart, if he could have seen anything good in an emancipator of negroes. A feeling of respect bordering on reverence is excited by the little we know of Macaulay’s father—his piety, his zeal, his self-sacrifice to the cause to which he devoted his mind, body, and estate; even the gloom and moroseness of his latter years, all point to a character of finer fibre and loftier strain, many might be disposed to think, than that of his eloquent and brilliant son. There are parallel cases on record of men endowed with over-abundance of thought and feeling, for which they never find adequate expression, who have had sons in whose case the spell which sealed their own lips to silence is broken—sons who can find ready utterance for the burden of thought which lay imprisoned in their sires, partly because they were not overfull, as their fathers were. Diderot was such a case. He always said that he was not to be compared to his father, the cutler of Langres; and declared he was never so pleased in his life as when a fellow-townsman said to him, “Ah, M. Diderot, you are a very famous man, but you will never be half the man your father was.” Carlyle always spoke of his father in similar language. But the closest analogy to the two Macaulays is that of the two Mirabeaus, the crabbed, old “friend of man,” and the erratic genius, the orator Gabrielle Honoré. It is certainly “a likeness in unlikeness” of no common kind; and nothing can be more dissimilar than the two pairs of men; but the similarity of relation of elder to younger in the two cases is all the more remarkable.

In this grave, well-ordered home Macaulay passed a happy childhood. He had three brothers and five sisters,
all his juniors, and for them he always felt a fraternal affection which bordered on a passion. His trials, as already implied, commenced when he had to leave his books, his parents, and his playmates for a distant school in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. Time never seems to have completely assuaged his home-sickness; and his letters to his mother express in a style of precocious maturity, the artless yearnings and affectionate grief of a child. Nothing more dutiful, tender, and intelligent, can well be conceived. His second half-year seems to have been even more painful to bear than the first; his biographer, will not print the letter he wrote immediately after his return to school at the end of the summer holidays—it would be “too cruel.” This is the second—written two months before he had ended his thirteenth year:—

Shelford, August 14, 1813.

My dear Mama,—I must confess that I have been a little disappointed at not receiving a letter from home to-day. I hope, however, for one to-morrow. My spirits are far more depressed by leaving home than they were last half-year. Everything brings home to my recollection. Everything I read, or see, or hear brings it to my mind. You told me I should be happy when I once came here, but not an hour passes in which I do not shed tears at thinking of home. Every hope, however unlikely to be realized, affords me some small consolation. The morning on which I went, you told me that possibly I might come home before the holidays. If you can confirm that hope, believe me when I assure you there is nothing which I would not give for one instant’s sight of home. Tell me in your next, expressly, if you can, whether or no there is any likelihood of my coming home before the holidays. If I could gain Papa’s leave, I should select my birthday, October 25, as the time which I should wish to spend at that home which absence renders still dearer to me. I think I see you sitting by Papa just after his
dinner, reading my letter, and turning to him with an inquisitive glance at the end of the paragraph. I think, too, that I see his expressive shake of the head at it. O, may I be mistaken! You cannot conceive what an alteration a favourable answer would produce on me. If your approbation of my request depends upon my advancing in study, I will work like a cart-horse. If you should refuse it, you will deprive me of the most pleasing illusion which I ever experienced in my life. Pray do not fail to write speedily.—Your dutiful and affectionate son,

T. B. MACAULAY

The urgent and pathetic appeal was not successful. The stern father did shake his head as the boy had feared, and the "pleasing illusion" was not realized.

His school, though a private one, was of a superior kind. There he laid the foundation of his future scholarship. But what surprises most, is that in the midst of the usually engrossing occupation of a diligent schoolboy, with his Latin, Greek, and mathematics, he found time to gratify that insatiable thirst for European literature which he retained through life. Before he was fifteen we find him recommending his mother to read Boccaccio, at least in Dryden's metrical version, and weighing him against Chaucer, to whom he "infinitely prefers him." This shows, at any rate, that no Puritanic surveillance directed his choice of books. The fault seems to have been rather the other way, and he enjoyed an excess of liberty, in being allowed to indulge almost without restraint his strong partiality for the lighter and more attractive forms of literature, to the neglect of austerer studies. Poetry and prose fiction remained through life Macaulay's favourite reading. And there is no evidence that he at any time was ever submitted by his teachers or himself, to a mental discipline of a more bracing kind. His father
apparently considered that the formation of his son’s mind, was no part of his duty. Engrossed in his crusade against slavery, in which cause “he laboured as men labour for the honours of a profession, or for the subsistence of their children,” he left the mental training of young Macaulay to hired teachers—except in one particular, which will be readily divined. The principles of evangelical religion were inculcated with more zeal and persistence than discretion. It is the ever-recurring error of old and serious minds, to think that the loftier views of life and duty, the moral beliefs which they themselves, in the course of years, after a long experience, perhaps of a very different code of ethics, have acquired, can be transplanted by precept, full-grown and vigorous, into the minds of the young. The man of fifty, forgetting his own youth, or remembering it only with horror, wishes his son to think and feel and act as he does himself. He should wish him the languid pulse and failing vigour of decay at the same time. In any case, the attempt to impart “vital religion” to Macaulay signally failed, and possibly was the indirect cause of the markedly unspiritual tone of his writings, and of his resolute silence on questions of ultimate beliefs. The son’s taste for poetry, novels, and “worldly literature” produced a suspicious querulousness in the elder Macaulay, which cannot easily be excused. He listened with a too indulgent ear to vague complaints against his son’s carriage and conversation, demanding answers to the anonymous accusations, in a tone little calculated to inspire sympathy. It says very much for Macaulay’s sweetness of character, that he was never soured or estranged from his father by this injudicious treatment. On the contrary, he remained a loyal and dutiful son, under trials, as we shall see, of no common severity.
In October, 1818, he went as a commoner to Trinity College, Cambridge. Neither his taste nor his acquirements were fitted to win him distinction in the special studies of the place. In his boyhood he had shown a transient liking for mathematics; but this had given way to an intense repugnance for exact science. "I can scarcely bear," he says in a letter to his mother, "to write on mathematics, or mathematicians. Oh! for words to express my abomination of that science, if a name sacred to the useful and embellishing arts may be applied to the perception and recollection of certain properties in numbers and figures. Oh! that I had to learn astrology, demonology, or school divinity. . . . Oh to change Cam for Isis." His inclination was wholly for literature. Unfortunately according to the regulations then in force a minimum of honours in mathematics was an indispensable condition for competing for the Chancellor's medals—the test of classical proficiency before the institution of the classical tripos. Macaulay failed even to obtain the lowest place among the Junior Optimes, and was, what is called in University parlance, gulphed. But he won the prize for Latin declamation, he twice gained the Chancellor's medals for English verse, and by winning a Craven scholarship he sufficiently proved his classical attainments. Why he was not sent to Oxford, as it seems he would have preferred, does not appear. Probably religious scruples on his father's part had something to do with the choice of a University. Otherwise, Oxford would have appeared to offer obvious advantages to a young man with his bent. His disproportionate partiality for the lighter sides of literature met with no corrective at Cambridge. As he could not assimilate the mathematical training, he practically got very little. The poets, orators, and historians,
read with a view chiefly to their language, formed a very imperfect discipline for a mind in which fancy and imagination rather needed the curb than the spur. A course of what at Oxford is technically called "science," even as then understood, would have been an invaluable gymnastic for Macaulay, and would have strengthened faculties in his mind, which as a matter of fact never received adequate culture. We shall have repeated occasion in subsequent chapters to notice his want of philosophic grasp, his dread and dislike of arduous speculation, his deficient courage in facing intellectual problems. It is not probable that any education would have made him a deep and vigorous thinker; but we can hardly doubt that a more austere training would at least have preserved him from some of the errors into which he habitually fell.

As it was, not Cambridge studies but Cambridge society left a mark on his mind. Genial and frank, and with an unlimited passion and talent for talk, he made troops of friends, and before he left the University had acquired a reputation as one of the best conversationists of the day. He met his equals in the Coleridges, Hyde and Charles Villiers, Romilly, Praed, and in one case his superior in verbal dialectics, Charles Austin, of whom Mill in one sentence has drawn such a powerful sketch: "The impression which he gave was that of boundless strength, together with talents which, combined with such apparent force of will and character, seemed capable of dominating the world." Of their wit combats a story is told, which slightly savours of mythus, how at Bowood the two Cantabs got engaged in a discussion at breakfast, and such was the splendour and copiousness of their talk, that the whole company in the house, "ladies, artists, politicians, diners-out," listened entranced till it was time to dress for
dinner. It is needless to say that Macaulay shone among the brightest in the Union Debating Society. Thus those faculties which were naturally strong were made stronger, those which were naturally weak received little or no exercise.

After literature, Macaulay's strongest taste was for politics. His father's house at Clapham was a common meeting-ground for politicians engaged in the agitation against slavery; and when yet a boy he had learned to take an interest in public affairs. In the free atmosphere of undergraduate discussion, such an interest is the last which is allowed to lie dormant, and Macaulay soon became a strenuous politician. Then occurred his single change of opinions throughout life. He went up to Cambridge a Tory; Charles Austin soon made him a Whig, or something more; and before his first year of residence at Cambridge was over, he had to defend himself against the exaggerated reports of some talebearer who had alarmed his parents. He protests that he is not a "son of anarchy and confusion," as his mother had been led to believe. The particular charge seems to have been that he had been "initiated into democratical societies" in the University, and that he had spoken of the so-called Manchester massacre in terms of strong indignation. It would have said little for his generosity and public spirit if he had not.

It is not easy for us now to realize the condition of England in Macaulay's youth. Though so little remote in point of time, and though still remembered by old men who are yet among us, the state of public affairs between the peace of 1815 and the passing of the Reform Bill was so unlike anything to which we are accustomed, that a certain effort is required to make it present to the mind. It is not easy to conceive a state of things in which the
country was covered by an army of "common informers," whose business it was to denounce the non-payment of taxes, and share with the fisc the onerous fines imposed, often without a shadow of justice,—in which marauders roamed at night under the command of "General Ludd," and terrorized whole counties,—when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and "in Suffolk, nightly, fires of incendiaries began to blaze in every district,"—when mobs of labourers assembled with flags bearing the motto "Bread or Blood," and riots occurred in London, Nottingham, Leicester, and Derby, culminating in the massacre at Manchester,—when at last the famous Six Acts were passed, which surrendered the liberties of Englishmen into the hands of the Government. "The old spirit of liberty would appear to have departed from England, when public meetings could not be held without the licence of magistrates, when private houses might be searched for arms, when a person convicted a second time of publishing a libel,"1—that is, a criticism on the Government—"might be transported beyond the seas." Macaulay had been a year at College when the Six Acts were passed. (Dec. 1819.)

Nothing could be more characteristic than the way in which Macaulay kept his head in this semi-revolutionary condition of public affairs. A man of strong passions would, inevitably, have taken an extreme side—either for reaction, or reform. Civil society seemed threatened by the anarchists; civil liberty seemed equally threatened by the Government. Either extreme Tory or extreme Radical opinions would appear to have been the only choice for an ardent young spirit—and the latter the more suitable to the impetuosity of youth and genius. Macaulay

took his stand, with the premature prudence and wisdom of a veteran, on the judicious compromise of sound Whig principles. He was zealous for reform, but never was touched by a breath of revolutionary fervour. The grinding collision of Old and New principles of Government did not set him on fire either with fear or with hope. The menacing invasions on the old system of Church and State, which had wrecked the happiness of the last years of Bucke—which now disturbed the rest of such men as Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth—filled him with no dismay. But he was as little caught up by visions of a new dawn—of a future "all the brighter that the past was base." In the heyday of youth and spirits and talent, he took his side with the old and practical Whigs, who were well on their guard against "too much zeal," but who saw their way to such reforms as could be realized in the conditions of the time. He was a Whig by necessity of nature, by calmness of passion, combined with superlative common sense.

He did not get a Fellowship till his third and last trial, in 1824. He had then already begun to make a name in literature. As a Junior Bachelor he competed for the Greaves historical prize—"On the Conduct and Character of William the Third." The essay is still in existence, though only the briefest fragments of it have been published, which are interesting on more grounds than one. Not only is the subject the same as that which occupied so many years of his later life, but the style is already his famous style in all essential features. There is no mistaking this:

"Lewis XIV. was not a great general. He was not a great legislator. But he was in one sense of the word a great King. He was perfect master of all the mysteries of the science of
royalty—of the arts which at once extend power and conciliate popularity, which most advantageously display the merits and most dexterously conceal the deficiencies of a sovereign.

This essay shows that his style was quite natural, and unaffected. Whatever may be thought of Macaulay’s style by the present race of critics, no one will deny that it was original, and has left a mark on our literature, like all original styles which give an impression of novelty on their first appearance: it was, we see, his spontaneous mode of utterance. The true prose writer, equally with the true poet, is born, not made.

More important were his contributions to Knight’s Quarterly Magazine. Spirited verse, prose, fiction, and criticism on poets, were his first efforts in literature, and prove sufficiently, if proof were wanted, in what direction his calling lay. Two battle-pieces in metre, Ivery and Naseby, still live by reason of their vigour and animation, and are little, if at all, inferior to his later productions in verse. The Fragments of a Roman Tale, and the Scenes from the Athenian Revels, are so sparkling and vivacious, and show such a natural turn for a dialogue and dramatic mise en scène, that it says a great deal for Macaulay’s good sense and literary conscientiousness that he remained content with this first success, and did not continue to work a vein which would have brought him prompt, if ephemeral, popularity. There can be little doubt that he could have equalled, or surpassed, most historical novelists who have written since Scott. But he had too genuine a love of history not to be conscious of the essential hollowness and unreality of the historical novel, and he never meddled with it again. Of the two criticisms on Dante and Petrarch, the first is nearly as
good as anything Macaulay ever wrote in that style (which, to be sure, is not saying much, as he was almost incapable of analyzing and exhibiting the beauties in the great creative works which he admired so much); but its genuine enthusiasm and zeal for the great Florentine, and indeed, for Italian literature generally, are really touching, and produce an effect on the mind not usually produced by his criticisms.

But by far the most noteworthy of his contributions to Knight's Magazine was the Correspondence between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton, touching the great Civil War. We are told that it was his own decided favourite among his earlier efforts in literature; and most correct was his judgment. The introduction to the dialogue, for simplicity and grace is worthy of Plato:—

"It chanced in the warm and beautiful spring of the year 1665, a little before the saddest summer that ever London saw," begins the narrator, "that I went to the Bowling Green at Putney Hill, whether at that time the best gentry made continual resort. There I met Mr. Cowley, who had lately left Barmelms. . . . . . I entreated him to dine with me at my lodging in the Temple, which he most courteously promised. And that so eminent a guest might not lack better entertainment than cooks or vintners can provide, I sent to the house of Mr. John Milton, in the Artillery Walk, to beg that he would also be my guest, for I hoped that they would think themselves rather united by their common art than divided by their different factions. And so, indeed, it proved. For while we sat at table they talked freely of men and things, as well ancient as modern, with much civility. Nay, Mr. Milton, who seldom tasted wine, both because of his singular temperance and because of his gout, did more than once pledge Mr. Cowley, who was indeed no hermit in diet. At last, being heated, Mr. Milton begged that I would open the windows. 'Nay,' said I, 'if you desire fresh air and coolness,
what would hinder us, as the evening is fair, from sailing for an hour on the river?’ To this they both cheerfully consented; and forth we walked, Mr. Cowley and I leading Mr. Milton between us to the Temple Stairs. There we took a boat, and thence we were rowed up the river.

‘The wind was pleasant, the evening fine; the sky, the earth, and the water beautiful to look upon. But Mr. Cowley and I held our peace, and said nothing of the gay sights around us, lest we should too feelingly remind Mr. Milton of his calamity, whereof he needed no monitor; for soon he said sadly: ‘Ah, Mr. Cowley, you are a happy man. What would I now give but for one more look at the sun, and the waters, and the gardens of this fair city!’’

There is reason to think that Macaulay’s splendid literary faculty was seriously damaged by his early entrance into the conflict of party politics, and that he never wholly recovered from its effect. It destroyed the tender bloom of his mind. As Mr. Pattison has shown that even Milton, when he turned from Comus and Lycidas to write ferocious pamphlets for twenty years, “left behind him the golden age, and one half of his poetic genius,” so may we say of Macaulay, that when he turned from such work as this dialogue to parliamentary debate and the distractions of office, he did an injury to his prose, which is none the less great and deplorable because it cannot be accurately measured. But let any one read this beautiful piece of majestic English, then any passage of the History or the Essays which he may like best, and say whether letters have not lost far more than politics have gained by Macaulay’s entrance into Parliament. The conduct of the whole dialogue is masterly. Both Milton and Cowley

\[\text{Milton, by Mark Pattison, in this series.}\]
sustain their parts with admirable propriety. It is no sham fight in which one of the interlocutors is a man of straw, set up only to be knocked down. The most telling arguments on the Royalists' side are put into Cowley's mouth, and enunciated with a force which cannot be surpassed. Above all, the splendour and nobility of the diction are such as never visited Macaulay's vigils again. The piece is hardly ever referred to, and appears to be forgotten. Even his most loyal biographer and kinsman waxes cold and doubtful about it. But it remains, and will be remembered, as a promise and pledge of literary power which adverse fate hindered him from fully redeeming.

Macaulay's early success in literature did not improve his relations with his father. On the contrary, he appears to have been chidden for everything he wrote. The ground of complaint was not far to seek: the Magazine in which he wrote was a worldly periodical, in which the interests of religion were neglected or offended. The sympathies of most readers will be so strongly in favour of the son, that we cannot do wrong in casting a look of forlorn commiseration on the old Puritan, who felt, with an anguish perhaps never fully expressed, the conviction and the proof growing on him that his son's heart was not as his heart, and that they were parting company as regards the deepest subjects more and more. When Macaulay was a lad at school his father had written to him: "I do long and pray most earnestly that the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit may be substituted for vehemence and self-confidence." The good man's hopes and prayers had not been realized, nor was his treatment of his son such that their realization could be expected. But the sense of void and inner bereavement would be
none the less bitter and strange even if the faults of treat-
ment were perceived when it was too late to rectify them,
and of this feeling on the father's part there is no evidence.
In any case, on no occasion in life did Macaulay show the
generosity and tenderness of his nature more admirably
than in these seasons of trial and failing sympathy with
his father. Troubles without were added to troubles
within. When he went to Cambridge his father seemed
in prosperous fortune which bordered on affluence. It was
understood that he was to be "made in a modest way an
eldest son." But a great change had come over Zachary
Macaulay's neglected business. The firm wanted a com-
petent head. The elder partner gave his mind, his time,
and his energy to the agitation against the slave-trade.
The junior partner, Babington, was not a man to sup-
ply his place. Like Cobden many years afterwards, the
elder Macaulay neglected his private affairs for public
interests, and he quietly slid down the road which leads
to commercial ruin. Then the son showed the sterling
stuff of which he was made. He received the first ill-
news at Cambridge with "a frolick welcome" of courage
and filial devotion. "He was firmly prepared," he said,
"to encounter the worst with fortitude, and to do his
utmost to retrieve it by exertion." A promise kept to
the letter and to the spirit. Not only did he, with the
help of his brother Henry, pay off ultimately his father's
debts, but he became a second father to his brothers and
sisters.

He quietly took up the burden which his father was unable
to bear; and before many years had elapsed the fortunes of
all for whose welfare he considered himself responsible were
abundantly secured. In the course of the efforts which he
expended on the accomplishment of this result, he unlearned the
very notion of framing his method of life with a view to his own pleasure; and such was his high and simple nature that it may well be doubted whether it ever crossed his mind that to live wholly for others was a sacrifice at all.

This was much, and inexpressibly noble; but even this was not all. Not only did Macaulay not give a thought to his own frustrated hopes and prospects; not only did he, a young man, shoulder the burden of a family two generations deep, but he did it with the sunniest radiance, as if not a care rankled in his heart. His sister, Lady Trevelyan, says that those who did not know him then “never knew him in his most brilliant, witty, and fertile vein.” He was life and sunshine to young and old in the sombre house in Great Ormond Street, where the forlorn old father like a blighted oak lingered on in leafless decay, reading one long sermon to his family on Sunday afternoons, and another long sermon on Sunday evenings—“where Sunday walking for walking’s sake was never allowed, and even going to a distant church was discouraged.” Through this Puritanic gloom Macaulay shot like a sunbeam, and turned it into a fairy scene of innocent laughter and mirth. Against Macaulay the author severe things, and as just as severe, may be said; but as to his conduct in his own home—as a son, as a brother, and an uncle—it is only the barest justice to say that he appears to have touched the furthest verge of human virtue, sweetness, and generosity. His thinking was often, if not generally, pitched in what we must call a low key, but his action might put the very saints to shame. He reversed a practice too common among men of genius, who are often careful to display all their shining and attractive qualities

3 *Trevelyan*, vol. i. cap. 3.
to the outside world, and keep for home consumption their meanness, selfishness, and ill-temper. Macaulay struck no heroic attitude of benevolence, magnanimity, and aspiration before the world — rather the opposite; but in the circle of his home affections he practised those virtues without letting his right hand know what was done by his left.

He was called to the bar in 1826, and went more than once on the Northern Circuit. But he did not take kindly to the law, got little or no practice, and soon renounced all serious thoughts of the legal profession, even if he ever entertained any. He had, indeed, in the mean time found something a great deal better to do. In October, 1824, writing to his father, he said, "When I see you in London I will mention to you a piece of secret history," which he conceals for the moment. This referred to an invitation to write for the Edinburgh Review; and in the following August, 1825, appeared an article on Milton, which at once arrested the attention of the public, and convinced the shrewder judges that a new force had arisen in literature. The success was splendid and decisive, and produced a great peal of fame. He followed it up with rapid energy, and with his single hand gave a new life to the Edinburgh Review. He was already distinguished even in the select circle of promising young men. In 1828 Lord Lyndhurst made him a Commissioner of Bankruptcy. In 1830 his articles on Mill had so struck Lord Lansdowne that he offered him, though quite a stranger, a seat in Parliament for the borough of Calne.

He was now thirty years old. He was a finished classical scholar, and a master of English and Italian literature. French literature he no doubt knew well, but not with the same intimacy and sympathy. Of English his-
tory he already possessed the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with rare accuracy and grasp. And of all history, ancient or modern, he probably had a competent command. On the other hand, his want of philosophical training does not appear to have been corrected by subsequent studies of a severer kind. All higher speculation seems to have been antipathetic to him. He spoke with respect of Bentham, but there is no evidence that he ever assimilated Bentham's doctrines. He admired Coleridge's poetry, but he did not meddle with his philosophy—which certainly was not very much, but still it was the best representative of speculative thought in England, and full of attraction to ardent young minds. In after-years, when Macaulay ventured to handle religious and philosophical subjects of a certain depth, this defect in his education made itself felt very plainly. But for the present, and for some time after, it was not perceived. He was abundantly well prepared by natural acuteness and wide reading to make more than a creditable figure amid the loose talk and looser thinking which are the ordinary staple of politics, and to politics he had now come in earnest.

Entering Parliament a few months before the death of George IV., he was just in time to witness the great battle of Reform fought out from beginning to end; to take, indeed, a conspicuous and honourable share in the campaign and final victory. His first speech on the Reform Bill placed him in the first rank of orators, if not of debaters. The Speaker sent for him, and "told him that in all his prolonged experience he had never seen the House in such a state of excitement."  

Sir Robert Peel paid him a most handsome compliment; and another member was heard to say that he had not heard such speaking since

4 Trevelyan, vol. I., cap. 4.
Fox. There can, indeed, be no doubt about the impressiveness and weight of Macaulay’s speaking. “Whenever he rose to speak,” says Mr. Gladstone, who sat with him in Parliament nearly from the first, “it was a summons like a trumpet-call to fill the benches.” It may well be questioned whether Macaulay was so well endowed for any career as that of a great orator. The rapidity of speech suited the impetuosity of his genius far better than the slow labour of composition. He has the true Demosthenic rush in which argument becomes incandescent with passion. To read his speeches by themselves, isolated from the debate in which they were delivered, is to do them injustice. It is only when we read them in Hansard or other contemporary reports, that we see how far higher was their plane of thought than that of the best speaking to which they were opposed, or even to that on his own side. It is not going too far to say that he places the question on loftier grounds of state policy than any of his colleagues. In his fourth speech on the Reform Bill, brushing away with disdain the minuter sophistries and special pleading of his opponents, he tells them that the Bill must be carried or the country will be ruined—that it will be carried whatever they do, but carried by revolution and civil war. “You may make the change tedious, you may make it violent, you may—God in his mercy forbid—you may make it bloody, but avert it you cannot.” Even if it were a bad bill, it should be passed, as the lesser of two evils, compared to withholding it. Then he throws those harpoons of pointed epigram, which are rarely at the command of orators who are not also writers, and which are as wise and true as they are sharp:

What then, it is said, would you legislate in haste? Would
you legislate in times of great excitement concerning matters of such deep concern? Yes, sir, I would; and if any bad consequences should follow from the haste and excitement, let those be answerable who, when there was no need of haste, when there existed no excitement, refused to listen to any project of reform; nay, made it an argument against reform that the public mind was not excited. . . . I allow that hasty legislation is an evil. But reformers are compelled to legislate fast just because bigots will not legislate early. Reformers are compelled to legislate in times of excitement, because bigots will not legislate in times of tranquillity.

Nothing shows more clearly the impression made by this magnificent speech than the pains taken by the Opposition to answer it. Croker, who rose immediately after Macaulay sat down, devoted a two hours’ speech exclusively to answering him; and Croker was one of the ablest debaters of his party. All the best men on that side followed the same line, feeling that Macaulay was really the formidable man. Sir Robert Inglis, Sir Charles Wetherell, Praed, and, finally, the Ajax of the Tories, Sir Robert Peel himself, singled out the “honourable and learned member” for Calne, as the foeman most worthy of their steel. No compliment could surpass this.

From the time he entered Parliament till nearly four years afterwards, when he sailed for India, Macaulay’s life was one of strenuous and incessant labour, such as has been hardly ever surpassed in the lives of the busiest men. Besides his Parliamentary duties he had official work—first as Commissioner, and then as Secretary, to the Board of Control; and in consequence of the frequent indisposition of his chief, Mr. Charles Grant, the whole labour of the office often devolved upon him. He was one of the lions of London Society, and a constant guest
at Holland House—the imperious mistress of which scolded, flattered, and caressed him with a patronizing condescension, that would not have been to every person's taste. He was on intimate terms with Rogers, Moore, Campbell, Luttrell, and the other wits of the day, and he more than held his own as a talker and a wit. And all this time he was writing those articles for the *Edinburgh Review*, which perhaps are often unwittingly assumed to have been his main occupation. They were in truth struck off in hastily snatched moments of leisure, saved with a miserly thrift from public and official work, by rising at five and writing till breakfast. Thirteen articles, from the *Essay on Robert Montgomery* to the first *Essay on Lord Chatham* inclusive, were written amidst these adverse conditions. We are bound in common equity to remember this fact, when inclined to find fault with either the matter or the manner of Macaulay's Essays. They were not the meditated compositions of a student wooing his muse in solitude and repose, crooning over his style and maturing his thought; but the rapid effusions of a man immersed in business, contesting populous boroughs, sitting up half the night in Parliament, passing estimates connected with his office, and making speeches on *la haute politique* to the Commons of England. Mr. Gladstone, who remembers the splendour of his early fame, does justice to the "immense distinction" which Macaulay had attained long before middle life, and justly remarks that, except the second Pitt and Lord Byron, no Englishman had ever won, at so early an age, such wide and honourable renown.

And behind this renown, unknown to the world, but more honourable than the renown itself, were facts which must for ever embalm Macaulay's memory with a fragrance
of lofty and unselfish virtue. The Whig Government, bent on economy, brought in a bill to reform the Bankruptcy jurisdiction. He voted for the measure, though it suppressed his Commissionership, and left him penniless; for at about the time his Trinity fellowship also expired. He was reduced to such straits that he was forced to sell the gold medals he had won at Cambridge; and, as he said at a later date, he did not know where to turn for a morsel of bread. This did not last long, and his appointment to the Board of Control, placed him in relative comfort. But presently a new difficulty arose. The Government introduced their Slavery Bill; which, though a liberal proposal, did not satisfy the fanatics of the abolitionist party, among whom Zachary Macaulay stood in the first rank. His son made up his mind in a moment. He declared to his colleagues and his chiefs that he could not go counter to his father. "He has devoted his whole life to the question; and I cannot grieve him by giving way, when he wishes me to stand firm." He placed his resignation in the hands of Lord Althorp, and freely criticized as an independent member the measure of his own Government. He told his leader that he did not expect such insubordination to be overlooked; and that if he were a Minister he would not allow it. Such noble independence had its reward. He wrote to his sister Hannah: "I have resigned my office, and my resignation has been refused. I have spoken and voted against the Ministry under which I hold my place. . . . I am as good friends with the Ministers as ever." Well might Sydney Smith say, that Macaulay was incorruptible.

Still the res angusta domi was pressing hard upon—not so much himself as his family, of which he was now the main support. With his official salary, and with what
he earned by writing for the *Edinburgh*—which, by the way, never seems to have exceeded two hundred pounds per annum—he was beyond the pressure of immediate want. If he had been out of office and at leisure, he, no doubt, would have gained far more by his pen. But, as he pointedly put it, he was resolved to write only because his mind was full—not because his pockets were empty. He accepted the post of legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India, from which he was sure to return with some twenty thousand pounds, saved out of his salary. In his position it is difficult, even judging after the event, to say that he could have acted more wisely and prudently than he did. But the sacrifice was great—and probably he knew it as well as any one, though with his usual cheery stoicism he said nothing about it. The exile from England, and even removal from English politics, were probably a gain. But the postponement of his monumental work in literature was a serious misfortune. The precious hours of health and vigour were speeding away, and the great work was not begun, nor near beginning. He sailed for Madras, February 15, 1834.

He spent the time during his voyage in a very characteristic manner, by reading all the way. "Except at meals," he said, "I hardly exchanged a word with any human being. I devoured Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, and English; folios, quartos, octavos, duodecimos." He always had an immoderate passion for reading, on which he never seems to have thought of putting the slightest restraint. When in India he writes to his sister, Mrs. Cropper, saying that he would like nothing so well as to bury himself in some great library, and never pass a waking hour without a book before him. And as a matter of fact, except when engaged in business or com-
position this seems to have been what he actually did. He walked about London, reading; he roamed through the lanes of Surrey, reading; and even the new and surprising spectacle of the sea—so suggestive of reverie and brooding thought—could not seduce him from his books. His appetite was so keen as to be almost undiscriminating. He was constantly reading worthless novels which he despised. Once he is shocked himself, and exclaims in his diary: “Why do I read such trash?” One would almost say that his mind was naturally vacant when left to itself, and needed the thoughts of others to fill up the void. How otherwise are we to account for the following extraordinary statement, under his own hand? He was on a journey to Ireland:

I read between London and Bangor the lives of the emperors from Maximin to Carinus, inclusive, in the Augustan history. . . . . We sailed as soon as we got on board. I put on my great coat and sate on deck during the whole voyage. As I could not read, I used an excellent substitute for reading. I went through Paradise Lost in my head. I could still repeat half of it, and that the best half.

The complaint is that Macaulay’s writings lack meditation and thoughtfulness. Can it be wondered at, when we see the way in which he passed his leisure hours. One would have supposed that an historian and statesman, sailing for Ireland in the night on that Irish sea, would have been visited by thoughts too full and bitter and mournful to have left him any taste even for the splendours of Milton’s verse. He was about to write on Ireland and the battle of the Boyne; and he had got up the subject with his usual care before starting. Is it not next to incredible that he could have thought of any-
thing else than that pathetic, miserable, humiliating story of the connexion between the two islands? And he knew that story better than most men. Yet it did not kindle his mind on such an occasion as this. There was a defect of deep sensibility in Macaulay—a want of moral draught and earnestness, which is characteristic of his writing and thinking. His acute intellect and nimble fancy are not paired with an emotional endowment of corresponding weight and volume. His endless and aimless reading was the effect, not the cause, of this disposition. While in India he read more classics in one year than a Cambridge undergraduate who was preparing to compete for the Chancellor’s medals. But this incessant reading was directed by no aim, to no purpose—was prompted by no idea on which he wished to throw light, no thoughtful conception which needed to be verified and tested. Macaulay’s omnivorous reading is often referred to as if it were a title to honour; it was far more of the nature of a defect. It is, by the way, a curious circumstance, that while on the one hand we are always told of his extraordinary memory, insomuch that he only needed to read a passage even once casually, for it to be

* “I have cast up my reading account, and brought it to the end of 1835. It includes December, 1834. During the last thirteen months I have read Æschylus twice, Sophocles twice, Euripides once, Pindar twice, Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Theocritus twice, Herodotus, Thucydides, almost all Xenophon’s works, almost all Plato, Aristotle’s Politics, and a good deal of his Organon, besides dipping elsewhere in him, the whole of Plutarch’s Lives, about half of Lucian, two or three books of Athenaeus, Plautus twice, Terence twice, Lucretius twice, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Lucan, Statius, Silius Italicus, Livy, Velleius Paterculus, Sallust, Caesar, and lastly Cicero. I have, indeed, still a little of Cicero left, but I shall finish him in a few days. I am now deep in Aristophanes and Lucian.”*
impressed on his mind for ever afterwards, on the other we find that he read the same books over and over again, and that at very short intervals. In the reading account just given we see that he read several authors twice in one year. But I happen to possess a copy of Lysias, which belonged to him, which shows that he carried the practice much further. He had the excellent habit of marking in pencil the date of his last perusal of an author, and in the book referred to, it appears that he read the speech Pro Cæde Eratosthenis three times within a year, and five times altogether; and with most of the speeches it was the same, though that one appears to have been his favourite. In September and October, 1837, he appears to have read all Lysias through twice over. Now what could be the meaning or the motive of these repeated perusals? In the case of a man with a wretched memory, who was about to undergo an examination, we could understand them. But Macaulay's memory bordered on the miraculous, and he only read to please himself. It seems very strange that a serious man should thus dispose of his spare moments. How dry the inward spring of meditation must have been to remotely allow of such an employment of time! That a finished scholar however busy should now and then solace himself with a Greek play or a few books of Homer would only show that he had kept open the windows of his mind, and had not succumbed to the dusty drudgery of life. But this was not Macaulay's case. He read with the ardour of a professor compiling a lexicon, without a professor's object or valid motive. He wanted a due sense of the relative importance of books and studies.

It behoves a critic to be cautious in finding fault with
Macaulay, as he generally will discover that before he has done blaming him for one thing, he has to begin praising him warmly for another. His career in India is an instance in point. However excessive his taste for reading may have been, he never allowed that or any other private inclination to interfere with the practical work which lay before him. In Calcutta, as in London, he showed the same power of strenuous, unremitting labour, which never seemed to know satiety or fatigue. Besides his official duties as Member of Council, he at once assumed, voluntarily and gratuitously, an enormous addition to his burden of work by becoming chairman of two important committees: the Committee of Public Instruction and the committee appointed to draw up the new codes—the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. He rarely failed to arrogate to himself the lion’s share of any hard work within his reach. But on this occasion, owing to the frequent illness of his colleagues, he had at times to undertake the greater part of the task himself. The Penal Code and the notes appended to it are perhaps one of his most durable titles to fame. On such a subject I can have no opinion; but this is the way in which Mr. Justice Stephen speaks of it:—

Lord Macaulay’s great work was too daring and original to be accepted at once. It was a draft when he left India in 1838. The draft . . . and the revision (by Sir Barnes Peacock) are both eminently creditable to their authors, and the result of their successive efforts has been to reproduce in a concise and even beautiful form the spirit of the law of England. . . . . The point which always has surprised me most in connexion with the Penal Code is, that it proves that Lord Macaulay must have had a knowledge of English criminal law which, considering how little he had practised it, may fairly be called extraordi-
nary. He must have possessed the gift of going at once to the very root of the matter, and of sifting the corn from the chaff, to a most unusual degree, for his draft gives the substance of the criminal law of England down to its minute working details, in a compass which by comparison with the original may be regarded as almost ludicrously small. The Indian Penal Code is to the English criminal law what a manufactured article ready for use is to the materials out of which it is made. It is to the French Code Pénal, and I may add the North German Code of 1871, what a finished picture is to a sketch. It is far simpler and much better expressed than Livingstone's Code of Louisiana, and its practical success has been complete. The clearest proof of this is, that hardly any questions have arisen upon it which have had to be determined by the Courts, and that few and slight amendments have had to be made by the Legislature.6

6 Trevelyan, vol. 1, cap. 6. Macaulay's labours on the Penal Code, the value of which no one disputes, are sometimes spoken of in a way which involves considerable injustice to his fellow-commissioners, whose important share in the work is tacitly ignored. The Penal Code, together with the Report and Notes, are often referred to as if they were Macaulay's exclusive work. For this assumption there is no ground, and Macaulay himself never laid claim to anything of the kind. When the illness of his colleagues deprived him temporarily of their assistance he naturally mentioned the fact in his familiar correspondence; but this does not justify the conclusion that he did all the work himself. Serious as were the interruptions caused by the illness of the other commissioners, they were the exceptions, not the rule. Before the rainy season of the year 1836 the Commission had been in full work for a whole year, and nothing is said as to sickness during all that time. Moreover, even when suffering from bad health, Sir John Macleod maintained on the subject of their joint labours daily communication with Macaulay, who submitted all he wrote to the criticism of his friend, and repeated modifications of the first draft were the result. This being so, it is not easy to see the equity of calling the Penal Code "Macaulay's great work," as Sir James Stephen does, or why the Report and Notes should appear in the Library edition of Macaulay's writings.
On the Education Committee he rendered perhaps equal service, though it may not be so generally known. The members of the Board were evenly divided as to the character of the instruction to be given to the natives. Five were for continuing the old encouragement of Oriental learning, and five for the introduction of English literature and European science. It is hardly necessary to say into which scale Macaulay threw his influence. The opinion of the Government was determined by an elaborate minute which he drew up on the subject, and Lord William Bentinck decided that “the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India.”

Macaulay was very unpopular with a portion of the English residents in Calcutta, chiefly it would seem in consequence of a useful reform which he helped to introduce, affecting the jurisdiction of the provincial courts of Bengal. The change appears to have been a wise one, and generally accepted as such. But it was unfavourable to certain interests in the capital, and these attacked Macaulay in the press with the most scurrilous and indecent virulence. The foulness of the abuse was such that he could not allow the papers to lie in his sister’s drawing-room. Cheat, swindler, charlatan, and tyrant were only the milder epithets with which he was assailed, and a suggestion to lynch him made at a public meeting was received with rapturous applause. He bore this disgraceful vituperation with the most unruffled equanimity. He did more: he vigorously advocated and supported the freedom of the press at the very moment when it was attacking him with the most rancorous invective. Macaulay had in him a vein of genuine magnanimity.
His period of exile in India drew to its close at the end of the year 1837. In the midst of his official work and multifarious reading he had written two articles for the Edinburgh Review, one on Mackintosh's History of the Revolution; the other his rather too famous Essay on Bacon. He made his plans for learning German on the voyage home. "People tell me that it is a hard language," he wrote to his friend Ellis, "but I cannot easily believe that there is a language which I cannot master in four months by working ten hours a day." He did learn German in the time prescribed; but except to read Goethe and Schiller and parts of Lessing, he never seems to have made much use of it. However, his object in going to India was now attained. He had realized a modest fortune, but ample for his simple wants and tastes. After an unusually long voyage he reached England in the middle of the year 1838. His father had died while he was on the ocean.

Within a few weeks he had contributed to the Edinburgh Review one of the best of his essays, that on Sir William Temple. In October he left England for a tour in Italy.

The first visit to Italy is always an epoch in the life of a cultivated mind. Probably few pilgrims to the classic land were ever better prepared than Macaulay by reading and turn of thought to receive the unique impressions of such a journey. He was equally capable of appreciating both the antiquities, the Pagan and the Christian, of which Italy is the guardian. Fortunately he kept a journal of his travels, from which a few extracts have been published. They show Macaulay in his most attractive and engaging mood. A want of reverence for the men of genius of past ages is not one of the sins which lies at his door.
On the contrary, after family affection it was perhaps the strongest emotion of his mind. He now had an opportunity of indulging it such as he had never had before. Here are a few extracts from his journal:

Florence, November 9, 1838.—To the Church of Santa Croce—an ugly, mean outside, and not much to admire in the architecture within” (shade of Mr. Ruskin!), “but consecrated by the dust of some of the greatest men that ever lived. It was to me what a first visit to Westminster Abbey would be to an American. The first tomb that caught my eye as I entered was that of Michael Angelo. I was much moved, and still more so when, going forward, I saw the stately monument lately erected to Dante. The figure of the poet seemed to me fine, and finely placed, and the inscription very happy—his own words—the proclamation which resounds through the shades when Virgil returns:

Onorate l’altissimo poeta.

The two allegorical figures were not much to my taste. It is particularly absurd to represent Poetry weeping for Dante... Yet I was very near shedding tears of a different kind as I looked at this magnificent monument, and thought of the sufferings of the great poet, and of his incomparable genius, and of all the pleasure which I have derived from him, and of his death in exile, and of the late justice of posterity. I believe that very few people have ever had their minds more thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of any great work than mine is with that of the Divine Comedy. His execution I take to be far beyond that of any other artist who has operated on the imagination by means of words—

O degli altri poeti onore e lume
Vagliami il lungo studio e'l grande amore
Che m' han fatto cercar lo tuo volume.

I was proud to think that I had a right to apostrophize him thus. I went on, and next I came to the tomb of Alfieri. I
passed forward, and in another minute my foot was on the grave of Machiaveli.

At Rome he is almost overpowered.

November 18.—On arriving this morning I walked straight from the hotel door to St. Peter’s. I was so excited by the expectation of what I was to see that I could notice nothing else. I was quite nervous. The colonnade in front is noble—very, very noble; yet it disappointed me, and would have done so had it been the portico of Paradise. In I went. I was for a minute fairly stunned by the magnificence and harmony of the interior. I never in my life saw, and never, I suppose, shall see again, anything so astonishingly beautiful. I really could have cried with pleasure. I rambled about for half an hour or more, paying little or no attention to details, but enjoying the effect of the sublime whole.

In rambling back to the Piazza di Spagna I found myself before the portico of the Pantheon. I was as much struck and affected as if I had not known that there was such a building in Rome. There it was, the work of the age of Augustus—the work of men who lived with Cicero and Caesar, and Horace and Virgil.

He never seems to have felt annoyed, as some have been, by the intermingling of Christian and Pagan Rome, and is at a loss to say which interested him most. He was already meditating his essay on the history of the Popes, and throwing into his *Lays of Ancient Rome* those geographical and topographical touches which set his spirited stanzas ringing in the ear of a traveller in Rome at every turn.

I then went to the river, to the spot where the old Pons Sublicius stood, and looked about to see how my *Horatius* agreed with the topography. Pretty well; but his house must be on Mount Palatine, for he could never see Mount Cælius from the spot where he fought.
But like all active minds to whom hard work has become a habit, Macaulay soon grew weary of the idleness of travelling. He never went further south than Naples, and turned away from the Campagna, leaving the delights of an Italian spring untasted, to seek his labour and his books at home. He reached London early in February, 1839, and fell to work with the eager appetite of a man who has had a long fast. In less than three weeks he had read and reviewed Mr. Gladstone's book on *Church and State*. But he was not destined to enjoy his leisure long. The expiring Whig Ministry of Lord Melbourne needed all the support they could obtain: he was brought into Parliament as member for Edinburgh, and soon after admitted into the Cabinet as Secretary-at-War.

This return to office and Parliament was an uncompensated loss to literature, and no gain to politics. The Whig Ministry was past saving; and Macaulay could gain no distinction by fighting their desperate battle. He felt himself that he was wasting his time. "I pine," he wrote, "for liberty and ease, and freedom of speech and freedom of pen." For this political interlude had necessitated the laying aside of his History, which he had already begun. He had now reached an age at which an author who meditates a great work has no time to lose. He was just turned forty; a judicious economy of his time and resources would have seen him a long way towards the performance of the promise with which his great work opens,—"I purpose to write the history of England from the accession of King James II. down to a time which is within the memory of men still living." It is impossible to read the forecast he made of his work on the eve of his journey to Italy without a pang of regret, and sense of a loss not easily estimated.
As soon as I return I shall seriously commence my History. The first part (which I think will take up five octavo volumes) will extend from the Revolution to the commencement of Sir Robert Walpole's long administration—a period of three or four and thirty very eventful years. From the commencement of Walpole's administration to the commencement of the American war, events may be despatched more concisely. From the commencement of the American war it will again become necessary to be copious. How far I shall bring the narrative down I have not determined. The death of George IV. would be the best halting place.

It was all in his mind. He had gone over the ground again and again. What a panorama he would have unfolded! what battle-pieces we should have had of Marlborough's campaigns! what portraits of Bolingbroke, Peterborough, Prince Eugene, and the rest! It is a sad pity that Lord Melbourne, who was fond of let ting things alone, could not leave Macaulay alone, but must needs yoke the celestial steed to his parliamentary plough. Or, to put it more fairly, it is a pity that Macaulay himself had not sufficient nerve, and consciousness of his mission, to resist the tempter. But he was loyal to a degree of chivalry to his political friends who were in difficulties. He was, as his sister's writing-master said, a "lump of good nature;" and without a full consciousness of the sacrifice he was making, he gave up to party what was meant for literature.

But he had a parliamentary triumph of no common kind—one of the two instances in which, as Mr. Gladstone says, "he arrested the successful progress of legislative measures, and slew them at a moment's notice, and by his single arm." The case was Sergeant Talfourd's Copyright Bill. His conduct on this occasion has been
strangely questioned by Miss Martineau, who wonders how an able literary man could utter such a speech, and hints "at some cause which could not be alleged for such a man exposing himself in a speech unsound in its whole argument." In any case, Macaulay had much more to lose by the line he took than Miss Martineau. No one, we may suppose at present, can read the oration in question without entire conviction of the single-minded sense of duty and elevated public spirit which animated him on this occasion. Nothing can be more judicial than the way in which he balances the respective claims to consideration of authors and the general public. In the following year he had a similar victory over Lord Mahon; and the present law of copyright was framed in accordance with his proposals, slightly modified. Macaulay made a most advantageous contrast to his brother authors in this matter. Even the "writer of books" who petitioned from Chelsea showed that he had considered the subject to much less purpose.

Lord Melbourne's Government fell in June 1841; and the general election which followed gave the Tories a crushing majority. Macaulay was freed from "that closely watched slavery which is mocked with the name of power." He welcomed the change with exuberant delight. He still retained his seat for Edinburgh, and spoke occasionally in the House; but he was liberated from the wasteful drudgery of office.

Here it will be well to interrupt this personal sketch of the writer, and proceed to a consideration of some of his work. But for the purpose of making clear some allusions in the two following chapters, we may state in anticipation that he had a serious attack of illness in the year 1852, from which he never entirely recovered.
CHAPTER II.

CHARACTERISTICS.

Macaulay belongs to a class of writers whom critics do not always approach with sufficient circumspection and diffidence, the class, namely, of writers whose merits and defects appear to be so obvious that there is no mistaking them. When dealing with writers of this kind, we are apt to think our task much easier and simpler than it really is. Writers of startling originality and depth, difficult as it may be to appraise them justly, yet, as it were, warn critics to be on their guard and take their utmost pains. Lesser writers, again, but of odd and peculiar flavour, are nearly sure of receiving adequate attention. But there are writers who belong to neither of these classes, whose merit consists neither in profound originality nor special flavour, but in a general wide eloquence and power, coupled with a certain commonplaceness of thought, of whom Cicero may be taken as the supreme type, and by those writers critics are liable to be deceived—in two ways. Either they admire the eloquence so much that they are blind to other deficiencies, or they perceive the latter so clearly that they fail to do justice to the other merits. On no writer have more opposite judgments been passed than on Cicero. By some he has been regarded as one of the loftiest geniuses of antiquity; by others as a shallow, ver-
bose, and ignorant pretender; and perhaps to this day
Cicero's exact position in literature has not been settled.
It is to be hoped that Macaulay, who has a certain distant
resemblance to Cicero, will not be so long in finding his
proper place.

That something like a reaction against Macaulay's fame
has recently set in, can hardly be doubted. It was, indeed,
to be expected that something of the kind would occur.
Such reactions against the fame of great authors frequently
appear in the generation which follows the period of their
first splendour. New modes of thought and sentiment
arise, amid which the celebrity of a recent past appears old-
fashioned, with little of the grace which clothes the
genuinely old. We cannot be surprised if a fate which
overtook Pope, Voltaire, and Byron, should now overtake
Macaulay. But those writers have risen anew into the
firmament of literature, from which they are not likely to
fall again. The question is, whether Macaulay will ultimately
join them as a fixed star, and if so, of what magnitude?
It would be against analogy if such a wide and resonant
fame as his were to suffer permanent eclipse. Hasty
reputations, due to ephemeral circumstances, may utterly
die out, but it would not be easy to name a really great fame
among contemporaries which has not been largely ratified
by posterity. Few authors have had greater contemporary
fame than Macaulay. It spread through all classes and
countries like an epidemic. Foreign courts and learned
societies vied with the multitude in doing him honour.
He was read with almost equal zest in cultivated European
capitals and in the scattered settlements of remote colonies.
The Duke of Wellington was loud in his praise. Professor
Ranke called him an incomparable man: and a body of
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bose, and ignorant pretender; and perhaps to this day Cicero's exact position in literature has not been settled. It is to be hoped that Macaulay, who has a certain distant resemblance to Cicero, will not be so long in finding his proper place.

That something like a reaction against Macaulay's fame has recently set in, can hardly be doubted. It was, indeed, to be expected that something of the kind would occur. Such reactions against the fame of great authors frequently appear in the generation which follows the period of their first splendour. New modes of thought and sentiment arise, amid which the celebrity of a recent past appears old-fashioned, with little of the grace which clothes the genuinely old. We cannot be surprised if a fate which overtook Pope, Voltaire, and Byron, should now overtake Macaulay. But those writers have risen anew into the firmament of literature, from which they are not likely to fall again. The question is, whether Macaulay will ultimately join them as a fixed star, and if so, of what magnitude? It would be against analogy if such a wide and resonant fame as his were to suffer permanent eclipse. Hasty reputations, due to ephemeral circumstances, may utterly die out, but it would not be easy to name a really great fame among contemporaries which has not been largely ratified by posterity. Few authors have had greater contemporary fame than Macaulay. It spread through all classes and countries like an epidemic. Foreign courts and learned societies vied with the multitude in doing him honour. He was read with almost equal zest in cultivated European capitals and in the scattered settlements of remote colonies. The Duke of Wellington was loud in his praise. Professor Ranke called him an incomparable man; and a body of English workmen sent him a vote of thanks for having
written a history which working men could understand. An author who collects suffrages from such opposite quarters as these must have had the secret of touching a deep common chord in human nature. It is the business of criticism to find out what that chord was.

Macaulay's great quality is that of being one of the best story-tellers that ever lived; and if we limit the competition to his only proper rivals—the historians—he may be pronounced the best story-teller. If any one thinks these superlatives misplaced, let him mention the historical writers whom he would put on a level with or above Macaulay—always remembering that the comparison is limited to this particular point: the art of telling a story with such interest and vivacity that readers have no wish but to read on. If the area of comparison be enlarged so as to include questions of intellectual depth, moral insight, and sundry other valuable qualities, the competition turns against Macaulay, who at once sinks many degrees in the scale. But in his own line he has no rival. And let no one undervalue that line. He kindled a fervent human interest in past and real events which novelists kindle in fictitious events. He wrote of the seventeenth century with the same vivid sense of present reality which Balzac and Thackeray had, when they wrote of the nineteenth century, which was before their eyes. And this was the peculiarity which fascinated contemporaries, and made them so lavish of praise and admiration. They felt, and very justly, that history had never been so written before. It was a quality which all classes, of all degrees of culture, could almost equally appreciate. But it produced a feeling of gratitude among the more experienced judges which seems likely to pass away. All the younger generation who have grown to manhood since Macaulay
wrote, have become intimately acquainted with his writings at too early an age to appreciate what an innovator he was in his day. Besides, he has had numerous able though inferior imitators. The younger folk therefore see nothing surprising that history should be made as entertaining as a novel. But twenty or thirty years ago the case was very different. Lord Carlisle when he finished the fifth (posthumous) volume, said he was “in despair to close that brilliant-pictured page.” It will generally be found that old men who were not far from being Macaulay’s equals in age, are still enthusiastic in his praise. It is the younger generation, who have come to maturity since his death, who see a good deal to censure in him, and not very much to admire. The late Sir James Stephen said “he could forgive him anything, and was violently tempted to admire even his faults.” Mr. Leslie Stephen, his son, is one of the most penetrating and severe of Macaulay’s critics.

There is evidently a misunderstanding here which needs removing. It is another instance of the opposite sides of the shield producing discrepant opinions as to its colour. Those who admire Macaulay, and those who blame him, are thinking of different things. His admirers are thinking of certain brilliant qualities in which he has hardly ever been surpassed. His censors, passing these by with hasty recognition, point to grave defects, and ask if such are compatible with real greatness. Each party should be led to adopt part of his opponent’s view, without surrendering what is true in his own. Macaulay’s eminence as a raconteur should not only be admitted with cold assent, but proclaimed supreme and unrivalled in its own way, as it really is. On the other hand, his serious deficiencies in other ways should be acknowledged with equal frankness.
One of his most remarkable qualities as a writer is his power of interesting the reader and holding his attention. It is a gift by itself, and not very easy to analyze. Some of the greatest writers have wanted it.

Dr. Johnson, speaking of Prior's Solomon and the partiality with which its author regarded it, says,—

His affection was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour, and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought; he had polished it often to elegance, and often dignified it with splendour, and sometimes heightened it to sublimity. He perceived in it many excellencies, and did not discover that it wanted that without which all others are of small avail—the power of engaging attention and alluring curiosity. Tedium is the most fatal of faults.

Of the truth of this last remark there is no doubt. But what was the secret of the tediousness of the poem Solomon, which, according to Johnson, was almost as great a paragon as the Hebrew monarch after whom it was named? A work on which great labour had been spent, which contained thought and knowledge, which had polish, elegance, splendour, and occasionally sublimity, one would have thought was not likely to be dull. As a matter of fact, Solomon is dead and buried fathoms deep in its own dulness. In this special case Johnson gives at least one good reason, but he throws no light on the general question of dulness—in what it consists, by which we might also explain in what interest consists. It appears that Macaulay himself was puzzled with the same difficulty. "Where lies," he asks somewhat unjustly, with reference to a novel of Lord Lytton, "the secret of being amusing? and how is it that art, eloquence, and diligence may all be employed in making a book dull?"
Few authors have had in larger degree than Macaulay "the secret of being amusing," of "engaging attention and alluring curiosity," as Dr. Johnson says. He is rarely, perhaps never, absolutely dull. On the other hand, he is not too lively and stimulating, and avoids therefore producing that sense of fatigue in the reader, which even genuine wit, if there is too much of it, is apt to engender. He had the talent which he concedes to Walpole, of writing what people like to read. Perhaps the secret of his charm lay in this: First that he was deeply interested himself in the subjects that he handles. His bona fide wish to do them justice—to impart his knowledge—is not hampered by any anxious self-consciousness as to the impression he himself is making. His manner is straightforward and frank, and therefore winning, and he communicates the interest he feels. Secondly, he was an adept in the art of putting himself en rapport with his reader—of not going too fast, or too far, or too deep, for the ordinary intelligence. He takes care not only to be clear in language, but to follow a line of thought from which obscurity and even twilight are excluded. His attention, indeed, to the needs of dull readers was excessive, and has risked the esteem of readers of another kind. He often steered too near the shoals of commonplace to suit the taste of many persons; still he never fairly runs aground. He has one great merit which can be appreciated by all—his thought is always well within his reach, and is unfolded with complete mastery and ease to its uttermost filament. He is never vague, shadowy, and incomplete. The reader is never perplexed by ideas imperfectly grasped, by thoughts which the writer cannot fully express. On the other hand, his want of aspiration, of all effort to rise into the higher regions of thought, has
lost him in the opinion of many readers. He is one of the most entertaining but also one of the least suggestive of writers.

His powers of brilliant illustration have never been denied, and it would not be easy to name their equal. His command of perfectly apposite and natural, yet not at all obvious images, is not more wonderful than the ease with which they are introduced. Few readers are likely to have forgotten the impression they once made on the youthful mind. It was something quite new and almost bewildering, like the first night at the play. He can conjure up in a moment a long vista of majestic similes, which attracts the eye like a range of snow-capped mountains. Take, for instance, the opening passages of the articles on Lord Clive and Ranke’s History of the Popes. As soon as the curtain rises, a grand panorama seems spread out before us. The first begins with a comparison between the English conquests of India, and the Spanish conquest of America. But notice how pictorially it is done:

The people of India when we subdued them, were ten times as numerous as the Americans whom the Spaniards vanquished, and were at the same time quite as highly civilized as the victorious Spaniards. They had reared cities larger and fairer than Saragossa and Toledo, and buildings more beautiful and costly than the Cathedral of Seville. They could show bankers richer than the richest firms of Barcelona or Cadiz; viceroys whose splendour far surpassed that of Ferdinand the Catholic; myriads of cavalry and long trains of artillery which would have astonished the Great Captain.

The passage is spoiled by mutilation; but readers can turn to it if they do not remember it. In the same way the article on the Popes opens with a truly grand picture.
“No other institution” (save the Papacy) “is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelpards and tigers bounded in the Flavian Amphitheatre.” Again: “She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot in Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the Temple of Mecca.” The sensitive youth feels his breath catch at illustrations like these. If they pall on the older mind it is because they are found to be addressed almost exclusively to the eye: they are followed by nothing of importance addressed to the reason. We shall have occasion to see that this sumptuous opening of the article on the Popes leads to a disquisition at once inaccurate in facts and superficial in argument.

Macaulay’s talent as an historical artist will be considered at some length when we come to examine the History of England. It will be sufficient in this general view to remark the skill with which he has overcome the peculiar difficulties of historical composition. The great difficulty in drawing the picture of a complex society in a past age is to combine unity with breadth of composition. In a long narrative only a very small portion of the picture can be seen at one time. The whole is never presented at one moment with concentrated effect, such as the painter can command, who places on one canvas which can be easily surveyed, all that he has to tell us. The historian cannot bring all his troops on the ground at once and strike the mind by a wide and magnificent display. He is reduced to a march past in narrow file. The danger, therefore, is that the effect of the whole will be feeble or lost. In the hands of a weak
man a thin stream of narrative meanders on, but a broad view is nowhere obtained. The lowest form of historical writing is the chronicle or mere annals, in which a broad view is not so much as aimed at. In great historical work, the immediate portion of the narrative passing before the reader's eye is always kept in subordinate relation to the whole drama of which it forms a part. And this is the problem, to keep the whole suggestively before the reader while only a part is being shown. Only a strong imagination is equal to this task. The mind of the writer must hold the entire picture suspended in his fancy while he is painting each separate portion of it. And he paints each separate portion of it with a view to its fitness and relation to the whole.

No fair critic will deny that Macaulay's execution in all these respects is simply masterly. The two volumes which comprise the reign of James II. in spite of their abundant detail are as truly an organic whole as a sonnet. Though the canvas is crowded in every part with events and characters, there is no confusion, no obstruction to clear vision. Wherever we stand we seem to be opposite to the centre of the picture. However interested we may be in a part, we are never allowed to lose sight of the whole. The compelling force of the writer's imagination always keeps it in a latent suggestive way before our minds. And all this is done under a self-imposed burden which is without example. For, in obedience to his canon as to how history should be written, the author has weighted himself with a load of minute detail such as no historian ever uplifted before. He hardly ever mentions a site, a town, a castle, a manor-house, he rarely introduces even a subordinate character, without bringing in a picturesque anecdote, an association,
a reminiscence out of his boundless stores of knowledge, which sparkles like a gem on the texture of his narrative. Nothing can exceed the skill with which these little vignettes are thrown in, and they are incessant; yet they never seem to be in the way, or to hinder the main effect. Take as an instance this short reference to the Earl of Craven. It occurs in the very crisis of the story, when James II. was a prisoner in his own palace, between his first and second attempts to fly the country:—

James, while his fate was under discussion, remained at Whitehall, fascinated, as it seemed, by the greatness and nearness of the danger, and unequal to the exertion of either struggling or flying. In the evening news came that the Dutch had occupied Chelsea and Kensington. The king, however, prepared to go to rest as usual. The Coldstream Guards were on duty at the palace. They were commanded by William, Earl of Craven, an aged man, who, more than fifty years before, had been distinguished in war and love, who had led the forlorn hope at Creutznach with such courage that he had been patted on the shoulder by the great Gustavus, and who was believed to have won from a thousand rivals the heart of the unfortunate Queen of Bohemia. Craven was now in his eightieth year; yet time had not tamed his spirit. It was past ten o'clock when he was informed that three battalions of the Prince's foot, mingled with some troops of horse, were pouring down the long avenue of St. James's Park, with matches lighted, and in full readiness for action. Count Solmes, who commanded the foreigners, said that his orders were to take military possession of the posts round Whitehall, and exhorted Craven to retire peaceably. Craven swore that he would rather be cut to pieces; but when the king, who was undressing himself, learned what was passing, he forbade the stout old soldier to attempt a resistance which must have been ineffectual.

How truly artistic! and how much Craven's conduct is
explained and heightened by that little touch recalling Creutznaehl, the forlorn hope, and the Great Gustavus! What a vista up the seventeenth century to the far off Thirty Years’ War is opened in a moment! I recall no writer who is Macaulay’s equal in this art of covering his larger surfaces with minute work which is never out of place. Like the delicate sculpture on the sandals of Athene in the Parthenon, it detracts nothing from the grandeur of the statue. Or, to take a more appropriate figure, it resembles a richly decorated Gothic porch, in which every stone is curiously carved, and yet does its duty in bearing the weight of the mighty arch as well as if it were perfectly plain.

There are only two modern men with whom he can be worthily compared, Michelet and Carlyle. Both are his superiors in what Mr. Ruskin calls penetrative imagination. Both have an insight into the moral world and the mind of man, of which he is wholly incapable. Both have a simple directness of vision, the real poet’s eye for nature and character, which he entirely lacks. Carlyle especially can emit a lightning flash, which makes Macaulay’s prose, always a little pompous in his ambitious flights, burn dim and yellow. But on another side Macaulay has his revenge. For clear broad width, for steadiness of view and impartiality of all-round presentation he is their superior. Carlyle’s dazzling effects of white light are frequently surrounded by the blackest gloom. Even that lovely “evening sun of July”—in a well-known passage of the French Revolution—emerges only for a moment from a dark cloud, which speedily obscures it again. Michelet’s light is less fitful than Carlyle’s; it is perhaps also less brilliant. Macaulay’s light, pale in comparison with their meteoric splendours,
has the advantage of being equal and steady, and free from the danger of going out. There is yet another quality in which he gains by comparison with the strongest men—the art of historical perspective. His scenes are always placed at the right distance for taking in their full effect. The vividness of Carlyle's imagination often acts like a powerful telescope, and brings objects too near the observer. The events in the French Revolution very often appear as if enacted under our windows. What is just in front of us we see with almost oppressive distinctness, but the eye cannot range over a wide yet perfectly visible panorama. Macaulay never falls into this error. His pictures are always far enough off for the whole sweep of the prospect to be seen with ease. He seems to lead us up to a lofty terrace overlooking a spacious plain which lies spread out below. For size, power, and brightness, if not always purity of colour, he has some title to be called the Rubens of historians.

Admitting all, or a portion, of what is thus advanced, the opposition to Macaulay has a very serious counter-statement to offer. The chief complaint—and it is sufficiently grave—is of a constant and pervading want of depth, either of thought or sentiment. Macaulay, it is said, did little or nothing to stir the deeper mind or the deeper feelings of his multitude of readers.

As regards the first charge, want of intellectual depth, it is not easy to imagine even the semblance of a defence. Indeed, Macaulay owns his guilt with a certain amount of bravado. He has expressed his contempt of all higher speculation with too much scorn to leave any room for doubt or apology on that head. He never refers to Philosophy except in a tone of disparagement and sneer. “Such speculations are in a peculiar manner the delight
of intelligent children and half-civilized men." Among
the speculations thus dismissed with derision are the
questions of "the necessity of human actions and the
foundation of moral obligation." Thus Macaulay dis-
believed in the possibility of ethical science. Of a
translation of Kant which had been sent him he speaks
with amusing airs of superiority, says he cannot under-
stand a word of it any more than if it had been written
in Sanscrit; fully persuaded that the fault lay with Kant,
and not with himself. But his dislike of arduous thinking
did not stop with philosophy. He speaks of Montesquieu
with great disdain; pronounces him to be specious, but
obscure as an oracle, and shallow as a Parisian coxcomb.
There is no trace in Macaulay's writings or life that he was
ever arrested by an intellectual difficulty of any kind. He
can bombard with great force of logic and rhetoric an
enemy's position; but his mind never seems to have
suggested to him problems of its own. In reading him
we glide along the smoothest surface, we are hurried from
picture to picture, but we never meet with a thoughtful
pause which makes us consider with closed eyes what the
conclusion may well be. Strange to say, he more nearly
approaches discussion of principles in his speeches than in
other portions of his works: but a writer of less specu-
lative force hardly exists in the language. It is not easy
to see from his diaries and correspondence that he had any
intellectual interests of any kind, except his taste—if that
can be called an intellectual interest—for poetry, and the
Greek and Latin classics. His letters are, with few ex-
ceptions, mere lively gossip. He rarely discusses even
politics, in which he took so large a share, with any
serious heartiness. He just gives the last news. He does

1 The only even apparent exceptions to this general statement
not betray the slightest interest in science, or social or religious questions, except an amusing petulance at the progress of the Tractarian movement, on which he writes squibs; but otherwise he lived in almost complete isolation amid the active intellectual life of his day. He appears to have been almost wholly wanting in intellectual curiosity of any kind.

This is shown by the strange indifference with which he treated his own subject—history. He lived in an age in which some of the most important historical works that the world has ever seen, were published. He was contemporary (to name only the chief) with Sismondi, De Barante, Guizot, the two Thierry, Mignet, Michelet, in France; with Raumer, Schlosser, Niebuhr, Otfried, Müller, Gans, Neander, F. G. Bauer, Waitz, Roth, in Germany. He never mentions one of them—except Sismondi with a sneer. The only modern historians of whom he takes notice are Ranke and Hallam—and this not with a view to considering the value of their historical work proper, but because they furnished him with a convenient armoury for his own polemical purposes. If he had had any wide generous interest in the progress of historical knowledge, he must have shown more sympathy with men engaged in the same field of labour as himself. He professed to be a

is a group of four or five letters of the year 1845, recounting Lord John Russell's abortive attempt to form a ministry; and a truly admirable letter to Mr. Ellis, narrating the scene in the House of Commons on the passing of the first Reform Bill by a majority of one. But even these letters deal chiefly with news, and hardly attempt the discussion of principles.

Perhaps the time has not yet come for a fully representative selection of Macaulay's best letters. He must have written, one would think, to his colleagues and others with more weight and earnestness than appears anywhere at present.
reformer of history. These men were reformers who had proclaimed, and put in practice, every principle of any value which he advocated in the *Edinburgh Review*, in his article on History, published in 1828. He lays down, not without a certain air as of a discoverer, the new method on which he conceives history should be written—that it should be not abstract and logical, but concrete, graphic, and picturesque. One might have expected that two of the most picturesque presentations of past times which literature has to show, which, when Macaulay wrote his article, had been recently published and attracted European attention, would have been at least named on such an occasion. De Barante’s *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* (published in 1824–26), and Augustin Thierry’s *Histoire de la Conquête d’Angleterre par les Normands* (1825), had a success in the world of letters second only to Macaulay’s own success some quarter of a century later with his *History of England*. Those writers were busy with the very task which he summoned historians to take in hand. Their fame was recent and prominent, one of the events of the day. He was writing on a subject from which a reference to them, one would think, could not be excluded. It is excluded, as completely as if they had never existed. How may this be explained? Did he not know their works? or did he not appreciate them? Neither alternative is welcome. His friend Hallam, when an old man worn down with years and domestic afflictions, set him a very different example. In his supplementary volume to the *History of the Middle Ages*, he shows how carefully he had made himself acquainted with all the more important historical inquiries of the Continent. But then, Hallam cared for the progress of historical research: he saw that history was full of problems which required
solution. He _could_ not be indifferent to what other men were doing. It is to be feared that Macaulay cared for little besides his own success as an historical artist.

The most important reform in historical studies ever made, has been the application of a critical method to the study of the past; in other words, the application of as much of scientific carefulness and precision as the subject allows. This revolution—for it is nothing less—had already begun in Macaulay’s youth; and during his lifetime it had won notable victories in almost every field of historical inquiry. He not only did nothing for historical criticism, he does not seem to have been aware of its existence. He took as little notice of the labours of his countrymen, Palgrave, Dr. Guest, Kemble, as he did of the labours of foreigners. He investigated no obscure questions, cleared up no difficulties, reversed the opinion of scholars upon no important point. The following passage in a letter to his friend Ellis is characteristic: "While I was reading the earlier books (of Livy), I went again through Niebuhr; and I am sorry to say, that having always been a little sceptical about his merits, I am now a confirmed unbeliever"—a judgment which throws more light on Macaulay’s own merits than on Niebuhr’s.

The want of ethical depth is at least as striking. He looks away from moral problems, even more resolutely than from intellectual problems. He never has anything to say on the deeper aspects and relations of life, and it would not be easy to quote a sentence from either his published works or private letters which shows insight or meditation on love, or marriage, or friendship, or the education of children, on religious faith or doubt. We find no trace in him of a "wise spirit," which has had
practical experience of the solemn realities and truths of existence. His learning is confined to book-lore; he is not well read in the human heart, and still less in the human spirit. His unspirituality is complete; we never catch "a glimpse of the far land" through all his brilliant narratives; never, in his numerous portraits, comes a line of moral suggestiveness, showing an eye for the deeper springs of character, the finer shades of motive. His inability to criticize works of poetry and fiction extended to their chief subject—the human heart; and it may be noticed that the remarkable interest he often awakens in a story which he tells so admirably, is nearly always the interest of adventure, never the interest of psychological analysis. Events and outward actions are told with incomparable clearness and vigour—but a thick curtain hangs before the inward theatre of the mind, which is never revealed on his stage. He had a favourite theory on which he often insisted, that children were the only true poets: and this, because of the vividness of their impressions. "No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet, or Lear, as a little girl is affected by the story of poor little Red Riding-hood,"—as if the force of the impression were everything, and its character nothing. By this rule, wax-work should be finer art than the best sculpture in stone. The impressiveness of remote suggestive association by which high art touches the deepest chords of feeling, Macaulay, apparently, did not recognize. He had no ear for the finer harmonies of the inner life.

The truth is that he almost wholly lacked the stronger passions. A sweet affectionate tenderness for friends and relations was the deepest emotion he knew. This, coupled with his unselfishness, made him a most
winning character to those near him, as it certainly filled his life with placid content and happiness. But there is no evidence of strong feeling in his story. I cannot readily believe the report that he was ever at one time a good hater. He had his tempers of course, like other men; but what sign is there of any fervent heat, or lasting mood of passion? Even in politics—the side on which he was most susceptible of strong feeling—he soon became calm, reasonable, gentle—like the good, upright, amiable man he was. Consider his prudence. He never took a hasty or unwise step in his life. His judgment was never misled in matters of conduct for a single moment. He walked in the honourable path he had chosen with a certainty as unerring as if Minerva had been present at his side. He never seems to have had occasion either to yield to, or to resist, a strong temptation. He was never in love. Ambition never got possession of his mind. We cannot imagine him doing anything wrong, or even indecorous: an elopement, a duel, an esclandre of any kind, cannot be associated even in imagination with his name. He was as blameless as Telemachus—

Centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to the household gods,

of spotless respectability. He is not to be blamed, but very much envied, for such a constitution of mind. But this is not the stuff of which great writers who stir men’s hearts are made. He makes us esteem him so much that we can do little more; he cannot provoke our love, pity, or passionate sympathy. There is no romance, pathos, or ideality in his life or his writings. We never leave him
conscious that we have been raised into a higher tone of feeling, chastened and subdued into humility, courage, and sacrifice. He never makes us feel "what shadows we are and what shadows we pursue." How should he? His own view of life was essentially flat and prosaic. Not an aspiration for the future; no noble unrest and discontent with the present; no sympathetic tenderness for the past. He resembled Rubens in more ways than one.

No phenomenon in the human mind (says Mr. Ruskin) is more extraordinary than the junction of this cold worldly temper with great rectitude of principle and tranquil kindness of heart. Rubens was an honourable and entirely well intentioned man, earnestly industrious, simple and temperate in habits of life, high-bred, learned, and discreet; his affection for his mother was great; his generosity to contemporary artists unfailing. He is a healthy, worthy, kind-hearted, courtly-phrased—animal, without any clearly perceptible traces of a soul, except when he paints his children.²

Macaulay had no children of his own to paint; but no man was ever fonder of children.

He was, beyond all comparison, the best of playfellows; unrivalled in the invention of games, and never wearied of repeating them. He had an inexhaustible repertory of small dramas for the benefit of his nieces, in which he sustained an endless number of parts. . . . There was one never-failing game, of building up a den with newspapers behind the sofa, and of enacting robbers and tigers—the children shrieking with terror, but always fascinated, and begging him to begin again.³

He had complete sympathy with children, and knew

³ Trevelyan, vol. ii. cap. ii.
the way to their hearts better than to those of their seniors. Once he bought a superb sheet of paper for a guinea, on which to write a valentine to his little niece Alice. He notes in his diary on the 14th Feb.

At three . . . came the children. Alice was in perfect raptures over her valentine. She begged quite pathetically to be told the truth about it. When we were alone together she said, "I am going to be very serious." Down she fell before me on her knees, and lifted up her hands: "Dear Uncle, do tell the truth to your little girl. Did you send the valentine?" I did not choose to tell a real lie to a child, even about such a trifle, and so I owned it.

A charming little scene, showing Macaulay's two best sides, tenderness and rectitude. But again; to distress, or its artful counterfeit, he was always pitiful and generous. In his journal he writes: "Dec. 27.—Disagreeable weather, and disagreeable news. —— is in difficulty again. I sent 50£, and shall send the same to ——, who does not ask it. But I cannot help being vexed. All the fruits of my book have for this year been swallowed up. It will be all that I can do to make both ends meet without breaking in upon capital." Leigh Hunt enclosed in a begging letter a criticism on the Roman Lays, lamenting that they wanted the true poetical aroma which breathes from Spenser's Faery Queen. Macaulay, who had none of an author's vanity, was "much pleased" with this sincerity.

Is there not reason to doubt whether a natural predisposition to the cardinal virtues is the best outfit for the prophet, the artist, or even the preacher? Saints from of old have been more readily made out of publicans and sinners than out of Pharisees who pay tithes of all they
possess. The artist, the writer and even the philosopher, equally need passion to do great work; and genuine passion is ever apt to be unruly, though by stronger men eventually subdued. "Coldness and want of passion in a picture are not signs of its accuracy, but of the paucity of its statements." 4 "Pour faire de bons vers, il faut avoir le diable au corps," said Voltaire. Macaulay had far too little of the "diable au corps" to make him a writer of impressive individuality and real power. The extent of his fame is out of all proportion to its depth. Except a certain influence on the style of journalism, which threatens to be transient, he has left little mark on his age. Out of his millions of readers there has scarcely come one genuine disciple.

By a change of taste as remarkable as any in literature, his style, which was universally admired, is now very freely decried—perhaps more than justice requires. It cannot be denied that it was a new style: all contemporaries, headed by Jeffrey, agreed upon that point. Real novelty of style is generally a safe test of originality of mind and character. With Macaulay the test does not extend so far. Still his style is perhaps the most original thing about him. Its peculiarity is the skill with which he has imparted to written language a large portion of the swing and rush of spoken oratory. He can be read with a good deal of the pleasurable excitement which numbers of people feel in listening to facile and voluble discourse. As a rule, copious and fluent oratory makes very bad reading: but Macaulay had the secret of transposing his thoughts from the language of spoken discourse, which seems their proper vehicle, to the language of written prose, without loss of effect. To no one talent

4 Modern Painters, vol. i.
perhaps does he owe so much of his reputation. The more refined and delicate literary styles are unpopular in proportion to their excellence; their harmonies and intervals, fascinating to the cultivated ear, are not only lost on but somewhat offensive to the multitude. For one hearer thrilled by a sonata or a fugue, a thousand are delighted by what are sometimes called the spirit-stirring strains of Rude Britannia. At an early date Macaulay gauged the popular taste. In 1830 he wrote to Macvey Napier complaining that some of the “most pointed and ornamented sentences” in an article had been omitted. “Probably,” he continues, “in estimating the real value of any tinsel which I may put upon my articles, you and I should not materially differ. But it is not by his own taste, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler is determined in his choice of bait.” It would be unfair to dwell on such a remark in a private letter, if it stood alone. But all his practice during thirty years was in unison with the principle here laid down. Eschewing high thought on the one hand, and deep feeling on the other, he marched down a middle road of resonant commonplace, quite certain that where

Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum,
And tootle-tee-tootle the fife,

the densest crowd, marching in time, will follow the music. Still it is the air rather than the instrument which makes some persons inclined to stop their ears. It is quite true that the measures of Macaulay’s prose “are emphatically the measures of spoken deliverance;” but the spoken deliverance is of the bar, the hustings, or the House of Commons. The want of benignity, the hard and scolding precision, with which he has been justly reproached, are
due rather to the matter and substance than to the form of his speech. His tone of sentiment is such as would lose nothing by being uttered in a loud voice at a public meeting, and he is indeed far from reaching the highest notes of solemn elevation and simple pathos with which such an audience inspires some orators. But neither in public nor in private had Macaulay any gift for expressing either tender or lofty emotion. His letters are singularly wanting in effusion and expansiveness, even when addressed to friends and relatives for whom we know he had warm affection! But his love took the form of solid matter-of-fact kindness, not of a sympathy in delicate unison with another spirit with whom an interchange of sentiment is a need of existence. He seems to have been one of those thoroughly good-hearted good-natured persons who are wanting in tact, delicacy, and sensitiveness. A certain coarseness of fibre is unmistakable. Nothing else

He was benevolent, but unsympathetic; he cared not for the beauty of nature, he detested dogs, and, except a narrow group of relations and friends, he cared not for men. One of the least pleasant passages in his biography is a scene he had with an Italian custom-house officer, who asked to be allowed a seat in his carriage from Velletri to Mola; Macaulay refused. Of this there is nothing to be said; the man may easily have been an undesirable companion. But the comment on the incident is wanting in the right tone: "I gave him three crowns not to plague by searching my baggage. . . . He pocketed the three crowns, but looked very dark and sullen at my refusal to accept his company. Precious fellow! to think that a public functionary to whom a little silver is a bribe, is fit company for an English gentleman." Narrow and unintelligent. In mere knowledge, Macaulay could certainly have derived much more from the man than the latter from Macaulay. But he had little curiosity or interest in the minds of others. It will be remembered in what isolation he spent his time on the voyage to India. "Except at meals, I hardly exchanged a word with any human being." One cannot imagine Socrates or Johnson acting thus.
will account for the "mean and ignoble association" of ideas, which he often seems rather to seek than avoid. He prefers comparisons which, by their ungraduated, unsoftened abruptness, produce a shock on nerves less robust than his own. "The victuallers soon found out with whom they had to deal, and sent down to the fleet casks of meat which dogs would not touch, and barrels of beer which smelt worse than bilge water." Nothing is gained by such crudity of language; and truth is sacrificed, if that is a consideration. Dogs have no objection to tainted meat, and nothing can smell worse than bilge water. "For our part, if we are forced to make our choice between the first shoemaker and the author of the three books on Anger, we pronounce for the shoemaker;" and one may add, you are certain to gain the gallery's applause by so doing. "To the seared consciences of Shaftesbury and Buckingham the death of an innocent man gave no more uneasiness than the death of a partridge." "A husband would be justly derided who should bear from a wife of exalted rank and spotless virtue, half the insolence which the King of England bore from concubines who, while they owed everything to his bounty, caressed his courtiers almost before his face." Sentences like these, in which the needless emphasis of the words shows up the more plainly the deficient dignity and weight of thought, are of frequent occurrence, and deprive Macaulay's prose of the high quality of distinction. His comparison of Montesquieu with the learned pig and musical infant is in the same style. But perhaps the most striking instance of his tendency to a low-pitched strain of allusion is to be found in his journal, on the occasion of his visit to Dumbarton Castle in the last year of his life: "I remember my first visit to Dumbarton,
and the old minister who insisted on our eating a bit of cake with him, and said a grace over it which might have been prologue to a dinner at the Fishmongers’ Company or the Grocers’ Company.” The notion that the size and sumptuousness of a feast are to determine the length and fervour of the thanksgiving, is one which one hardly expects to find outside of the Common Council, if even it is to be met with there. Macaulay’s utter inability to comprehend piety of mind, is one of the most singular traits in his character, considering his antecedents.

Macaulay’s style, apart from its content, presents one or two interesting problems which one would like to solve. An able critic has noticed the singular fact, that though he seems to take pains to be pleonastic and redundant, he is nevertheless invariably lively. His variations of one tune do not weary, as one might expect. In the same way, the oratorical swing and rapidity which he undoubtedly possesses do not appear easy to reconcile with his short sentences and the mechanically regular stroke of his periods. His paragraphs are often built up by a succession of tiers, one over the other; they do not seem to grow from a central root of thought or sentiment. Sentences not exceeding a line in average length, reduced to their lowest terms of subject, predicate, and copula, are held together only by the art of the typographer. “The people of Gloucester rose, and delivered Lovelace from confinement. An irregular army soon gathered around him. Some of his horsemen had only halters for bridles. Many of his infantry had only clubs for weapons.” The monotony of rhythm is sometimes reinforced by the monotony of phrase, sentence after sentence beginning

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6 Hours in a Library, by L. Stephen, 3rd series.
with the same words; as, for instance, this conclusion of the Essay on Lord Holland.

The time is coming when, perhaps, a few old men, the last survivors of our generation, will in vain seek, amidst new streets, and squares, and railway stations, for the sight of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties—of painters and poets—of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen. They will then remember, with strange tenderness, many objects once familiar to them—the avenue and the terrace, the busts and the paintings; the carving, the grotesque gilding, and the enigmatic mottoes. With peculiar fondness they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and wit could devise to embellish a drawing-room. They will recollect, not unmoved, those shelves loaded with the varied learning of many lands and many ages; those portraits in which were preserved the features of the best and wisest Englishmen of two generations. They will recollect how many men who have guided the politics of Europe—who have moved great assemblies by reason and eloquence—who have put life into bronze and canvas, or who have left to posterity things so written as it shall not willingly let them die—were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society of the most splendid of capitals. They will remember the singular character which belonged to that circle in which every talent and accomplishment, every art and science, had its place. They will remember how the last debate was discussed in one corner, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Reynolds’s Baretta; while Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation; while Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxemburg, or his rides with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz. They will remember, above all, the grace—and the kindness, far more admirable than grace—with which the princely hospitality of that ancient mansion was dispensed. They will remember the venerable
and benignant countenance and the cordial voice of him who bade them welcome. They will remember that temper which years of pain, of sickness, of lameness, of confinement, seemed only to make sweeter and sweeter; and that frank politeness, which at once relieved all the embarrassment of the youngest and most timid writer or artist who found himself for the first time among ambassadors and earls. They will remember that constant flow of conversation, so natural, so animated, so various, so rich with observation and anecdote; that wit which never gave a wound; that exquisite mimicry which ennobléd, instead of degrading, that goodness of heart which appeared in every look and accent, and gave additional value to every talent and acquirement. They will remember, too, that he whose name they hold in reverence was not less distinguished by the inflexible uprightness of his political conduct than by his loving disposition and winning manners. They will remember that in the last lines which he traced he expressed his joy that he had done nothing unworthy of the friend of Fox and Grey; and they will have reason to feel similar joy, if, in looking back on many troubled years, they cannot accuse themselves of having done anything unworthy of men who were distinguished by the friendship of Lord Holland.

If the light of nature and an ordinary ear were not sufficient to warn a writer against such repetition, Macaulay, who had read his Aristotle and Quintilian, might have been expected to know better. "The qualities and artifices of style which tell in declamation, for which they were intended, when divested of this aid do not fulfil their proper function; as, for instance, asyndeta and the reiteration of the same word; and though the orators employ them in their debates, as adapted to delivery, in the written style they appear silly, and are justly reprobated." Indeed, Macaulay never quite overcame a

7 Cope's Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric, p. 326.
tendency to abuse this common and useful rhetorical figure in an order of composition for which it is unfit. It is to be found in the first page of his History, and is so common in his Essays, that their style is very often identical with that of his speeches.

The art by which Macaulay has caused these various blemishes not only to be condoned, but to be entirely unpereceived by the majority of readers, is derived from the imaginative power and splendour of his larger tableaux. The sentences may be aggregates of atoms, but the whole is confluent, and marked by masterly unity. Style may be considered from more than one aspect. We may consider it from the point of view of the grammarian or professor of rhetoric, with reference mainly to the choice of words, the propriety of phrase, the rhythm of sentence. Or we may consider it from the higher standpoint—the general effect and impressiveness of the whole composition; the pervading power, lucidity, and coherence, which make a book attractive to read and easy to master. In the former class of qualities Macaulay leaves much to be desired. In the latter he has not many superiors. Artless, and almost clumsy as he is in building a sentence, into which he is without the skill to weave, as some moderns do, those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixthls diminished sigh on sigh,—in building a chapter, an article, or a book he has a grand and easy power which ought "to bring the sweat into the brow" of some who hold him cheap. His short sentences, when looked at by themselves so isolated and thin, are the lines of a fine engraving all converging to produce one well-considered artistic effect—an effect in which neither deep thought nor high feeling has a share, but still one so brilliant and striking that the criticism which overlooks it may justly be accused of blindness.
CHAPTER III.

THE ESSAYS.

We sometimes hear Macaulay's Essays preferred to his History, not only as more popular, but as showing more genius and power. Although this opinion could hardly be held by any serious critic, it contains enough truth to make its existence intelligible. The Essays have qualities of variety, freedom, and, above all, brevity, which the History is necessarily without, but which are very taking qualities with the readers whom Macaulay chiefly addresses. A long-sustained work devoted to the history of one country in one period, however lively it may be made, demands a heavier tax on the attention than many are able to pay. The large and ever-growing class who read not for knowledge but for amusement, as an innocent mode of killing time, soon become weary of one subject carried on through several volumes. Their weak mental appetite needs stimulating by a frequent change of diet. Length is the one thing they fear and most dislike. To take up the same work day after day oppresses them with the sense of a task, and they promptly conceive an ill-will to the author for not keeping pace with their changes of mood. Even the highest works of poetical genius—the Faery Queen and Paradise Lost—are said to be comparatively neglected, simply on
account of their volume, which alarms the indolence of readers. And it may be well doubted whether even Shakespeare does not owe a great deal of his popularity with the reading public to the fact that plays are necessarily short, and can be read through in a short time.

To readers of this temper—and they probably are a vast majority—essays offer the very thing they are in search of. No strain on the attention, frequent change of subject, a happy medium between undue length and undue brevity, are qualities exactly suited to their taste. This alone might well be the sole or chief reason why Macaulay's Essays should be by some preferred to his History. But this is probably not the only reason. The Essays have some merits which the History lacks. They were all written in the vigour of life, before his mind was saddened, if not enfeebled, by serious ill-health. They were short enough to be struck off at a heat, and many we know were written with extreme rapidity. They consequently have the attractive quality of exuberant vigour, high spirits, and conscious strength which delights in exercise and rapid motion for their own sake. A sense of weariness in the writer, however much it may be concealed by art, is almost sure to be felt by the reader sympathetically. Of this drawback few authors ever knew less than Macaulay up to the time of his illness. His prompt and full command of his faculties made, as he said, composition nothing but a pleasure to him. No man ever worshipped a more bountiful muse. He had no labour pains, no dark wrestlings with thoughts which he could not throw, conquered and subdued, with vigorous strength down on paper. His Essays therefore, in many ways much less finished and careful, have often more verve than the History. Like the first flight of the
falcon, they show a store of unsubdued energy, which, so far from fearing fatigue, rather seeks it, and does not readily find it.

The originality of form and treatment which Macaulay gave to the historical essay has not perhaps received due recognition. Without having invented it, he so greatly expanded and improved it that he deserves nearly as much credit as if he had. He did for the historical essay what Haydn did for the sonata, and Watt for the steam engine: he found it rudimentary and unimportant, and left it complete and a thing of power. Before his time, there was the ponderous history—generally in quarto—and there was the antiquarian dissertation. There was also the historical review, containing alternate pages of extract and comment—generally rather dull and gritty. But the historical essay as he conceived it, and with the prompt inspiration of a real discoverer immediately put into practical shape, was as good as unknown before him. To take a bright period or personage of history, to frame it in a firm outline, to conceive it at once in article-size, and then to fill in this limited canvas with sparkling anecdote, telling bits of colour, and facts all fused together by a real genius for narrative, was the sort of genre-painting which Macaulay applied to history. We have only to turn to the back numbers of the Edinburgh Review to perceive how his articles gleam in those old pages of "grey paper and blunt type." And to this day his Essays remain the best of their class, not only in England but in Europe. Slight, or even trivial, in the field of historical erudition and critical inquiry, they are masterpieces if regarded in the light of great popular cartoons on subjects taken from modern history. They are painted indeed with such freedom, vividness, and
power, that they may be said to enjoy a sort of tacit monopoly of the periods and characters to which they refer, in the estimation of the general public. How many persons, outside the class of professed students, know much of Lord Chatham, Lord Clive, Warren Hastings, Walpole, Pulteney, Carteret, and many more, beyond what they learn from the pages of Macaulay? His friend Lord Stanhope is a much more safe, steady, and trustworthy guide through the eighteenth century. But for one reader who will sit down to the accurate, conscientious, ill-written History of England by Lord Stanhope, a hundred will read, and read again, the brilliant Essays. Any portion of English history which Macaulay has travelled over—the remark applies much less to his treatment of foreign subjects—is found to be moulded into a form which the average Englishman at once enjoys and understands. He did, it has been truly said, in a small way, and in solid prose, the same thing for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Shakespeare did in a poetical way for the fifteenth century. The first Duke of Marlborough had the candour to acknowledge that all he knew of the history of England he derived from Shakespeare’s historical plays. We may surmise, that many who would not readily confess it are equally indebted to Macaulay. He succeeded in achieving the object which he always professed to aim at—making history attractive and interesting—to a degree never attained before. This is either a merit or a fault, according to the point of view from which we regard it; but from every point of view it was no common feat.

It will be convenient to classify the Essays in the following groups, with the object of giving as much unity as possible to a subject necessarily wanting it:
(1.) English history.
(2.) Foreign history.
(3.) Controversial.
(4.) Critical and miscellaneous.

(1.) English History Group.—If the articles composing this group are arranged with reference to the chronology of the periods they treat of, they form a fairly complete survey of English history from the time of Elizabeth to the later years of the reign of George III. This was the portion of our history to which Macaulay had devoted most time and attention. The period previous to the Reformation he had studied with much less care. His acquaintance with the Middle Age generally, may without injustice be pronounced slight; and though well informed as to the history of the Continent, his knowledge of it, as we shall have occasion to see, was not so accurate or deep. But his knowledge of English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was minute, extensive, and profound. These twelve essays may be regarded as preliminary studies, by which he preluded and prepared himself for his great work. Nothing can be more obvious than that the historical student was guided in his choice of this field by the sympathies and opinions of the active politician. He was a Whig, with ardent and disinterested conviction, when to be a Whig was to be a friend of liberty and progress in the most rational and practical form. During the long predominance of Tory rule and sentiment, the heroic age of England had been defaced, and perverted into a hideous and malignant caricature. A vigorous vindication of English liberty in the past, allied itself naturally, in the pages of the Edinburgh

Review, with the active polemics there carried on in favour of the same liberty in the present. It was not as an antiquarian that Macaulay insisted upon a new hearing of the great cause in which Charles I., Strafford, and Laud appeared on the one side, against Hampden, Pym, and Cromwell on the other; but as the active member of Parliament, who supported the first Reform Bill with five powerful speeches in one year. He attacked Toryism indirectly, by writing on the great Liberal leaders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the Reformers attacked Catholicism by writing on the primitive discipline and doctrine of the Early Church. When writing of the Long Parliament or the Revolution, an implied reference is always visible to the Whigs and Tories of his own day. Sometimes the reference to contemporary politics is open and direct, as when, in the midst of his discussion of the conduct of the Parliamentary leaders headed by Hampden, he makes a sudden and telling allusion to the contemporary condition of Spain under Ferdinand VII. (Memorials of Hampden). The party character of Macaulay's Essays on English History is neither to be denied nor deplored. That he rendered a great political service to the cause of Liberalism cannot be doubted, and every deduction that may be made from the merit of the historian must be set down to the account of the publicist. Scientific history was never his object, but the propagation of sound constitutional doctrine was very much so. It has been said with truth, that in all he ever wrote, a defence open or implied of Whig principles may be perceived. That this connexion of his work with the ephemeral politics of the day will injure its permanent value is very obvious; but not perhaps to the extent that is sometimes supposed.
It is one of the affectations of the hour to use the term Whig as a convenient vehicle of polite vituperation. A man now who can with any accuracy be called a genuine old Whig, is by some persons considered to be beyond the pale of toleration. No further anathema is needed; the deadliest slur has been cast on his intellect and character in one word. A hatred of pure reason, and a comfortable middle-class creed on social matters, are the two most offensive characteristics generally ascribed to the Whig. They would be offensive enough, if Whiggism was, or pretended to be, a philosophical theory of politics. But in Macaulay's day, Whiggism was not a philosophy, but a scheme of practical expediency—a working policy which had a chance of being realized. What after all is the essence of Whiggism as distinct from its accidents? Is it not this—illogical but practical compromise, between two extremes which are logical but not at all practical? It is no isolated phenomenon confined to certain periods of English history, but one of the most general to be found, not only in politics but in religion, and even philosophy. Wherever men are engaged in steering between the opposite shoals of extreme parties with a view to practical results, there Whiggism exists in reality if not in name. Bossuet was a Whig in the Catholic Church, and Pascal was a Whig in the Gallican Church. Reid, Brown, and Coleridge, even Kant, were Whigs in philosophy. Whiggism is always the scorn of thoroughgoing men and rigorous logicians; is ever stigmatized as a bending of the knee to Baal. But thoroughgoing men, actuated by thoroughgoing logic, do not often, or for long, remain directors of public affairs. No man was ever less of a philosopher, or more of a politician, than Macaulay. He had an eye to business, not to abstract truth. The present age, which
sees only the writer, and has nearly forgotten the politician, is easily tempted to judge him by a standard to which he did not and could not conform. His own serene unconsciousness of his want of speculative power is at once amusing and irritating. But the point to be remembered is, that when we have written Whig after his name, and declared they are convertible terms, all is not said and done, and that for purposes of criticism, the process is too simple and summary to be of much value. We have to consider the object at which he aimed, not to complain of his failure to hit a mark which he never thought of. A man engaged in paving the best via mediu that he can find between ultra opinions on opposite sides, is always exposed to taunt. Macaulay was reviled by Chartists and Churchmen, and he himself disliked high Tories and philosophical Radicals in equal measure. When the object is to gain votes for practical measures, the beauties of pure reason are apt to be overlooked. The great maxim of prudence on these occasions, is "not to go too far" in any direction. Logic and consistency are readily sacrificed for the sake of union in action. Closet philosophers naturally resent this as very mean and commonplace. But that is because they are closet philosophers.

The party bias of the Essays, it is said, deprives them of all value as history. And this is partly true. But let us be just even to party historians. When it is claimed that the historian must above all things be impartial, what is meant by the word? Is it demanded that the writer on a past age is to take no side—to have no preference, either for persons whom he considers virtuous or for principles which he considers just; and, again, is he to have no reprobation for the
contraries to these, which he considers unjust and per-
nicious? If this is meant by impartiality, the answer is 
that on these lines history cannot be, and never has been, 
written. Such is the solidarity of human nature, that it 
refuses to regard the just and the unjust with equal 
favour in the past any more than in the present. Of 
course the question is always reserved as to which party 
in the suit these epithets respectively apply. Erroneous 
judgments have been passed in the court of history, as 
they are passed in courts of law. But that is no argu-
ment for maintaining that both sides are entitled to 
the same favour and good will. Both sides are entitled 
to justice, and justice may require the utmost severity 
of condemnation of one of the parties. No judge at the 
end of a criminal trial was ever able to conceal the side 
to which he inclined in his summing up. His business 
is not to abstain from having an opinion, which a man of 
intelligence could hardly do, but to point to the decisive 
evidence on either side, and holding up the scales, 
to let the lighter kick the beam in the eyes of all 
men. If this is partiality, it is such as no honest man 
would like to be without. So the historian; his duty is 
to be impartial in weighing evidence; but that being done, 
to declare with unmistakable clearness which side has 
been found wanting. As he is human, he is exposed to 
error, but for that there is no remedy. Miscarriages of 
justice must and will occur. They must be redressed 
when discovered. And fortunately errors of this kind 
are of less grave practical consequence in the courts of 
history than in the courts of law. Yet we submit to the 
latter, being unable to help ourselves. It is vain to hope 
that this subjective bias can ever be removed from the 
mind of a human judge. And it is not desirable to
remove it. What is worthy of blame is the suppression or garbling of evidence—not holding really true scales. The notion that such bias is necessarily connected with the party-spirit of modern times, and shown only in reference to modern periods of history, is quite without foundation. The history of Greece and Rome is subject to it as much as the history of Modern Europe. Mitford was biased in favour of the oligarchies of Greece. Grote was equally biased in favour of the democracies. So far each was within his right. But if it appears that either was unfair in collecting and sifting evidence, and showed anxiety to win a verdict by his misrepresentation of it, then he is to be condemned as an unjust judge—or rather, he is an advocate, who has usurped a judge's functions and merits degradation. Mitford has been deposed, and justly so, in the opinion of competent men. Grote on the whole has been maintained by the same opinion.

Further, if we grant that historians are exposed to peculiar temptations to slide from the position of judge to that of advocate—if they are honest advocates, maintaining the cause they believe to be just, by honourable means, they need not fear much censure from equitable men. The final judge, after all, is public opinion—not of a day, or a year, or even of a century, but of ages. Perhaps it can never be absolutely obtained. But in the meanwhile nothing is more serviceable to the cause of truth than that every important party to an historical suit should be represented by the ablest advocate that can be found, so long as he is honest—that is, not only refrains from telling lies, but from suppressing truth. Every open-minded inquirer must be glad to hear all that can be said in favour of a given side; nay, to hear most of all what
can be said in favour of the side to which he himself does not belong. It is vastly more comforting to hear Dr. Lingard condemn James II. of injustice, infatuation, arbitrary and impotent policy, than to hear the most eloquent indictments of the same monarch from those who hold Whig opinions. When Hume condemns Charles I. for the arrest of the five members, we feel quite sure that on that point at least nothing can be said, or such an able, not to say unscrupulous, advocate, would not have omitted it. In time the heats of party zeal are gradually cooled; questions of disputed fact are reduced to narrow issues. The motives and characters of the most prominent actors are at last weighed by impartial men, who have no interest stronger in the matter than the discovery of truth. Then we have reached the critical stage of history.

Macaulay was far from having reached this higher stage. But as a writer of party history he stands high. If his mind was uncritical, his temper was generally fair. No one would expect the party against whom he appeared—the sympathizers with high prerogative, as against the sympathizers with liberty,—to admit this. But his Whig version of our history has been on the whole accepted by a wide public, with whom political partisanship is not a strong passion. His frank avowal of his sympathies can be a defect only in the eyes of the unintelligent, or the bigoted who will brook no contradiction. His bias is open and above-board; he lays his proofs before you, which you may accept or refuse; but in a candid way—very different from the sly, subtle disingenuousness of Hume. At the same time it must be admitted that the common fate of controversialists is already beginning to overtake Macaulay. His point of
view is already somewhat out of date. We are always repelled, or disdainfully amused, by the heats of a remote controversy which does not touch our passions or interests. It seems absurd to be so angry with people who lived so long ago, and who clearly never did us any harm. The *suave mari magno* feeling is a little ungenerous, but very natural and common. A critic complains that Macaulay "mauls poor James II." as he did the Tories of 1832. It no doubt requires an historical imagination of some liveliness to make us perceive that pity is wasted on a sovereign whose wickedness was only defeated by his folly. We are in no danger of being tried and brow-beaten by Jeffreys or hanged by Colonel Kirke. Such are the gratitude and the "little short memories" of mankind. Nevertheless it is a true instinct which warns us against transferring the passions of the present to the remote past. The passions should be quiet, only the critical reason should be active, surveying the concluded story with calm width, and telling us what it all amounted to.

It will not be expected that all Macaulay's Essays should be passed in review in a short work of this kind. We can only find space for a few words on the most memorable, omitting the less famous as we pass over the relatively unimportant pictures in a gallery.

The Essays, as might well be supposed, are unequal in merit. One of the weakest is that which appears first on the list given a few pages back, *Burleigh and his Times*. It is at once thin and trenchant, and would be wholly undeserving of notice did it not contain a faulty historical view, which Macaulay never laid aside to the end of his life. The error consists in fastening the odium of persecution and intolerance as a peculiar reproach on the government of Burleigh and Elizabeth. "What can be said in
defence of a ruler who is at once indifferent and intolerance?” he asks. If the Queen had only had the virtue and enlightenment of More and L’Hospital, the whole of our history for the last two hundred and fifty years would have worn another colour. “She had the happiest opportunity ever vouchsafed to any sovereign of establishing perfect freedom of conscience throughout her dominions, without danger to her Government, without scandal to any large party among her subjects.” Any addition to the enlightenment and patience of the capricious vixen who then ruled England would no doubt have been a great boon to her subjects and ministers, but it is supposing extraordinary efficacy even in the virtue of Queen Elizabeth to imagine that it could have influenced our history for two hundred and fifty years after her death. But Macaulay must have known that uniformity in religion was considered in the sixteenth century an indispensable condition of stable civil government, and that by all parties and sects. “Persecution for religious heterodoxy in all its degrees was in the sixteenth century the principle, as well as the practice, of every church. It was held inconsistent with the sovereignty of the magistrate to permit any religion but his own; inconsistent with his duty to suffer any but the true.” ² Bacon said: “It is certain that heresies and schisms are of all others the greatest scandals, yea, more than corruption of manners.”³ It is against all equity to blame one or two individuals for a universal error. Yet Macaulay constantly dwells on the persecutions of Elizabeth’s reign as if they were marked by peculiar shortsightedness and malignity. He does it in the essay on Hallam, and in the first chapter of the

³ Essay iii.
History, though in less peremptory language. There can be no doubt that he knew the facts perfectly well. But, as often happened with him, knowledge did not mount up into luminous general views. Persecution had long been proved to be bad; Elizabeth persecuted; therefore she was to be blamed. The temper of the whole age is not taken into the account.

The article on Hallam's *Constitutional History* is one of the best. It is one of the most strenuous argumentative pieces Macaulay ever wrote. Fiercely polemical in its assault on the Tory version of English history, it may be regarded as a compendium of Whig principles *in usum populi*. Indeed its opinions are somewhat more than Whig. It belongs to that small group of articles which were written before the author was plunged in the daily strife of politics and ceaseless round of business, (the others are those on *Milton, Machiavelli,* and *History,* and they show, I venture to think, a speculative reach and openness of mind which were never recovered in the active life of subsequent years. The vindication of the character of Cromwell is as spirited as it is just, and really gives the outline which Carlyle filled in many years after.

The article on the *Memorials of Hampden* is graceful and touching. The tone of pious reverence for the great Puritan champion makes it one of his most harmonious pieces. The essay on *Milton* is only remarkable for showing the early maturity of his powers, but on that ground it is very remarkable. With the article on *Sir William Temple* we enter upon a new stage of Macaulay's development as a writer and an artist. The articles he wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* after his return from India in 1838, are markedly superior to those he wrote before leaving England. The tone is much quieter, yet the
vivacity is not diminished; the composition is more careful, sustained, and even. The *Sir William Temple* was the first of the post-Indian articles, and it is one of the best he ever wrote. If one wanted to give an intelligent foreign critic a good specimen of Macaulay—a specimen in which most of his merits and fewest of his faults are collected in a small compass—one could hardly do better than give him the article on *Sir William Temple*. The extraordinary variety of the piece, the fine colouring and judicious shading, the vivid interest, the weighty topics discussed gravely, the lighter accessories thrown in gracefully over and around the main theme, like arabesque work on a Moorish mosque, or flights of octaves and arpeggios in a sonata of Mozart, justly entitle it to a high place, not only in Macaulay’s writings, but in the literature of the age. Strange to say, it does not appear to have been a favourite with the public, if we may infer as much from the fact that it has not been printed separately; yet no article deserves it better. It is a masterpiece of its kind. The article on *Mackintosh* calls for no remark. That on *Walpole* is interesting chiefly for the amusing animosity which Macaulay nourished towards him. It was most unjust. He had far too low an opinion of Walpole’s intellect, which was in many ways more penetrating and thoughtful than his own. Walpole did not call Montesquieu a Parisian coxcomb, but the very moment the *Esprit des Lois* appeared, pronounced it the best book that ever was written. Walpole’s generous sentiments on the slave-trade, half a century in advance of public opinion on the subject, should have been appreciated by a son of Zachary Macaulay. The two articles on the first William Pitt, written at ten years’ interval, show the
difference between Macaulay's earlier and later manner very clearly. The first is full of dash, vigour, and interest, but in a somewhat boisterous tone of high spirits, which at times runs dangerously near to bad taste. As for instance:

"In this perplexity Newcastle sent for Pitt, hugged him, patted him, smirked at him, wept over him, and lisped out the highest compliments and the most splendid promises. The king, who had hitherto been as sulky as possible, would be civil to him at the levée,” &c., &c. Nothing of this kind will be found in the second article (the last Macaulay ever wrote for the Edinburgh Review), but, on the contrary, great dignity and gravity which recall the best pages of the History. He was, indeed, writing the History at this moment, and he was enjoying a literary leisure such as he had never enjoyed before. He also was losing the strongly marked characteristics of a party man, and gravitating to that central and neutral position which he occupied with regard to politics in his later years. The fact is worth alluding to, as there seems still to survive a notion that Macaulay from first to last remained a narrow and bitter Whig. Those who hold this view may consider the following passage:

The Whig, who during three Parliaments had never given one vote against the Court, and who was ready to sell his soul for the Comptroller's staff or for the Great Wardrobe, still professed to draw his political doctrines from Locke and Milton, still worshipped the memory of Pyn and Hampden, and would still, on the 30th of January, take his glass to the man in the mask and then to the man who would do it without a mask. The Tory, on the other hand, while he reviled the mild and temperate Walpole as a deadly enemy of liberty, could see nothing to reprobate in the iron tyranny of Strafford and Laud. But whatever judgment the Whig or the
Tory of that age might pronounce on transactions long past, there can be no doubt that, as respected practical questions then pending, the Tory was a reformer—and indeed an intemperate and indiscreet reformer—while the Whig was a conservative, even to bigotry. . . . Thus the successors of the old Cavaliers had turned demagogues; the successors of the old Roundheads had turned courtiers. Yet it was long before their mutual animosity began to abate; for it is the nature of parties to retain their original enmities far more firmly than their original principles. During many years a generation of Whigs whom Sydney would have spurned as slaves, continued to wage deadly war with a generation of Tories whom Jeffreys would have hanged for republicans.

The Pitts, both father and son, seem to have had an unusual attraction for Macaulay, and he wrote of them with more sympathy and insight than of any other statesman except King William III. His biography of the younger Pitt is perhaps the most perfect thing that he has left. It is not an historical essay, but a genuine "Life," and it is impossible to overpraise either the plan or the execution. Nearly all the early faults of his rhetorical manner have disappeared; there is no eloquence, no declamation, but a lofty moral impressiveness which is very touching and noble. It was written when he saw his own death to be near, and although he had none of Johnson's "horror of the last," there is a depth and solemnity of tone in this "Life" to which he never attained before. Pitt's own stately and majestic character would seem to have chastened and elevated his style, which recalls the masculine dignity, gravity, and calm peculiarity to the higher strains of Roman eloquence. The little work deserves printing by itself on "papier de Chine," in Elzevir type, by Lemerre, Quantin, or the Librairie des Bibliophiles.
Very different are the two famous Indian articles on Clive and Warren Hastings. In these we find no Attic severity of diction, but all the pomp and splendour of Asiatic eloquence. It is not unsuitable to the occasion; a somewhat gorgeous magnificence is not out of place in the East. There is no need to dwell on pieces so universally and justly popular. They belong, it need not be said to his second and better manner; the rhetoric though proud and high-stepping enough, is visibly under restraint and amenable to the curb. There was a particular reason why Macaulay was so successful in the articles on the two Pitts and the two Indian Pro-consuls. They were men whose character he could thoroughly understand and largely admire. Taken all round, his insight into men's bosoms was not deep, and was decidedly limited. Complex and involved characters, in which the good and evil were interwoven in odd and original ways, in which vulgar and obvious faults or vices concealed deeper and rarer qualities underneath, were beyond his ken. In men like Rousseau, Byron, Boswell, even Walpole, he saw little more than all the world could see—those patent breaches of conventional decorum and morality


4 It is vexatious to be forced to add, that the historical fidelity of the fine Essay on Warren Hastings, is in many places open to more than suspicion. A son of the Chief Justice of Bengal has shown (Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey, Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1840) that Macaulay has been guilty at least of very reckless statements. He was not, one likes to think, intentionally and wittingly unfair; but he was liable to become inebriated with his own rhetoric till he lost the power of weighing evidence. The old superstitious belief in Macaulay’s accuracy is a creed of the past: but one cannot help regretting that he never saw the propriety or even the necessity of either answering or admitting the grave reflections on his truthfulness made in Mr. Barwell Impey’s book.
which the most innocent young person could join him in condemning. But the great civic and military qualities—resolute courage, promptitude, self-command and firmness of purpose—he could thoroughly understand and warmly admire. His style is always animated by a warmer glow and a deeper note when he celebrates high deeds of valour or fortitude either in the council or the field. There was an heroic fibre in him, which the peaceful times in which he lived, and the peaceful occupations in which he passed his days, never adequately revealed.

*Foreign History Group.*—Of these five articles there is only one over which we can linger. The *Machiavelli* is ingenious and wide; but its main thesis—that the Italians had a monopoly of perfidy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is untenable and almost absurd. The *Mirabeau* is sprightly, but it contains some very commonplace errors—for instance, that the death of the Duke of Burgundy was a serious loss to good government in France. As to the *Frederic*, it might pass muster before Carlyle wrote on the subject: it has little interest now. The article on Barère is a most savage philippic against one of the most odious characters in history. Whether he deserved so sumptuous an execution may be doubted. Alone remains the famous article on the *History of the Popes*, which not only bespeaks attention by reason of its subject and the point of view from which that subject is regarded, but because it is apparently considered by some persons as valuable and important in itself. It is very far indeed from being either. If the articles on Temple and Pitt show Macaulay’s good side, this article on the Popes shows his less favourable side in an equal degree. It was not a subject which he was well qualified to treat, even if

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Machiavelli, Mirabeau, Von Banke, Frederic, Barère.
he had done his best and given himself fair play. Circum-
stances and his own temperament combined, prevented
him from doing either one or the other.

The real subject of the article, though nominally Ranke’s
book, is to ask the question, Why did Protestantism cease
to spread after the end of the sixteenth century? and why
did the Church of Rome recover so much of the ground
that she had lost in the early years of the Reformation? The
inquiry was an interesting one, and worthy of a careful
answer. But the answer could only be found or given by
a student who could investigate with freedom, and who was
in a position to speak his mind. To write with one eye on
the paper and with the other on the susceptibilities of the
religious world, was not a method that could lead to results
of any value. And Macaulay comes to no result. He does
not even reach a conclusion. The question with which
he starts, and which is repeated again with great solemnity
at the end of the article, is not answered, nor is an answer
even attempted. He displays in his most elaborate manner
how strange and surprising it is that the Roman Church
should survive the many attacks made upon her; how
singular it is that when Papists now forsake their religion,
they become infidels and not Protestants; and when they
forsake their infidelity, instead of stopping half way in
some Protestant faith, they go back to Romanism. At
the time of the Reformation, he says, this was not the case.
“Whole nations then renounced Popery, without ceasing
to believe in a first cause, in a future life, or the Divine
Mission of Jesus.” This he considers a “most remarkable
fact,” and worthy of “serious consideration.” But he does
not give a hint of an explanation of the fact—unless the
singular preface to the historical portion of the article may
be so considered.
The purpose of this Introduction is to discuss whether the growth of knowledge and science has any influence in the way of promoting the rationality of men’s religious opinions; and Macaulay decides that it has not. Science may increase to any amount, but that will never have the least effect on either natural or revealed religion.

A Christian of the fifth century with a Bible, was neither better nor worse situated than a Christian of the nineteenth century with a Bible—candour and natural acuteness being of course supposed equal. It matters not at all that the compass, printing, gunpowder, steam, gas, vaccination, and a thousand other discoveries and inventions, which were unknown in the fifth century, are familiar to the nineteenth. None of these discoveries and inventions have the smallest bearing on the question whether man is justified by faith alone, or whether the invocation of saints is an orthodox practice. It seems to us, therefore, that we have no security for the future against the prevalence of any theological error that has prevailed in time past among Christian men.

He goes on to say, that when he reflects that a man of such wisdom and virtue as Sir Thomas More believed in Transubstantiation, he is unable to see why that doctrine should not be believed by able and honest men till the end of time. No progress of science can make that doctrine more absurd than it is already, or than it ever has been. “The absurdity of the literal interpretation was as great and as obvious in the sixteenth century as it is now.” In fact, the human mind is given up to caprice on these matters, and obeys no ascertainable law. “No learning, no sagacity, affords a security against the greatest errors on subjects relating to the invisible world.” Whether a man believes in sense or nonsense with regard to religion is merely a matter of accident. But if that is so, what is
there in the least surprising that the Church of Rome has survived so many attacks and perils? why is that fact "most remarkable" and "worthy of serious consideration"? It is expressly stated that reason has nothing to do with these matters. Any old heresy may come to life again at any moment. Any nonsense may be believed by men of learning and sagacity. Then why wonder that one particular form of nonsense is believed? It is a waste of time to marvel at the effects of acknowledged chance. If, indeed, the phenomena recur with considerable regularity and persistence, we may have good reason to suspect a law. In either case Macaulay's procedure was illegitimate. Roman Catholicism is capable of rational explanation, or it is not. If it is, let the inquiry into the moral, social, and intellectual causes of its origin be soberly conducted. If it is not capable of rational explanation, why pronounce its prevalence worthy of consideration and most remarkable?

But what can be said of the passage in which a Christian of the fifth century with a Bible is declared to be neither better nor worse situated than a Christian of the nineteenth century with a Bible? This is to assert that the lapse of time has no effect on the way in which men read, understand, and interpret ancient writings. With regard to any literature such a remark would be most erroneous; but with regard to the Scriptural literature—the Bible—it is erroneous to absurdity. If there is any one thing which varies from age to age more than another, it is the way in which men regard the writings of past generations, whether these be poetry, philosophy, history, or law. But the point of view from which religious writings are regarded is exposed to perturbations of exceptional violence. And yet Macaulay deliberately wrote that the
lapse of fourteen hundred years had, and could have, no
effect on the study of the Scriptures—that a Christian
reading the Bible amid the falling ruins of the
Roman Empire, was in the same position as a Christian
reading the Bible in prosperous England in the reign of
Queen Victoria. A more inept remark was hardly ever
made by a man of education. With regard to what
ancient writings did Macaulay find himself neither better
nor worse situated than a man of the fifth century? Did
he read Plato, as Plotinus or Proclus did? Did he read
Cicero as Macrobius did? or Virgil as Servius did? or
Homer as Eustathius did (a century or two makes no
difference)? Did he even read Pope as Johnson did,
or Congreve, or Cowley, or any writer that ever lived
in an age removed from his own? But the changes
of mental attitude with regard to secular writers are
trivial as compared to the changes which take place with
regard to religious writers. In a similar spirit, he says
that the absurdity of the literal interpretation was as great
and as obvious in the sixteenth century as it is now. This
is tantamount to saying that what appeared obviously
absurd to him was always obviously absurd to everybody.
That the human mind in the course of its development
has gone through great changes in its conceptions of the
universe—of man’s position in it—of the order of nature—
seems to have been a notion which he never even remotely
suspected. Did he think that the Pagan Mythology was
as obviously absurd in the time of Homer as it is now? Did
he find the Hindoo Mythology obviously absurd to
religious Brahmins? This is the writing of a man who
cannot by possibility conceive any point of view but his
own.

The remainder of the article is devoted to a description
of what he names the four risings of the human intellect against the Church of Rome. Macaulay painting a picture, and Macaulay discussing a religious or philosophical question, are two different persons. There is some very attractive and graceful scene-painting in this part of the article. The Albigensian Crusade is narrated with great spirit, brevity, and accuracy. What he calls the second rising up, in the fourteenth century, was not one at all. It was a quarrel between an ambitious king and an ambitious pope, in which the latter got the worst of it. His knowledge here is very thin: as when he says that "The secular authority, long unduly depressed, regained the ascendant with startling rapidity." What secular authority had been depressed? There had not been any secular authority in France from the fall of the Carling Empire till the gradual establishment of the Capetian Monarchy under Philip Augustus and his successors. Feudalism had reigned supreme for three hundred years; and feudalism in France was the negation of secular authority, because it was incompatible with any general government. But we cannot dwell on this point, any more than we can on his treatment of the Reformation, which is full of small slips; as, for instance, that "the spirit of Savonarola had nothing in common with the spirit of religious Protestantism." Luther, at any rate, did not hold that view, as he republished in 1523 Savonarola's Commentary on the Psalms. Again he says that Catholicism was associated in the public mind of Spain with liberty as well as victory and dominion. As regards victory and dominion the remark is true; but liberty! The reference is to the period of the Spanish conquest of Mexico by Cortez; that is so say, to the despotic reign of Charles V. We have only space to refer to the odd comparison, or rather contrast, which he draws between
the Church of England and the Church of Rome, the object of which is to show that the policy of the latter "is the very masterpiece of human wisdom," whereas the policy of the Church of England has been very much the reverse. It takes him three pages to develop his idea, but it all comes to this, that the Church of Rome knows how to utilize enthusiasm, and the Church of England does not. "Place Ignatius at Oxford: he is certain to become the head of a formidable secession. Place John Wesley at Rome: he is certain to be the first general of a new society devoted to the interests and honour of the Church." Now this sentence, and the whole argument of which it is a part, is very singular, as showing that Macaulay was often not fully master of the knowledge which we know that he possessed. When he paints a picture his hand never shakes; his imagination for that purpose holds all the facts he requires in vivid reality before him. But when he attempts to generalize, to co-ordinate facts in a general expression, he breaks down. As in the present instance; the whole history of the Reformation, both in England and on the Continent, was there to show him that the profound wisdom he ascribed to the Church of Rome existed only in his own fancy. Greater caution in handling Luther, greater prudence with regard to Henry VIII., might, it is well known, have prevented a schism. But the case of the Jansenists was enough to show him how hasty his view was, if he had given himself time to reflect. He was well acquainted with the facts. In this very article he refers to the destruction of Port Royal. But what were the Jansenists but the Wesleyans of the Church of Rome, with a singular closeness of analogy? He reproaches the English Church with the defection of Wesley, and no doubt a great deal may be said as regards the unwisdom
which allowed or caused it. But what was that compared to the treatment of the Jansenists by the Church of Rome? As a matter of fact, from the time of St. Cyran and Antony Arnauld to the time of Lamménais and Döllinger, the Church of Rome has never hesitated to take the shortest way with dissentients in her own communion, "to spue them out of her mouth," with every mark of detestation and abhorrence. On the other hand, of all long-suffering Churches, tolerant and docile of contradiction to the verge of feebleness, the Church of England is perhaps the most remarkable. And Macaulay knew this quite well.

Controversial Group. — Controversy is at once the most popular and the most ephemeral form of composition. Nothing seems more important at the moment: nothing less so when the moment has passed. Of all the endless controversies of which the world has ever been full, only the fewest survive in human memory; and they do so either because they have been real turning-points in the history of thought, or because something of permanent value outside the immediate subject of contention was struck out in the conflict. Pascal's Provincial Letters are the supreme example of a controversial piece on which time seems to have no effect. But Pascal had advantages such as no other controversialist has ever united. First of all, he did not kill his adversaries, generally the most fatal thing for his own permanent fame that a controversialist can do. The Jesuits still exist, and are still hated by many. Those who bear ill-will to the Society find in the Provincial Letters the most exquisite expression of their dislike. Secondly, Pascal was the first

* Mill, Saddler, Southey, Gladstone.
classic prose writer of his country. On a lower, but still a very high level, stands Bentley’s dissertation on Phalaris. Bentley did kill his adversary dead, but it was with missiles of pure gold, which the world carefully preserves. Macaulay, it need hardly be remarked, did nothing of this kind. He took his share with courage and ability in the battle for Liberal views forty and fifty years ago, and that is nearly all that can be said. He kept the position—he repelled the enemy; he did not advance and occupy new ground, and give a new aspect to the whole campaign. As he suppressed the articles on Mill, with a delicacy which did him honour, they need hardly be referred to. It has been well pointed out, that there is a contradiction between his principles and his conduct on this occasion. “He ought by all his intellectual sympathies to be a Utilitarian. Yet he abuses Utilitarianism with the utmost contempt, and has no alternative theory to suggest.” But coherence of thought, we have seen, was not his characteristic. The article on Southey is much more pleasant reading. If while admiring its vigour we miss a lightness of touch, we should remember that it was written two years before the passing of the Reform Bill, when the minds of men had become heated to a degree of fierceness, The admiration expressed for the industrial régime strikes a reader of the present day as oddly sentimental and impassioned. But the industrial régime was a very different thing in 1830 from what it is in 1882, and Macaulay was the last man to forecast the future evils of the manufacturing system. As usual, he shows his strength not in thinking, but in drawing. The following passage has always appeared to us as one of the best in his earlier and less chastened manner.

7 Hours in a Library. Third Series. By Leslie Stephen.
Part of this description might, perhaps, apply to a much greater man, Mr. Burke. But Mr. Burke assuredly possessed an understanding admirably fitted for the investigation of truth—an understanding stronger than that of any statesman, active or speculative, of the eighteenth century—stronger than every thing, except his own fierce and ungovernable sensibility. Hence he generally chose his side like a fanatic, and defended it like a philosopher. His conduct, in the most important events of his life—at the time of the impeachment of Hastings, for example, and at the time of the French Revolution—seems to have been prompted by those feelings and motives which Mr. Coleridge has so happily described:

Stormy pity, and cherish’d lure
Of pomp, and proud precipitance of soul."

Hindostan, with its vast cities, its gorgeous pagodas, its long-descended dynasties, its stately etiquette, excited in a mind so capacious, so imaginative, and so susceptible, the most intense interest. The peculiarities of the costume, of the manners, and of the laws, the very mystery which hung over the language and origin of the people, seized his imagination. To plead in Westminster Hall, in the name of the English people, at the bar of the English nobles, for great nations and kings separated from him by half the world, seemed to him the height of human glory. Again, it is not difficult to perceive that his hostility to the French Revolution principally arose from the vexation which he felt at having all his old political associations disturbed, at seeing the well-known boundary-marks of states obliterated, and the names and distinctions with which the history of Europe had been filled for ages, swept away. He felt like an antiquary whose shield had been secured, or a connoisseur who found his Titian retouched. But however he came by an opinion, he had no sooner got it than he did his best to make out a legitimate title to it. His reason, like a spirit in the service of an enchanter, though spell-bound, was still mighty. It did whatever work his passions and his imagina-
tion might impose. But it did that work, however arduous, with marvellous dexterity and vigour. His course was not determined by argument; but he could defend the wildest course by arguments more plausible than those by which common men support opinions which they have adopted, after the fullest deliberation. Reason has scarcely ever displayed, even in those well-constituted minds of which she occupies the throne, so much power and energy as in the lowest offices of that imperial servitude.

The article on Mr. Gladstone's book, *The State in its relations with the Church*, perhaps interests us more than it should, by reason of the courteous but severe handling given to "the young man of unblemished character and distinguished parliamentary talents—the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories," who have long since looked in another direction for hope and leadership. As regards Macaulay's main contention, that the spiritual and temporal powers should be kept apart as much as possible few now-a-days would dispute it. Mr. Stephen doubts whether we can draw the line between the spiritual and the secular." And in our age of mixed and motley creeds, representing every degree of belief and unbelief, the task may be arduous. The real difficulty is this, that the State always asserts implicitly a creed or doctrine, by its legislation, even when most careful to avoid doing so in an explicit manner. Not to be with a religious doctrine, is to be against it. Even to ignore its claims or existence, is *quoad hoc* to be hostile to them. When the State establishes civil marriage, it puts an affront on the sacrament of marriage; when it undertakes to teach the commoner elements of morality in its schools, but refuses to further the inculcation of the Christian

*Hours in a Library*. Third Series.
version of those elements, it is so far slighting Christianity. The result is ceaseless and illogical compromise, extending over the whole field of politics. And this condition of things can only be terminated either by the whole population becoming Christian, and identical in creed, or wholly agnostic. It by no means suited Macaulay's purpose to say this in the pages of the Edinburgh Review. Perhaps he did not see his way so far. His maxim was—"Remove always practical grievances. Do not give a thought to anomalies which are not grievances." Thus he was for maintaining the Episcopal Church in England, and the Presbyterian Church in Scotland; and for paying the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland. Against these practical make-shifts there is nothing to be said, if they produce peace. But in the domain of speculation they have no place. Mr. Gladstone's position—perhaps not very logically maintained—was, that the State was bound to be Christian, after the fashion of the Church of England. The counter position is, that the State is bound to be agnostic, after a fashion which nowhere completely exists. To say this in 1839, would have given rise to unbounded scandal. Macaulay was so hampered in his argument that he has been accused "of begging the question by evading the real difficulty." That may be true enough from one point of view; but he could hardly have been expected to write, in that day, very differently from what he did.

Critical Group.—When Macvey Napier requested Macaulay to write for him an article on Scott, he made answer:—"I assure you that I would willingly, and even eagerly, undertake the subject which you propose, if I

9 Dryden, B. Montgomery, Byron, Bunyan, Johnson, Bacon, Hunt, Addison.
thought that I should serve you by doing so. But depend
upon it you do not know what you are asking for. . . . . I
am not successful in analysing the works of genius. I
have written several things on historical, political, and moral
questions, of which, on the fullest re-consideration, I am
not ashamed, and by which I am willing to be estimated:
but I never have written a page of criticism on poetry or
the fine arts which I would not burn if I had the power.”
Nothing could be more frank, modest, and true. After
such a candid avowal, it would be ungracious to find fault
with pieces which their author wished to destroy. But it
is not clear that he meant to include in this condemnation
all the articles in this group: especially those on Johnson
and Bacon, might be supposed excepted, and to come
under the head of those “moral questions” in his treat-
ment of which he did not consider himself to have failed.
They are much more moral studies than literary criticisms.
Now we have had occasion to notice that Macaulay’s
insight into character, unless it was exceptionally free from
knots and straight in the grain, was fitful and uncertain.
Neither Johnson nor Bacon were men whom he could
have been expected to see through with a wide and tolerant
eye. With Johnson, Boswell is inseparably associated;
and Macaulay has spoken of him also with abundant
emphasis. To these three, therefore, our remarks will be
confined.

His paradox about Boswell is well known, and consists
in tracing the excellence of his book to the badness of the
author. Other men, we are told, have attained to literary
eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it
by reason of his weaknesses. “If he had not been a great
fool, he would not have been a great writer.” “He had
quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities,
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if he had been a man of sense and virtue would scarcely have sufficed to make him conspicuous. But as he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal.” Sense and virtue have in that case a great deal to answer for, in depriving the world of masterly biographies. How it happened that the best of books was written by the most arrant of fools, Macaulay neglects to explain. Blind chance, or a fortuitous concourse of atoms, have been supposed to offer a sufficient account of the origin of the world: and apparently something similar was imagined here. Critical helplessness could hardly go further. Still, although Macaulay habitually fails to analyze and exhibit the merits of literary work, he rarely overlooks them. Boswell, he says, had neither logic, eloquence, wit, learning, taste, nor so much of the reasoning faculty as to be capable even of sophistry. “He is always ranting, or twaddling.” What then, is there to praise in his book? The reports of Johnson’s conversations, and those of the Club, might be the supposed answer. But did Macaulay, so able an artist himself, think nothing of the great and rare art of mise en scène? Did he suppose that a shorthand writer’s report of those famous wit-combats would have done as well, or better? The fact is, that no dramatist or novelist of the whole century surpassed, or even equalled Boswell, in rounded, clear, and picturesque presentation—in real dramatic faculty. Macaulay’s attack on his moral character is even more offensive. He calls him an idolater and a slave; says he was like a creeper, which must cling to some stronger plant; and that it was only by accident that he did not fasten himself on Wilkes or Whitfield. Nothing could be more unjust, more unintelligent. Boswell’s attitude to Johnson, as was so well pointed out by Carlyle, in an
article which it is difficult not to regard in some respects as a covert answer to this of Macaulay's, was one of boundless reverence and love to a superior in intellect and moral worth. His feeling towards Paoli was of a similar kind. This fervent hero-worship Macaulay cannot in the least understand. In his view, it was mere base sycophancy and toad-eating. Boswell, he says, "was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled on." Well might Carlyle say that the last thing that Boswell would have done, if he had been a mere flunkey, would have been to act as he did. Johnson was never of much importance in the great world of fashion, into which he penetrated very nearly as little at the end as at the beginning of his career. Boswell could, as a Scotch Tory of good birth, and an eldest son, easily have found much more serviceable patrons to whom to pay his court than the ragged, ill-tempered old scholar, who gave him many more kicks than halfpence. Macaulay might have recollected that he himself once paid his court to an insolent aristocrat, Lady Holland, who ordered her guests about as if they were footmen; that though he certainly did not waste his time in running after obscure sages, he knew quite well how, by a judicious mixture of independence and usefulness, to attract the notice of a powerful Minister. Boswell's faults and vices are obvious enough: but if he was the insufferable bore and noodle that Macaulay describes, how came Johnson—a man of masculine sense—to make him his intimate, to spend months with him in the daily contact of a long journey, and then pronounce him "the best travelling-companion in the world"?

We now come to Johnson. Besides the article in the *Edinburgh Review*, we have the biography published in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, written twenty-five years after-
wards. The latter, as belonging to his last and best manner, is more chaste in language, and more kindly and tolerant in tone than the Essay; still it is essentially on the same lines of thought and sentiment. We have the same clear perception of the external husk of Johnson; but there is as little penetration into his deeper character in the one case as in the other. There is nothing unfair or ungenerous; especially in the biography there seems a fixed resolve to be as generous as possible; but the appreciation is inadequate, and chiefly confined to the surface. The following is nearly Macaulay's masterpiece in superficial portraiture, as showing his tendency to dwell on the outside appearance of character and little besides:—

Johnson grown old—Johnson in the fulness of his fame, and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him—his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disquisitions, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehement insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates—old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat, Hodge, and negro Frank—all are as familiar to us as objects by which we have been surrounded from our childhood.

There is all through both pieces too much dwelling on Johnson's coarse manners, fits of ill-temper, and tendency to over-eat himself. These details are welcome in a biography, but out of place in a critical estimate. The
only point of view from which Johnson can be properly judged is that which Macaulay never took up—the religious point of view. Johnson was an ardent believer, ever fighting with doubt. His heart was full of faith, while his intellect was inclined to scepticism. A great deal of his impatience and irritability arose from this dual condition of his mind and sentiments. He felt that if he listened to unbelief he would be lost. He was always wanting more evidence than he could get for supernatural things. That was why he hunted after the Cock Lane Ghost, and was always fond of stories that seemed to confirm the belief in a life beyond the grave. He disbelieved the earthquake of Lisbon, because it seemed to reflect on the benevolence of God. It is this insecure but ardent piety which gives him an interest and a pathos from which the common run of contented believers are generally free. Next to his piety, the profound tenderness of Johnson's nature is his most marked trait. When they are fused together, as they sometimes were, the result is inexpressibly touching, as in that notice in his diary of the death of his "dear old friend," Catherine Chambers. When we read of his incessant benevolence, we can understand the love he inspired in all who really knew him, which made Goldsmith say, "He has nothing of the bear but the skin;" and Burke say, when he was out-talked by Johnson to some one's regret, "It is enough for me to have rung the bell for him." These things are not exactly overlooked by Macaulay, but they are not brought out; whereas Johnson's puffings, and gruntings, and perspiration when at his dinner, are made very prominent.

We now come, not without reluctance, to look at the deplorable article on Bacon.

The historical portion has only just lately received such
an exposure at the hands of the late Mr. Spedding, that to dwell upon it here is as unnecessary as it would be impertinent. Two octavo volumes were not found more than sufficient to set forth the full proofs of Macaulay's quite astounding inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and even falsifications of truth. The only question that we can discuss even for a moment in this place, is what could have been Macaulay's motive for writing with such passion and want of good faith against a man whom in the same breath he extolled even to excess. We cannot suspect him—"a lump of good nature"—of malignity. The probability is that his usual incapacity to see through an intricate character led him into airing one of those moral paradoxes of which he was fond. A jarring contrast of incompatible qualities, so far from repelling, very much attracted him in a character. He seems to have thought it good fun to expand Pope's line into an article of a hundred pages. One can imagine him thinking as he wrote, "What will they say to this?" for the rest, meaning no particular harm either to Bacon or any one. The piece has no moral earnestness about it, and is flippant in thought even when decorous in language.

The object is a deliberate attack and invective against all higher speculation, which is branded as mere cant and hypocrisy. The philosophy of both Zeno and Epicurus we are told was a "garrulous, declaiming, canting, wrangling philosophy." The philosophy of the ancients is pronounced "barren." The ancient philosophers, in those very matters "for the sake of which they neglected all the vulgar interests of mankind, did nothing, and worse than nothing." "We know that the philosophers were no better than other men. From the testimony of friends as well as foes, . . . . it is plain that these teachers of
virtue had all the vices of their neighbours with the additional vice of hypocrisy.” Religion itself when allied with philosophy became equally pernicious. The great merit of Bacon, was that he cleared his mind of all this rubbish. “He had no anointing for broken bones, no fine theories de finibus, no arguments to persuade men out of their senses. He knew that men and philosophers, as well as other men, do actually love life, health, comfort, honour, security, the society of friends; and do actually dislike death, sickness, pain, poverty, disgrace, danger, separation from those to whom they are attached. He knew that religion, though it often regulates and modifies these feelings, seldom eradicates them; nor did he think it desirable for mankind that they should be eradicated.” Much more is said against the ancient philosophers, and in favour of Bacon, who appears moreover to have had two peculiar merits; first, that he never meddled with those enigmas “which have puzzled hundreds of generations, and will puzzle hundreds more”—the grounds of moral obligation and the freedom of the human will; secondly, that he despised speculative theology as much as he despised speculative philosophy. In short, his peculiar and extraordinary quality was that he was an ἔφορος, a mere common man, and that is precisely why he was so great a philosopher. “It was because he dug deep that he was able to pile high,” deep digging being apparently the characteristic of the common man.

The point especially deserving of notice in this extraordinary diatribe is, that all spiritual religion is as much aimed at as philosophy, though the attack is veiled with great prudence and skill. But every word said against philosophy would apply equally against religion. Every sneer and gibe flung at Plato, Zeno, and Epictetus, would
equally serve against Thomas à Kempis, St. Francis of Sales, or Jeremy Taylor. It is not at all easy to determine what could have induced Macaulay to commit this outrage. He is generally excessively observant of the biensibances. Was he avenging some old private grudge against a Puritanical education? Had he become convinced that spiritual aspirations were moonshine? There is certainly a vehemence in his onslaught which almost points to a personal injury, as Porson said of Gibbon’s attack on Christianity. In any case we must admit that on no other occasion did Macaulay descend so low as on this. Nowhere else has he given us such an insight into the limitations of his heart and understanding, and of his strangely imperfect knowledge, with all his reading. It would require pages, where we have not room for sentences, to expound the matter fully. Take one or two instances, merely because they are short. He reproaches the ancient philosophy with having made no progress in eight hundred years: “Look at the schools of this wisdom four centuries before the Christian era and four centuries after that era. Compare the men whom those schools formed at those two periods. Compare Plato and Libanius; Pericles and Julian. This philosophy confessed, nay boasted, that for every end but one it was useless. Had it attained that one end?” It is difficult to handle the sciolism implied in such remarks and such a question. What had occurred between the dates specified—those of Pericles and Julian? Only the conquest of the world by the Romans, the rise and fall of the Roman Republic and Empire, the invasion of the barbarians, and the proximate dissolution of society. This is to count for nothing. The greatest revolution in human annals—the death throes, in short, of the old world—could not be
expected to influence the course and value of speculation! The thing to notice was that Libanius was inferior to Plato, and Julian to Pericles, and that settled the point that the ancient philosophy was nothing but cant and hypocrisy. Again, we are asked to believe that it was through the perversity of a few great minds that the blessings of the experimental philosophy were so long withheld from the world. The human mind had been "misdirected;" "trifles occupied the sharp and vigorous intellects" of the Greeks and of the schoolmen. Socrates and Plato were the chief authors of this evil, which tainted the whole body of ancient philosophy "from the time of Plato downwards." Plato has to bear the enormous guilt of having "done more than any other person towards giving the minds of speculative men that bent which they retained till they received from Bacon a new impulse in a diametrically opposite direction." Had it not been for these lamentable aberrations with which Macaulay says he has no patience, we should have had, no doubt, diving-bells, steam-engines, and vaccination in the time of the Peloponnesian war; or why not say in the time of the Trojan war, or even of Noah's ark. That society and the human intellect have laws of organic growth, the stages of which cannot be transposed, any more than the periods of youth and old age can be transposed in the life of an individual, was a conception which never dawned even faintly on Macaulay's mind. He was as little competent to speak of experimental science, which he belauded, as of philosophy, which he vilified. He says several times in various forms that science should only be cultivated for its immediate practical and beneficial results. He applauds Bacon because "he valued geometry chiefly if not solely on account of those
uses which to Plato appeared so base," for his love of "those pursuits which directly tend to improve the condition of mankind," for the importance ascribed "to those arts which increase the outward comforts of our species;" and he excuses any over-strength of statement in this matter, by saying that it was an error in the right direction, and that he vastly prefers it to the opposite error of Plato. Now this shows that he failed to grasp the method of science as much as the method and import of philosophy. Science has never prospered until it has freed itself from bondage to the immediate wants of life—till it has pursued its investigations with perfect indifference as to the results and uses to which they may be applied. But it is needless to pursue the subject. The effect of the whole article is the same as that produced by a man of rude manners making his way into a refined and well-bred company; with an unbecoming carriage and a loud voice he goes up to the dignified dames—the ancient Philosophies one after another—and asks them what they do there; mocks at their fine ways; and finishes by telling them roundly that in his opinion they are all no better than they should be. Nothing that Macaulay has written has been more injurious to his fame as a serious thinker.

Nevertheless, say what we will, Macaulay's essays remain a brilliant and fascinating page in English literature. The world is never persistently mistaken in such cases. Time enough has elapsed, since their publication, to submerge them in oblivion had they not contained a vital spark of genius which criticism is powerless to extinguish. If not wells of original knowledge, they have acted like irrigating rills which convey and distribute the fertilizing waters from the fountain-head. The best would adorn any literature, and even the less successful have a pic-
turesque animation, and convey an impression of power that will not easily be matched. And again we need to bear in mind that they were the productions of a writer immersed in business, written in his scanty moments of leisure when most men would have rested or sought recreation. Macaulay himself was most modest in his estimate of their value, and resisted their republication as long as he could. It was the public that insisted on their reissue, and few would be bold enough to deny that the public was right.
CHAPTER IV.

NARRATIVE OF MACAULAY’S LIFE RESUMED UP TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE HISTORY.

(A.D. 1841—1848.)

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "it is wonderful how little Garrick assumes. No, sir, Garrick *fortunam reverenter habuit*. Then, sir, Garrick did not find, but made his way to the tables, the levees, and almost the bed-rooms of the great. If all this had happened to me, I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me to knock down everybody that stood in the way." One is reminded of these wise and kindly words from the rough but tender-hearted old moralist when reflecting on the uniform success and prosperity which attended Macaulay in everything he undertook. With the single exception of his failing to secure a place in the Tripos at Cambridge, which, after all, had no evil effects, as he obtained a fellowship notwithstanding, he did not put his hand to a thing without winning loud applause. In his story there are no failures to record. The trials and straitened means of his early years arose from no fault of his. As soon as he began to rebuild the shattered fortunes of his family, the work went on without break or interruption, and was triumphantly accomplished before he had reached his fortieth year. But he had done much
more than restore his material circumstances; in the meantime he had acquired a wide and brilliant fame. He had made his way to the tables, the levees, and bed-chambers of the great. A novus homo, he was treated with the distinction which in our aristocratic society was at that time nearly always reserved for the so called "well-born." And yet he, like Garrick, bore his honours, if not weekly, yet without a particle of insolence or assumption, or the least symptom that his head had been turned. And this was the result not of religious or philosophic discipline, of a conscious moral cultivation of humility, and a sober spirit, but of mere sweetness of nature and constitutional amiability.

After his fall, or, perhaps we should say, his rise from office, he almost immediately proceeded to tempt fortune in a very perilous way. He put forth a volume of poems—the Lays of Ancient Rome. His eyes were quite open to the risk. To Napier, who had expressed doubts about the venture, he wrote:—

I do not wonder at your misgivings. I should have felt similar misgivings if I had learned that any person, however distinguished by talents and knowledge, whom I knew as a writer only by prose works, was about to publish a volume of poetry—had I seen advertised a poem by Mackintosh, by Dugald Stewart, or even by Burke, I should have augured nothing but failure; and I am far from putting myself on a level with the least of the three.

Few writers have surpassed Macaulay in that most useful of all gifts, a clear and exact knowledge of the reach and nature of his talents. It never stood him in better stead than on the present occasion.

It will be remembered that he was engaged on the lay
of Horatius when he was in Italy. But he had written two lays while in India, and submitted them to Dr. Arnold of Rugby, who had spoken of them with high praise. The subject had thus been a long time in his mind, and the composition, though no doubt often interrupted, had been most careful and deliberate. Macaulay had the faculty of rhyme in no common degree, and he was also a scientific prosodian. He consulted his friends about his verses, and, what was less common, he took their advice when they pointed out defects. Several years off and on, thus employed on four poems, which together do not amount to two-thirds of Marmion, were a guarantee against hasty work; and the result corresponds. The versification of the Lays is technically without blemish, and this correctness has been purchased by no sacrifice of vigour. On the contrary, Macaulay’s prose at its best is not so terse as his verse. He had naturally a tendency to declamation. In the Lays this tendency is almost entirely suppressed, as if the greater intensity of thought needed for metrical composition had consumed the wordy undergrowth of rhetoric, and lifted him into a clearer region where he saw the facts with unimpeded vision. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the rhythm is somewhat monotonous and mechanical. The melody never wanders spontaneously into new and unexpected modulation, and seems rather the result of care and labour than a natural gift of music. Some lines are strangely harsh, as—

So spun she, and so sang she,

a concourse of sibilants which can hardly be spoken, and would have shocked a musical ear.

But the Lays have, nevertheless, very considerable poetical merit, on which it is the more necessary to dwell, as there
appears to be disposition in some quarters to only grudgingly allow it, or even to deny it. The marked taste of intelligent children for Macaulay’s poems is not to be undervalued. It shows, as Mr. Maurice said, that there was something fresh, young, and unsophisticated in the mind of the writer. But Macaulay has no reason to fear a more critical tribunal. There is a directness of presentation in his best passages, the poetical result is so independent of any artifice of language, or laboured pomp of diction, but, on the contrary, arises so naturally from mere accuracy of drawing and clear vision of the fact, that the question is not whether his work is good, but whether in its kind it has often been surpassed. Mr. Ruskin insists strongly on “the peculiar dignity possessed by all passages which limit their expression to the pure fact, and leave the hearer to gather what he can from it.”

1 This acknowledged sign of strength is very frequent in Macaulay’s Lays. Few writers indulge less in the Pathetic Fallacy than he. Line after line contains nothing but the most simple statement of fact in quite unadorned language. For instance:—

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

Every statement here might be made with propriety by a simple man, as, e.g. a carpenter who had witnessed the event—the noise of the falling fabric, its position in the river, the exulting shout which naturally followed, the

1 Modern Painters, vol. iii, c. 12.
splash of yellow foam—no otiose epithet, as the Tiber was the stream. Each line might form part of a bald report, and yet the whole is graphic simply because it is literally true. The art, like all art, of course consists in seeing and seizing the right facts and giving them prominence. Macaulay’s power of drawing, at once accurate and characteristic, gives to his descriptions at times a sharpness of outline which seems borrowed from sculpture:—

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena;
To Sextus nought spake he.
But he saw on Palatinus
The white porch of his home,
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

"Oh Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman’s life, a Roman’s arms,
Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back
Plunged headlong in the tide.

Is there not a definite objectiveness of presentation here almost statuesque?

Macaulay’s calmness and self-restraint in verse are very marked as compared with the opposite qualities which he sometimes displays in prose. Occasionally he reaches a note of tragic solemnity without effort, and by the simplest means, as in the visions which haunted Sextus:—

Lavinium and Laurentum
Had on the left their post,
With all the banners of the marsh,
And banners of the coast.
Their leader was false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame;
With restless pace and haggard face
To his last field he came.
Men said he saw strange visions
Which none beside might see,
And that strange sounds were in his ears
Which none might hear but he.
A woman fair and stately,
But pale as are the dead,
Oft through the watches of the night
Sat spinning by his bed.
And as she plied the distaff,
In a sweet voice and low
She sang of great old houses,
And fights fought long ago.
So spun she, and so sang she,
Until the East was grey,
Then pointed to her bleeding breast,
And shrieked, and fled away.

But his poetical merit, considerable as it was, is not the most important and interesting feature in the Lays of Ancient Rome. In literary classification Macaulay of course belongs to what is called the romantic school; he could not do otherwise, living when he did. He was five years old when the Lay of the Last Minstrel was published, and he received in the impressionable period of youth the full impact of the Waverley novels. We have already seen how much they contributed to form his notions of history. It was not likely when he took to writing ballads that the influence of Scott would be less than when he wrote prose. Accordingly we meet with a reminiscence and echo of Scott all through the lays. This was unavoidable, and Macaulay seeks in no wise to disguise the fact. On the other hand, no one could resemble Scott less in his deeper sympathies and cast of mind than Macaulay. Scott had
the instinct of a wild animal for the open air, the forest, the hill-side. He

Loved nature like a horned cow,
Deer or bird or caribou;

and thought that if he did not see the heather once a year he should die. Macaulay was a born citadin, and cared for nature hardly at all. His sister doubted whether any scenery ever pleased him so much as his own Holly Lodge, or Mr. Thornton’s garden at Battersea Rise. Scott, again, was full of the romantic spirit. His mind dwelt by preference on the past, which was lovely to him. Macaulay had an American belief and delight in modern material progress, and was satisfied that no age in the past was ever as good as the present. Scott’s notions of politics were formed on the feudal pattern. He could understand and admire fealty, the devotion of vassal to lord, the personal attachment of clansman to his chief, but of the reasoned obedience and loyalty of the citizen to the state, to the polity of which he forms a part, Scott seems as good as unconscious. It would not be easy to quote, from his poems at least, a passage which implied any sympathy with civil duty and sacrifice to the res publica, to the common weal. As Mr. Ruskin says, his sympathies are rather with outlaws and rebels, especially under the “greenwood tree,” and he has but little objection to rebellion even to a king, provided it be on private and personal grounds, and not systematic or directed to great public aims. This was the genuine feudal spirit which ignored the state and the correlated notion of citizenship, and trusted for social cohesion to the fragile tie of the liegeman’s sworn fidelity to his suzerain. Nothing stirred Scott’s blood more than military prowess, the conflict of armed men, but he remains con-
tented with the conflict; he cares little in what cause men fight, so long as they do fight and accomplish "deeds of arms." It may be for love, or the point of honour, or because the chief commands it, or merely for the luxury of exchanging blows; but for the patriotic valour which fights for hearth and home, and native city, he has hardly a word to say.

On opening Macaulay's Lays we find ourselves in a world which is the exact opposite of this;—civic patriotism, zeal for the public weal whether against foreign foe or domestic tyrant—these are his sources of inspiration. And there is thus a curious contrast, almost contradiction, between the outward form of the poems and their contents. The real romantic ballad and its modern imitations, properly refer to times in which the notion of a State, composed of citizens who support it on reasoned grounds, has not emerged. The polis is not to be found in Homer, or in Chevy Chase, or in Scott. In Macaulay's ballads the State is everything. His love for ordered civil life, his zeal for the abstract idea of government instituted for the well-being of all who live under it, are as intense in him as they were in the breast of Pericles. Thus the key-note of the ballads is as remote as possible from that of Scott, and indeed of all mediævalists, and not only remote, but very much nobler. The fighting in the lays does not arise from mere reckless light-hearted ferocity—

That marked the foeman's feudal hate,
but from lofty social union which leads the brave to self-sacrifice for the common good.

For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life
In the brave days of old.
And this higher moral strain has its poetic reward. Macaulay attains a heroism of sentiment, which Scott never reaches. Compare the almost effeminate sob over James killed at Flodden:

He saw the wreck his rashness wrought,
Reckless of life he desperate fought,
And fell on Flodden plain.
And well in death his trusty brand
Firm clenched within his manly hand
Beseemed the monarch slain;
But O! how changed since yon blithe night,
Gladly I turn me from the sight
Unto my tale again.

Compare this with the exultant and fiery joy over the death of Valerius.

XVIII.

But fiercer grew the fighting
Around Valerius dead;
For Titus dragged him by the foot
And Aulus by the head.
"On, Latines, on!" quoth Titus,
"See how the rebels fly!"
"Romans, stand firm," quoth Aulus,
"And win this fight or die.
They must not give Valerius
To raven and to kite;
For aye Valerius loathed the wrong,
And aye upheld the right;
And for your wives and babies
In the front rank he fell.
Now play the men for the good house
That loves the people well."

XIX.

Then tenfold round the body
The roar of battle rose,
Like the roar of a burning forest
When a strong north wind blows.
Now backward, and now forward,
Rocked furiously the fray,
Till none could see Valerius,
And none wist where he lay.
For shivered arms and ensigns
Were heaped there in a mound,
And corpses stiff, and dying men
That writhed and gnawed the ground;
And wounded horses kicking,
And snorting purple foam:
Right well did such a, couch best
A consulat of Rome.

Macaulay had thoroughly assimilated the lofty civic spirit of the ancients—a spirit which was seriously injured when not wholly destroyed in the Middle Ages by Feudalism and Catholicism together.

The lay of Virginia is of less even and sustained excellence than the two lays which precede it. The speech of Icilius and the description of the tumult which followed are admirable for spirit and vigour. It may be noticed generally that Macaulay is always very successful in his descriptions of excited crowds—he does it con amore—he had none of the disdain for the multitude which Carlyle manifests in and out of season. On this occasion the liberal politician combined with the artist to produce a powerful effect. He had a noble hatred of tyranny, and his sympathies were wholly with the many as against the few. There was a righteous fierceness in him at the sight of wrong, which is the stuff of which true patriots in troubled times are made.

And thrice the tossing Forum set up a frightful yell;
"See, see, thou dog! what thou hast done, and hide thy shame in hell,
Thou that wouldst make our maidens slaves must first make slaves of men.
Tribunes! hurrah for Tribunes! Down with the wicked ten!"
This speech of Icilius is no closet rhetoric composed by a man who had never addressed a mob; it is the speech of a practised orator who knows how to rouse passion and set men's hearts on fire. It is also a thoroughly dramatic speech; good in itself, but made much better by the situation of the supposed speaker. From a modern point of view it is better than the speech which Livy makes Icilius deliver, with its references to Roman law. On the other hand, the speech of Virgininius to his daughter, just before he stabs her, is quite as bad as that of Icilius is good. It is a singular thing that Macaulay, whose sensibility and genuine tenderness of nature are quite beyond doubt, had almost no command of the pathetic. The explanation seems to be that he really was too sensitive. He says in his diary: "I generally avoid novels which are said to have much pathos. The suffering which they produce is to me a very real suffering, and of that I have quite enough without them." The fact, though highly creditable to his heart, shows a marked limitation of range, and excludes him from the class of artists by nature, who are at once susceptible and masters of emotion. Feeling must have subsided into serene calm before it can be successfully embodied in art. In any case Macaulay seems to have been unusually incapable of, or averse to, the expression of tender and pathetic sentiment. He has in his correspondence and diaries more than once occasion to refer to the deaths of friends whom we know he loved, and he always does so in a curiously awkward manner, as if he were ashamed of his feelings, and wished to hide them even from himself. "Jeffrey is gone, dear fellow; I loved him as much as it is easy to love a man who belongs to an older generation. . . . After all dear Jeffrey's death is hardly a matter for mourning." He had been on
terms of affectionate intimacy with Jeffrey for more than twenty-five years. On hearing that Harry Hallam was dying at Sienna, he says, "What a trial for my dear old friend" (the historian); "I feel for the lad himself, too. Much distressed, I dined however. We dine unless the blow comes very very near the heart indeed." There is evidently a deliberate avoidance of giving way to the expression of grief. And yet when he comes across some of his sister Margaret's letters twenty-two years after her death, he is overcome, and bursts into tears. Macaulay could not hold the more passionate emotions sufficiently at arm's length to describe them properly when he felt them. And when they were passed, his imagination did not reproduce them with a clearness available for art. A man on the point of stabbing his daughter to save her from dishonour would certainly not think of making the stagey declamation which Macaulay has put into the mouth of Virginis. The frigid conceits about "Capua's marble halls," and the kite gloating upon his prey, are the last things that would occur to a mind filled with such awful passions. Macaulay would have done better on this occasion to copy the impressive brevity of Livy, "Hoc te uno, quo possum modo, filia in libertatem vindico." If it be said that the object was not historical or even poetical verisimilitude, but to write an exciting ballad such as might be supposed to stir the contemporaries of Licinius and Sextius, the answer will be given presently in reference to a parallel but much simpler case.

The Prophecy of Capys is distinctly languid as a whole, though it has some fine stanzas, and contains one of the most delicate touches of colour that Macaulay ever laid on:

And Venus loves the whispers
Of plighted youth and maid,
In April's ivory moonlight  
Beneath the chestnut's shade.

The unclouded moon of Italy lighting up the limestone rocks produces just the nuance of green ivory. Generally his sense of colour is weak compared with Scott, whose eye for colour is such that while reading him we seem to be gazing on the purple glory of the hills when the heather is in bloom: Macaulay is grey and dun. It is curious to compare how Macaulay and Scott deal with the same situation, that of a person anxiously watching for the appearance of another. Scott does it by putting the sense of sight on the alert:

The noble dame on turret high,  
Who waits her gallant knight,  
Looks to the western beam to spy  
_The flash of armour bright_;  
The village maid with hand on brow  
The level ray to shade,  
Upon the footpath watches now  
_For Colin's darkening plaid._

Macaulay puts the sense of hearing on guard.

Since the first gleam of daylight,  
Sempronius had not ceased  
_To listen for the rushing_  
Of horse-hoofs from the east.

A keen sense of colour is the peculiar note, one might say the badge of the romantic school, and this is true even of musicians (compare Handel, Bach, Haydn, with Beethoven, Schumann, and Wagner). It is not without interest that we find Macaulay a sort of forced disciple of the romantic school, differing from it in this as well as in the other peculiarities above mentioned.

_The Prophecy of Capys_ suggests a sense of fatigue and
flagging inspiration in the writer which are not without a certain significance, and may help to throw light on a question which has a certain interest for some persons. The question is whether Macaulay should be considered a poet or not. "Some fastidious critics," says Mr. Trevelyan, "think it proper to deny him that title." Now, if by this is meant that he not only was no poet but wrote no poetry, the statement is obviously excessive and unfair. To have written poetry does not necessarily constitute a man a poet. We need to know before according that title to a man, what relative proportion the poetic vein bore to the rest of his nature; how far poetry was his natural and spontaneous mode of utterance. It is evident that quantity as well as quality has to be considered. Should we consider the writer of the best sonnet that ever was written a poet, if he never had written anything else? Was Single-speech Hamilton an orator? When Johnson called Gray a "barren rascal," he implied in coarse language a truth of some importance, and passed a just criticism on Gray. Facile abundance is not necessarily a merit in itself, but it at least points to natural fertility of the soil, and its adaptation to the crop produced. On the other hand, rare exotics painfully reared by artificial means, have not often more than a fancy value. Shelley writing the twelve books of the Revolt of Islam in a few months, Byron writing the first canto of Don Juan in a few weeks, showed by so doing that poetry was the spontaneous product of their minds, that the labour was small compared with the greatness of the result, and that in short the natural richness of the soil was the cause of their fertility. From this point of view it is manifest that Macaulay was no poet, though certainly he has written poetry. Directed by an immense knowledge of literature and a cultivated taste,—by watch-
ing for the movements of inspiration, by the careful storage of every raindrop that fell from the clouds of fancy, he collected a small vessel full of clear limpid water, the sparkling brightness of which it is unjust not to acknowledge. But the process was too slow and laborious to justify us in calling him a poet. What a different gale impelled him when he wrote prose: he has only to shake out the sheet, and his sails become concave and turgid with the breeze. That is to say, prose was his vocation, poetry was not. But that is no reason why we should not admire Horatius as one of the best ballads in the language. As Lessing wrote dramas by dint of critical acumen, without, according to his own conviction, any natural dramatic talent, so Macaulay wrote two or three graceful poems by the aid of great culture and trained literary taste.

A question was left unanswered on a former page, and reference was made to a parallel case. The question was, whether such a lay as that of Virginia was in any degree more likely to represent an original lost lay written at the time of the Licinian Rogations, than one written at the Decemvirate. One of Macaulay’s best ballads after the Lays may help us to answer the question. The Battle of Ivry, though not so careful and finished in language as the Lays is equal to any of them in fire. It is full also of what is called local colour and those picturesque touches which delight the admirers of the pseudo-antique. Now it happens that we have a Huguenot lay on this very subject, and it is interesting to compare the genuine article with the modern imitation. The romance and chivalry which Macaulay, following the taste of his time, has infused into his ballad, are entirely wanting in the Huguenot song, which is very little more than a dull
and somewhat fierce hymn with a strong Old Testament flavour. In the modern poem the real local colour, the real sentiments with which a Huguenot regarded the defeat of the League are omitted, and replaced by picturesque and graceful sentiments, against which the only thing to be said is that they are entirely wanting in historical fidelity and truth. Even matters of fact are incorrectly given. No one would infer from Macaulay's ballad that Henry IV.'s army contained the flower of the French nobility, Catholic as well as Protestant, and as for the "lances" and "thousand spears in rest" with which he arms Henry's knights, it was one of the latter's military innovations to have suppressed and replaced them by sabres and pistols, far more efficacious weapons at close quarters. But the romantic, chivalrous, and joyous tone is that which most contrasts with the gloomy, religious spirit of the original. The song is supposed to be made in the name of Henry of Navarre, who gives all the glory to God. Two or three stanzas out of twenty will be sufficient to quote:—

Je chante ton honneur sous l'effet de mes armes,
A ta juste grandeur je rapporte le tout,
Car, du commencement du milieu jusqu'au bout,
Toi seul m'as guaranty au plus fort des allarmes.

Du plus haut de ton Ciel regardant en la terre,
Méprisant leur audace et des graves sourcils,
Desdaignant ces mutins, soudain tu les as mis
An plus sanglant malheur que seu sont porter la guerre.

Le jour cesse plastost que la chasse ne cesse;
Tout ce camp désolé ne se peut assurer,
Et à poin te la nuit les laisse respirer,
Car les miens courageux les poursuivent sans cesse.²

So we see that the chivalrous humanitarian sentiments which Macaulay has put in the mouth of his Huguenot bard are without foundation.

But out spake gentle Henry, “No Frenchman is my foe; Down, down with every foreigner, but let your brethren go.”
Oh! was there ever such a knight, in friendship or in war,
As our sovereign lord, King Henry, the soldier of Navarre?

“Beaucoup de fantassins français furent néanmoins sabrés ou arquebusés dans la première fureur de la victoire! La déroute fut au moins aussi sanglante que le combat.” Now the question mooted was as to the probability of these ballads having any historical fidelity or verisimilitude. With regard to a ballad not three hundred years old, we find one of them has none. What is the probability of those which pretend to go back a good deal over two thousand years being more accurate?

And this brings us to the consideration of the question whether we can honestly compliment and congratulate Macaulay on his Lays of Ancient Rome. The preceding remarks, it is hoped, show no tendency to morose hypercriticism. But does it raise one’s opinion of Macaulay’s earnest sincerity of mind to find him devoting some considerable time to the production of what he candidly admitted to be but trifles, though “scholarlike and not inlegant trifles.” He could very well lay his finger on the defects of Bulwer’s Last Days of Pompeii: “It labours,” he says, “under the usual faults of all works in which it is attempted to give moderns a glimpse of ancient manners. After all, between us and them, there is a great gulf which no learning will enable a man to clear.” At the very time he made this entry in his journal he was composing his lay on Horatius, a much more difficult task
than Bulwer's, for our knowledge of Roman manners under the empire may be said to be intimate and exact as compared with our knowledge of Roman manners in the semi-mythic period of the early republic. Was it a worthy occupation for a serious scholar to spend his time in producing mere fancy pictures which could have no value beyond a certain prettiness, "in the prolongation from age to age of romantic historical descriptions instead of sifted truth?" Could we imagine Grote or Mommsen, or Ranke or Freeman engaged in such a way without a certain sense of degradation? This is not making much of a small matter; it is really important, reaching down if you consider it well to the deeper elements of character and primary motive. Macaulay's love and pursuit of truth, which he imagined to be dominant passions with him, were relatively feeble. The subject has already been referred to. It is strange to see how much he deceived himself on this point. In the ambitious and wordy verses he composed on the evening of his defeat at Edinburgh, he feigns that all the Fairies passed his cradle by, without a blessing, except the Fairy Queen of Knowledge; and she, the "mightest and the best," pronounced—

Yes; thou wilt love me with exceeding love.

And the three illustrious predecessors whom in this particular he wishes most to resemble, and who are alone mentioned are the three oddly chosen names of Bacon, Hyde, and Milton, in all of whom we may confidently say that the love of truth was not the prominent and striking feature of their character and genius. Of Bacon, Macaulay himself has rather overstated, while he deplored, the weakness of his love of truth as compared to his love of

\[3\] Modern Painters, vol. iii. c. 6.
place and honours. What Hyde has to do in such company more than other statesmen, ancient or modern, it is difficult to see. And in what way did Milton show a love of truth more than any other poet? Macaulay's notion of the sentiment he claimed, seems to have been abundantly vague. Kepler verifying his laws and going over the calculations one hundred and fifty times, in the meanwhile writing almanacks to keep him from starving; Newton working out his theory of gravitation for years, and modestly putting it aside because the erroneous data on which he calculated led to incorrect results, then on corrected data writing the *Principia*; nay, Franklin running an unknown risk of his life by identifying by means of his kite electricity with lightning, and countless other loyal servants of science might have been cited with relevancy as types of lovers of truth. It is a misuse of language to confuse a general love of literature, or a very sensible zeal in getting up the materials for historical scene-painting, with the stern resolution which lays siege to nature's secrets, and will not desist till they are surrendered. But such pains are undertaken only at the bidding of a passionate desire for an answer by minds which can perceive the test-problems which have not yet capitulated, but which must be reduced before any further advance into the Unknown can be safely made. It is a peculiarity of Macaulay's mind that he rarely sees problems, that he is not stopped by difficulties out of which he anxiously seeks an issue. We never find him wondering with suspended judgment in what direction his course may lie. On the contrary, he has seldom any doubt or difficulty about anything, his mind is always made up, and he has a prompt answer for every question. We may without scruple say that the course of a genuine love of truth has never run so smooth. Here was the
early history of Rome full of difficulties which clamoured for further research and elucidation. The subject had been just sufficiently worked to whet the curiosity and interest of an inquiring mind. There were not many men in Europe more fitted by classical attainments to take the problems suggested in hand, and advance them a stage nearer to a correct solution. Macaulay did not consider the matter in this light at all. To have written a scholarlike essay on early Roman history would have been to write for a few score readers in the English and German universities. The love of truth which he imagined that he possessed would have directed him into that course. But if he had taken it, his biographer would most certainly not have been able to inform us of anything so imposing as this:—“eighteen thousand of the Lays of Ancient Rome were sold in ten years, forty thousand in twenty years, and by June, 1875, upwards of a hundred thousand copies had passed into the hands of readers.”

Macaulay did not after leaving office avail himself of his leisure to resume his interrupted history with the zeal and promptitude that might have been expected. Besides the Lays, he allowed other and even less important things to waste his time. He was by no means so resolute in resisting the blandishments of society as he should have been, and as he afterwards became. “I have had so much time occupied by politics and by the society which at this season fills London that I have written nothing for some weeks,” he wrote to Macvey Napier. He would have shown more robustness of character and a more creditable absorption in his work, if he had courageously renounced for good and all both society and politics, now that he was for the first time in his life free to devote all his energies to a great work. Instead of that he loitered for fully
three years before he threw himself with passionate single-hearted concentration on his history. This shows that the book after all was not generated in the deeper and more earnest parts of his nature, but came mostly from the fancy and understanding. Or perhaps we should not be very wrong if we surmise that depth and earnestness were somewhat wanting in him. He had no latent heat of sustained enthusiasm either scientific, political, or artistic. By a vigorous spurt he could write a brilliant article, which rarely required more than a few weeks. His ambition, which, like all his passions, was moderate and amiable, was largely satisfied by the very considerable honours which he acquired by his contributions to the blue and yellow Review; he had none of the fierce and relentless thirst for a great fame which drives some men into wrapt isolation, where they are free to nurse and indulge their moods of creative passion. Neither was he under the dominion of a great thought which hedges a man with solitude even in a crowd. On the other hand, it is only just to remember that the pressure put upon him to leave his work was severe. Both in Parliament and the Edinburgh Review, he was able to render services which were not likely to be foregone, by those who needed them, without a hard struggle. For nearly twenty years the quarterly organ of the Whigs had enjoyed a new lease of popularity and power through his contributions. In the House of Commons the beaten and dejected Whigs were grateful beyond words for the welcome aid of his brilliant and destructive oratory. Mr. Napier appears to have been inconceivably importunate for articles, and Macaulay, though protesting that he must really now devote himself to his history, with amiable weakness ends by giving in and writing. But the sacrifice was really too great, and he ought to have seen that it was. He did at last, and resolutely
putting his foot down, declared that he would write no more for the Review till he had brought out two volumes of his book. He wrote to Napier:—

I hope that you will make your arrangements for some three or four numbers without counting on me. I find it absolutely necessary to concentrate my attention on my historical work. You cannot conceive how difficult I find it to do two things at a time. Men are differently made. Southey used to work regularly two hours a day on the History of Brazil; then an hour for the Quarterly Review; then an hour on the Life of Wesley; then two hours on the Peninsular War; then an hour on the Book of the Church. I cannot do so. I get into the stream of my narrative, and am going along as smoothly and quickly as possible. Then comes the necessity of writing for the Review. I lay my History aside; and, when after some weeks I resume it, I have the greatest difficulty in recovering the interrupted train of thought. But for the Review, I should already have brought out two volumes at least. I must really make a resolute effort, or my plan will end as our poor friend Mackintosh’s ended.

This self-reproach and this comparison with Mackintosh are constantly flowing from his pen.

Another paper from me is at present out of the question. One in half a year is the utmost of which I can hold out any hopes. I ought to give my whole leisure to my History; and fear that if I suffer myself to be diverted from that design, as I have done, I shall be like poor Mackintosh, leave behind me the character of a man who would have done something, if he had concentrated his powers instead of frittering them away... I must not go on dawdling and reproaching myself all my life.

This sacrifice to editorial importunity was the more regrettable as articles, written under this pressure, with
one exception, have added little to Macaulay's fame. The fact is in nowise surprising. Task-work of this kind, even though undertaken at the bidding of friendship, is apt to betray a want both of maturity and spontaneous inspiration. Saving the article on Chatham, a subject which lay in the course of his studies, and with which he took great pains, writing it over three times, Macaulay's contributions to the *Edinburgh* at this period have largely the characteristics of what are vulgarly called "pot-boilers," though in his case they were written to keep, not his own but another man's pot boiling. The articles on Madame D'Arblay's *Memoirs* and on Frederick the Great are thin, crude, perfunctory, and valueless, except as first-rate padding for a periodical review. In the latter he cannot even spell the name of the Principality of Frederick's favourite sister Wilhelmina correctly; always writing Bareuth instead of Baireuth; it is but a small error, but it indicates haste, as he was usually careful in the orthography of proper names. But there are worse faults than this. When off his guard, especially when contemptuous or angry, Macaulay easily lapsed into an uncurbed vehemence of language which bordered on vulgarity.

Frederick by no means relinquished his hereditary privilege of kicking and cudgelling. His practice, however, as to that matter, differed in some important respects from his father's. To Frederick William, the mere circumstance that any person whatever, men, women or children, Prussians or foreigners, were within reach of his toes or his cane, appeared to be a sufficient reason for proceeding to belabour them. Frederick required provocation, as well as vicinity.

Again, "The resistance opposed to him by the tribunals inflamed him to fury. He reviled the Chancellor; he
kicked the shins of his judges.” Of Voltaire’s skill in flattery, he remarks:—“And it was only from his hand that so much sugar could be swallowed without making the swallowor sick.” In the article on Madame D’Arblay, her German colleague, Madame Schwellenberg, is described with a coarseness of tone worthy of the original: “a hateful old toad-eater, as illiterate as a chamber-maid, and proud as a whole German chapter.” Madame Schwellenberg “raved like a maniac in the incurable ward of Bedlam.” Madame Schwellenberg “raged like a wild cat.”

Macaulay never fully appreciated the force of moderation, the impressiveness of calm understatement, the penetrating power of irony. His nature was essentially simple and not complex; when a strong feeling arose in his mind, it came forth at once naked and unashamed; it met with no opposition from other feelings capable of modifying or restraining it. A great deal of his clearness springs from this single, uninvolved character of his emotions, which never blend in rich, polyphonic chords, filling the ear of the mind. Somewhat of this simplicity appears to have been reflected in his countenance, Carlyle, who was practically acquainted with a very different internal economy, once observed Macaulay’s face in repose, as he was turning over the pages of a book. “I noticed,” he said, “the homely Norse features that you find everywhere in the Western Isles, and I thought to myself, ‘Well, any one can see that you are an honest, good sort of fellow, made out of oatmeal!’” He resembled the straight-splitting pine, rather than the gnarled oak. To liken a woman on account of her ill-temper to a raving maniac and a wild cat excited in him no qualms; the epithets expressed his feelings, but no counter wave of fastidious
taste surged up compelling a recast of the whole expression.

It is some confirmation of a view already advanced in these pages that Macaulay's natural aptitude was rather oratorical than literary, that at this very time he was making some of his best speeches in Parliament. The fine literary sense of nuance, the scrupulous choice of epithet, the delicacy which it alarmed by loud tones and colours, in short, the qualities most rare and precious in a writer, are out of place in oratory, which is never more effective than when inspired by manly and massive emotion, enforcing broad and simple conclusions. It is impossible to read Macaulay's speeches without feeling that in delivering them he was wielding an instrument of which he was absolutely the master. The luminous order and logical sequence of the parts are only surpassed by the lofty unity and coherence of the whole. High statesmanlike views are unfolded in language that is at once terse, chaste, and familiar, never fine-drawn or over-subtle, but plain, direct, and forcible, exactly suited to an audience of practical men. Above all, the noble and generous sentiment, which burns and glows through every sentence, melts the whole mass of argument, illustration, and invective into a torrent of majestic oratory, which is as far above the eloquence of rhetoric as high poetry is above the mere rhetoric of verse. It is the more necessary to dwell on this point with some emphasis, as an unjust and wholly unfounded impression seems to be gaining ground that Macaulay was a mere closet orator, who delivered carefully prepared essays in the House of Commons, brilliant perhaps, but unpractical rhetorical exercises that smelt strongly of the lamp. The truth is that Macaulay is never less rhetorical, in the bad sense of the word,
than in his speeches. He put on no gloves, he took in
hand no prepared roll, when on well-chosen occasions he
came down to the House to make a speech. Blows
straight from the shoulder; a short and sharp Roman
sword wielded with equal skill and vigour are rather the
images suggested by his performance in these conflicts.
Yet a hundred persons know his essays for one who is
acquainted with his speeches. During the period com-
prised in this chapter—from 1841 to 1848—he made
twelve speeches, and if the world’s judgments were dic-
tated by reason and insight instead of fashion and hear-
say, no equal portion of Macaulay’s works would be
deemed so valuable. It is no exaggeration to say that as
an orator he moves in a higher intellectual plane than he
does as a writer. As a writer he rather avoids the discussion
of principles, and is not always happy when he does engage
in it. In his speeches we find him nearly without exception
laying down broad luminous principles, based upon reason,
and those boundless stores of historical illustration, from
which he argues with equal brevity and force. It is
interesting to compare his treatment of the same subject
in an essay and a speech. His speech on the Maynooth
grant and his essay on Mr. Gladstone’s Church and State
deal with practically the same question, and few persons
would hesitate to give the preference to the speech.

It is difficult to give really representative extracts from
Macaulay’s speeches, for the reason that they are so
organically constructed that the proverbial inadequacy
of the brick to represent the building applies to them in
an unusual degree. Many of the speeches also refer to
topics and party politics which are rapidly passing into
 oblivion. One subject, to our sorrow, retains a perennial
interest: Macaulay’s speeches on Ireland would alone
suffice to place him in the rank of high, far-seeing statesmen. The lapse of well-nigh forty years has not aged this melancholy retrospect. He is speaking of Pitt's intended legislation at the time of the Union.

Unhappily, of all his projects for the benefit of Ireland, the Union alone was carried into effect; and, therefore, that Union was a Union only in name. The Irish found that they had parted with at least the name and show of independence; and that for this sacrifice of national pride they were to receive no compensation. The Union, which ought to have been associated in their minds with freedom and justice, was associated only with disappointed hopes and forfeited pledges. Yet it was not even then too late. It was not too late in 1813. It was not too late in 1821. It was not too late in 1825. Yes, if even in 1825 some men who were then as they are now, high in the service of the Crown, could have made up their minds to do what they were forced to do four years later, that great work of reconciliation which Mr. Pitt had meditated might have been accomplished. The machinery of agitation was not yet fully organized. The Government was under no strong pressure; and therefore concession might still have been received with thankfulness. That opportunity was suffered to escape, and it never returned.

In 1829, at length, concessions were made, were made largely, were made without the conditions which Mr. Pitt would undoubtedly have demanded, and to which, if demanded by Mr. Pitt, the whole body of Roman Catholics would have eagerly assented. But those concessions were made reluctantly, made ungraciously, made under duress, made from mere dread of civil war. How, then, was it possible that they should produce contentment and repose? What could be the effect of that sudden and profuse liberality following that long and obstinate resistance to the most reasonable demands, except to teach the Irishman that he could obtain redress only by turbulence? Could he forget that he had been, during eight-and-twenty years, supplicating Parliament for justice, urging those unanswerable arguments which prove that the rights of conscience
ought to be held sacred, claiming the performance of promises made by ministers and princes, and that he had supplicated, argued, claimed the performance of promises in vain? Could he forget that two generations of the most profound thinkers, the most brilliant wits, the most eloquent orators had written and spoken for him in vain? Could he forget that the greatest statesmen who took his part had paid dear for their generosity? Mr. Pitt had endeavoured to redeem his pledge, and he was driven from office. Lord Grey and Lord Grenville endeavoured to do but a small part of what Mr. Pitt thought right and expedient, and they were driven from office. Mr. Canning took the same side, and his reward was to be worried to death by the party of which he was the brightest ornament. At length, when he was gone, the Roman Catholics began to look, not to cabinets and parliaments, but to themselves. They displayed a formidable array of physical force, and yet kept within, just within, the limits of the law. The consequence was that, in two years, more than any prudent friend had ventured to demand for them was granted to them by their enemies. Yes; within two years after Mr. Canning had been laid in the transept near us, all that he would have done—and more than he could have done—was done by his persecutors. How was it possible that the whole Roman Catholic population of Ireland should not take up the notion that, from England, or at least from the party which then governed, and which now governs England, nothing is to be got by reason, by entreaty, by patient endurance, but everything by intimidation? That tardy repentance deserved no gratitude, and obtained none. The whole machinery of agitation was complete, and in perfect order. The leaders had tasted the pleasures of popularity; the multitude had tasted the pleasures of excitement. Both the demagogue and his audience felt a craving for the daily stimulant. Grievances enough remained, God knows, to serve as pretexts for agitation; and the whole conduct of the Government had led the sufferers to believe that by agitation alone could any grievance be removed. 

4 On the State of Ireland, Feb., 1844.
As a specimen of Macaulay’s power of invective, his attack on Sir Robert Peel may be quoted. After Peel’s death, when revising his speeches for publication, he recalled in his diary the impression he had made. “How white poor Peel looked while I was speaking: I remember the effect of the words, ‘There you sit, &c.’”

There is too much ground for the reproaches of those who having, in spite of a bitter experience, a second time trusted the Right Honourable Baronet, now find themselves a second time deluded. It has been too much his practice, when in Opposition, to make use of passions with which he has not the slightest sympathy, and of prejudices which he regards with a profound contempt. As soon as he is in power, a change takes place. The instruments which have done his work are flung aside. The ladder by which he has climbed, is kicked down. ... Can we wonder that the eager, honest, hot-headed Protestants, who raised you to power in the confident hope that you would curtail the privileges of the Roman Catholics, should stare and grumble when you propose to give public money to the Roman Catholics? Can we wonder that the people out of doors should be exasperated by seeing the very men who, when we were in office, voted against the old grant of Maynooth, now pushed and pulled into the House by your whippers-in to vote for an increased grant. The natural consequences follow. All those fierce spirits whom you hallowed on to harass us, now turn round and begin to worry you. The Orangeman raises his war-whoop: Exeter Hall sets up its bray: Mr. Macneill shudders to see more costly cheer than ever provided for the Priest of Baal at the table of the Queen: and the Protestant operatives of Dublin call for impeachments in exceedingly bad English. But what did you expect? Did you think when, to serve your turn, you called the devil up that it was as easy to lay him as to raise him? Did you think when you went on, session after session, thwarting and reviling those whom you knew to be in the right, and flattering all the worst passions of
those whom you knew to be in the wrong, that the day of reckoning would never come? It has come. There you sit, doing penance for the disingenuousness of years. If it be not so, stand up manfully and clear your name before the House and country. Show us that some steady policy has guided your conduct with respect to Irish affairs? Show us how, if you are honest in 1845, you can have been honest in 1841? Explain to us why, after having goaded Ireland to madness for the purpose of ingratiating yourselves with the English, you are now setting England on fire for the purpose of ingratiating yourselves with the Irish? Give us some reason which shall prove that the policy you are following, as Ministers, is entitled to support, and which shall not equally prove you to have been the most factious and unprincipled Opposition that ever this country saw?" 

But the time was approaching when these brilliant passages of arms needed to be brought to a close. Through manifold impediments and hindrances, Macaulay had slowly proceeded with his History of England: and he felt what most workers have experienced, that the attractive power of his work increased with its growth. In 1844, he gave up writing for the Edinburgh Review, a wise, though somewhat late resolution, which he would have done well to make earlier. In 1847 he lost his seat for Edinburgh, and thus was severed the last tie which connected him with active politics. He then settled down with steady purpose to finish his task; and, on November 29, 1848, the work was given to the world. Not since the publication of the first volume of the Decline and Fall, nearly three-quarters of a century before, has any historical work been received with such universal acclamation. The first edition of three thousand copies was exhausted in ten days; and in less than four months

5 Speech on Maynooth, April, 1845.
thirteen thousand copies were sold. The way in which Macaulay was affected by this overwhelming success showed that he was wholly free from any taint of pride or arrogance. "I am half afraid," he wrote in his journal, "of this strange prosperity. . . . I feel extremely anxious about the second part. Can it possibly come up to the first?"

We have now to consider the work in which, for many years, he had "garnered up" his heart.
CHAPTER V.

THE HISTORY.

"History," says Macaulay at the commencement of the Essay on Hallam, "at least in its state of ideal perfection, is a compound of poetry and philosophy. It impresses general truths on the mind, by a vivid representation of particular characters and incidents. But in fact the two hostile elements of which it consists have never been known to form a perfect amalgamation; and at length, in our own time, they have been completely and professedly separated. Good histories, in the proper sense of the word, we have not. But we have good historical romances and good historical essays."

The reconciliation of these two hostile elements of history was the dream of Macaulay's early ambition and the serious occupation of his later years. It will be worth while to briefly consider the problem itself, before we contemplate the success and skill which he brought to bear on its solution.

The two sides, or the two elements of history,—the element of fact, and the element of Art which fashions the fact into an attractive form,—have always been too obvious to be overlooked. In the earliest form of history—poetry and legend—the element of fact is reduced to a minimum, and almost completely overpowered by the element of art,
which moulds fact without restraint. The growth of civic life partly redresses the balance: the need of accurate record of facts is felt, and first bald annals, and then history in the common sense of the word, make their appearance. The relative proportion of the two ingredients was never carefully determined, but left to the taste and genius of individual writers. On the whole, however, the artistic element long maintained the upper hand. The search for facts, even when acknowledged as a duty, was perfunctory, and the main object of historians was to display their talent in drawing pictures of the past, in which imagination had a larger share than reality. The masters of this artistic form of history are the four great ancients, two Greek and two Roman, Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus, who have never been, and are in little danger of being, surpassed. The moderns for a long time only copied the ancients in history as in all other departments. Considering his opportunities and easy access to original authorities, Hume is hardly a more careful inquirer than Livy: an attractive narrative in a pure style was the main object of both.

But towards the end of the last century history received a new impulse. The complicated structure of society began to be dimly surmised; political economy introduced a greater precision into the study of certain social questions; and the enlarged view thus gained of the present was soon extended to the past. The French Revolution, revealing as it did the unsuspected depth of social stratification, accelerated a movement already begun. In the early part of the present century history was studied with new eyes. It was seen that it must all be written over again—that the older writers had seen little more than the surface and were only surveyors, whereas geologists were-
wanted who could penetrate to greater depths. In short, the past began to be scientifically examined, not for artistic purposes in order to compose graceful narratives—not for political purposes in order to find materials for party warfare—not for theoretical purposes in order to construct specious but ephemeral philosophies of history; but simply for accurate and verifiable knowledge. It was a repetition of the process through which previous sciences had passed from the pursuit of chimerical to real and valid aims—the study of the heavens from astrology to astronomy, the study of the constituents of bodies from alchemy to chemistry, the study of medicine from the search for the elixir vitae to serious therapeutics. The result was to depress, and almost degrade, the artistic element in history.

When the magnitude and severity of the task before men was at last fully perceived—when it was seen that we have to study the historical record as we study the geological record—that while both are imperfect, full of gaps which may never be filled up, yet enough remains to merit and demand the most thorough examination, classification, and orderly statement of the phenomena we have—it was felt there was something trivial and unworthy of the gravity of science to think of tricking out in the flowers of rhetoric the hardly-won acquisitions of laborious research. Poetical science and scientific poetry are equally repellent to the genuine lovers of both. Simple unornate statement of the results obtained is the only style of treatment consonant with the dignity of genuine inquiry.

Macaulay passed his youth and early manhood during the period when this great change was taking place in historical studies, and producing its first fruits. But it did not find favour in his eyes. Very much the contrary; it filled him with something like disgust. Instead of
yielding to the new movement, he resolved to ignore it, and even by his practice to oppose it. Though the two elements of history had never yet been amalgamated with success, and were about perhaps to be severed for ever, he thought he could unite them as they had never been united before. He took, as we have seen (chap. ii.), no notice of the new history, showed no curiosity in what was being done in that direction, and nursing his own thoughts in almost complete isolation amid contemporary historians, conceived and matured his own plan of how history should be written. He has left us in no doubt as to what that plan was. It was that history should be a true novel, capable of "interesting the affections, and presenting pictures to the imagination. . . . It should invest with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory; call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners, and garb; show us over their houses, seat us at their tables, rummage their old-fashioned wardrobes, explain the uses of their ponderous furniture." And that this plan, made in youth, was carried out in after-life with rare success and felicity, his History is here to show. Thus, just at the time when history was taking a more scientific and impersonal character, Macaulay was preparing to make it more concrete and individual, to invest it with more flesh and blood, and make it more capable of stirring the affections. He was not a progressivist or even a conservative, but a reactionary in his notions of history. But originality may be shown (sometimes is more shown) in going back as well as in going forward. Those are by no means the strongest minds which most readily yield to the prevailing fashion of their age. Macaulay showed a lofty self-confidence and sense of power, when he resolved
to attempt a task which he owned had never been accomplished before—nay, to confer on artistic history a rank and dignity which it never had previously enjoyed, at a time when a formidable rival was threatening to depress, or even to depose it altogether.

His plan led, or rather forced him, to work on a scale of unprecedented magnitude, which, even in spite of his example, has never been quite equalled. To produce the effects he required, extreme minuteness of detail was indispensable; characters must be painted life-size, events related with extraordinary fulness, and the history of a nation treated in a style proper to memoirs, or even to romances. The human interest had to be sustained by biographical anecdotes, and a vigilant liveliness of narrative which simulated the novel of adventure. The political interest was to be kept up by similar handling of party debates, party struggles, by one who knew by experience every inch of the ground. But the true historical and sociological interest necessarily retreated into a secondary rank. An ordinance map cannot serve the purpose of a hand atlas. On the scale of an inch to a mile we may trace the roads and boundaries of our parish; but we cannot combine with such minuteness a synthetic view of the whole island and its relation to European geography. It was on the scale of an ordinance map that Macaulay wrote his *History of England*. Such a plan necessarily excluded as much on the one hand as it admitted on the other. Our view of the past is vitiated and wrong, unless a certain proportion presides over our conception of it. The most valuable quality of history is to show the process of social growth; and the longer the period over which this process is observed, the more instructive is the result. A vivid perception of a short period, with imperfect grasp of
what preceded and followed it, is rather misleading than instructive. It leads to a confusion of the relative importance of the part as compared to the whole.

It is perhaps a low-minded objection to Macaulay's conception of history, to remark that its application to lengthy periods is a physical impossibility. The five volumes we have of his History comprise a space of some fifteen years. It was his original scheme to bring his narrative down to the end of the reign of George IV., in round numbers a period of a century and a half. If therefore his plan had been carried out on its present scale, it would have needed fifty volumes, if not more, as it is highly improbable that more recent events would have permitted greater compression. But further, he wrote at an average a volume in three years; therefore his whole task would have taken him one hundred and fifty years to accomplish—that is to say, it would have taken as long to record the events as the events took to happen. This is almost a practical refutation of the method he adopted. And yet such an absurd result could not on his principles be avoided. If history is to be written in such minute detail that it shall rival the novel in unbroken sustentation of the personal interest attaching to the characters, unexampled bulk must ensue. Macaulay had no intention of being so prolix. He expected to achieve the first portion of his plan (down to the commencement of Walpole's administration), a matter of thirty-five years, in five volumes; and as it turned out, five volumes only carried him over fifteen years. But he could not afford to reduce his scale without sacrificing his conception of how history should be written.

What was the new and original element in Macaulay's treatment of history? The unanimous verdict of his
contemporaries was to the effect that he had treated history in a novel way. He was himself satisfied that he had improved on his predecessors. "There is merit, no doubt," he says, in his diary, "in Hume, Robertson, Voltaire, and Gibbon. Yet it is not the thing. I have a conception of history more just, I am confident, than theirs." Self-conceit was no vice of Macaulay's; and as on this point of his originality he persuaded all the reading world of his time to adopt his opinion, our business is to find out in what his originality consisted. What it amounts to, or may be intrinsically worth, will be considered afterwards.

If we take to pieces one of his massive chapters with a view to examine his method, we shall find that his self-confidence was not without foundation. Historical narrative in his hands is something vastly more complex and involved than it ever was before. Indeed "narrative" is a weak and improper word to express the highly organized structure of his composition. Beneath the smooth and polished surface layer under layer may be seen of subordinate narratives, crossing and interlacing each other like the parts in the score of an oratorio. And this complexity results not in confusion, but in the most admirable clearness and unity of effect. His pages are not only pictorial, they are dramatic. Scene is made to follow scene with the skill of an accomplished playwright; and each has been planned and fashioned with a view to its thoughtfully prepared place in the whole piece. The interest of the story as a story is kept up with a profound and unsuspected art. The thread of the narrative is never dropped. When transitions occur—and no writer passes from one part of his subject to another with more boldness and freedom—they are managed with such skill and ease
that the reader is unaware of them. A turn of the road has brought us in view of a new prospect; but we are not conscious for a moment of having left the road. The change seems the most natural thing in the world. Let the more remarkable chapters be examined from this point of view—say, simply for example, the Ninth, the Fifteenth, and the Twentieth—and then let the most adverse critic be asked to name an instance in which the art of historical composition has been carried to a higher perfection.

In short, Macaulay was a master of the great art of mise-en-scène, such as we never had before. It is rather a French than an English quality, and has been duly appreciated in France. Michelet praises Macaulay in warm terms, speaks of him as "illustre et regretté," and of his "très beau récit." If he must be considered as an historical artist who on the whole has no equal, the fact is not entirely owing to the superiority of his genius, unmistakable as that was. No historian before him ever regarded his task from the same point of view, or aimed with such calm patience and labour at the same result; no one, in short, had ever so resolved to treat real events on the lines of the novel or romance. Many writers before Macaulay had done their best to be graphic and picturesque, but none ever saw that the scattered fragments of truth could, by incessant toil directed by an artistic eye, be worked into a mosaic, which for colour, freedom, and finish, might rival the creations of fancy. The poets who have written history—Voltaire, Southey, Schiller, Lamartine—are not comparable to Macaulay as historical artists. They did not see that facts recorded in old books, if collected and sorted with unwearied pains, might be made to produce effects nearly as striking and brilliant as the facts they invented for the works of
their imagination. Macaulay saw that the repertory of truth was hardly less extensive than the repertory of fiction. If the biography of every character is known with the utmost detail, it will be possible, when each presents himself in the narrative, to introduce him with a fulness of portraiture such as the novelist applies to the hero and heroine of his romance. Exhaustive knowledge of the preceding history of every place named, enables the writer to sketch the castle, the town, or the manor house with opportune minuteness and local colour. Above all, a narrative built on so large a scale that it allows absolutely unlimited copiousness of facts and illustration, can be ordered with that regard to the interest of the story as a story that the universal curiosity in human adventure is awakened which produces the constant demand for works of fiction. Macaulay saw this, and carried out his conception with a genius and patient diligence which, when our attention is fully called to the point, fill the mind with something like amazement. It is probable that no historian ever devoted such care to the grouping of his materials. He re-planned and re-wrote whole chapters with ungrudging toil. “I worked hard,” he says, in his diary, “at altering the arrangement of the first three chapters of the third volume. What labour it is to make a tolerable book; and how little readers know how much trouble the ordering of parts has cost the writer.” Again: “This is a tough chapter. To make the narrative flow along as it ought, each part naturally springing from that which precedes, is not easy. What trouble these few pages have cost me. The great object is that they may read as if they had been spoken off, and seem to flow as easily as table-talk.” Any one who knows by experience how difficult it is to conduct a wide complex narrative
with perspicuity and ease, and then observes the success with which Macaulay has conquered the difficulty, will be apt to fall into a mute admiration almost too deep for praise. In the "ordering of parts," which cost him so much labour, his equal will not easily be found. Each side of the story is brought forward in its proper time and place, and leaves the stage when it has served its purpose, that of advancing by one step the main action. Each of these subordinate stories, marked by exquisite finish, leads up to a minor crisis or turn in events, where it joins the chief narrative with a certain éclat and surprise. The interweaving of these well-nigh endless threads, the clearness with which each is kept visible and distinct, and yet is made to contribute its peculiar effect and colour to the whole texture, constitute one of the great feats in literature.

Imperfectly as a notion of such constant and pervading merit can be conveyed by an extract, one is offered here merely as an example. But a passage from Hume, dealing with the same events, will be given first. An interesting comparison—or rather, contrast—between the styles of the earlier and later writer will be found to result. The subject is the flight of the Princess Anne at the crisis of her father's fortunes. Hume says:—

But Churchill had prepared a still more mortal blow for his distressed benefactor. His lady and he had an entire ascendant over the family of Prince George of Danemark; and the time now appeared seasonable for overwhelming the unhappy king, who was already staggering with the violent shocks which he had received. Andover was the first stage of James's retreat towards London, and there Prince George, together with the young Duke of Ormond, Sir George Huet, and some other persons of distinction, deserted him in the night time, and retired
to the Prince’s camp. No sooner had this news reached London, than the Princess Anne, pretending fear of the king’s displeasure, withdrew herself in company with the bishop of London and Lady Churchill. She fled to Nottingham, where the Earl of Dorset received her with great respect, and the gentry of the country quickly formed a troop for her protection.

This is Macaulay’s account:—

Prince George, and Ormond, were invited to sup with the king at Andover. The meal must have been a sad one. The king was overwhelmed by his misfortunes. His son-in-law was the dullest of companions. “I have tried Prince George sober,” said Charles the Second, “and I have tried him drunk; and drunk or sober, there is nothing in him.” Ormond, who was through life taciturn and bashful, was not likely to be in high spirits at such a moment. At length the repast terminated. The king retired to rest. Horses were in waiting for the Prince and Ormond, who, as soon as they left the table, mounted and rode off. They were accompanied by the Earl of Drumlanrig, eldest son of the Duke of Queensberry. The defection of this young nobleman was no insignificant event. For Queensberry was the head of the Protestant episcopalianists of Scotland, a class compared with whom the bitterest English Tories might be called Whiggish; and Drumlanrig himself was lieutenant-colonel of Dundee’s regiment of horse, a band more detested by the Whigs than even Kirke’s lambs. This fresh calamity was announced to the king on the following morning. He was less disturbed by the news than might have been expected. The shock which he had undergone twenty-four hours before had prepared him for almost any disaster; and it was impossible to be seriously angry with Prince George, who was hardly an accountable being, for having yielded to the arts of such a tempter as Churchill. “What!” said James, “Is Est-il-possible gone too? After all, a good trooper would have been a greater loss.” In truth the king’s whole anger seems at this time to have been concentrated, and not without cause, on one object. He set off for
London, breathing vengeance against Churchill, and learned on arriving a new crime of the arch-deceiver. The Princess Anne had been some hours missing.

- Observe the art with which the flight of the princess has been kept back, till it can be revealed with startling effect. The humorous story continues.—

Anne, who had no will but that of the Churchills, had been induced by them to notify under her own hand to William, a week before, her approbation of his enterprise. She assured him that she was entirely in the hands of her friends, and that she would remain in the palace or take refuge in the city as they might determine. On Sunday, 25th November, she and those who thought for her were under the necessity of coming to a sudden resolution. That afternoon a courier from Salisbury brought tidings that Churchill had disappeared, and that he had been accompanied by Grafton, that Kirke had proved false, and that the royal forces were in full retreat. There was, as usually happened when great news, good or bad, arrived in town, an immense crowd that evening in the gallery of Whitehall. Curiosity and anxiety sate on every face. The Queen broke forth into natural expressions of indignation against the chief traitor, and did not altogether spare his too partial mistress. The sentinels were doubled round that part of the palace which Anne occupied. The princess was in dismay. In a few hours her father would be at Westminster. It was not likely that he would treat her personally with severity; but that he would permit her any longer to enjoy the society of her friend was not to be hoped. It could hardly be doubted that Sarah would be placed under arrest, and would be subjected to a strict examination by shrewd and rigorous inquisitors. Her papers would be seized; perhaps evidence affecting her life would be discovered; if so, the worst might well be dreaded. The vengeance of the implacable king knew no distinction of sex. For offences much smaller than those which might be brought home to Lady Churchill, he had sent women to the scaffold and the stake.
Strong affection braced the feeble mind of the princess. There was no tie which she would not break, no risk which she would not run, for the object of her idolatrous affection. "I will jump out of the window," she cried, "rather than be found here by my father." The favourite undertook to manage an escape. She communicated in all haste with some of the chiefs of the conspiracy. In a few hours everything was arranged. That evening Anne retired to her chamber as usual. At dead of night she rose, and accompanied by her friend Sarah and two other female attendants, stole down the back stairs in a dressing-gown and slippers. The fugitive gained the open street unchallenged. A hackney coach was in waiting for them there. Two men guarded the humble vehicle; one of them was Compton, Bishop of London, the princess's old tutor; the other was the magnificent and accomplished Dorset, whom the extremity of the public danger had aroused from his luxurious repose. The coach drove to Aldersgate Street, where the town residence of the Bishops of London then stood, within the shadow of their cathedral. There the princess passed the night. On the following morning she set out for Epping Forest. In that wild tract Dorset possessed a venerable mansion, which has long since been destroyed. In his hospitable dwelling, the favourite resort of wits and poets, the fugitives made a short stay. They could not safely attempt to reach William's quarters, for the road thither lay through a country occupied by the royal forces. It was therefore determined that Anne should take refuge with the northern insurgents. Compton wholly laid aside for the time his sacerdotal character. Danger and conflict had rekindled in him all the military ardour which he had felt twenty-eight years before, when he rode in the Life Guards. He preceded the princess's carriage in a buff coat and jackboots, with a sword at his side, and pistols in his holsters. Long before she reached Nottingham she was surrounded by a body-guard of gentlemen who volunteered to escort her. They invited the bishop to act as their colonel, and he assented with an alacrity which gave great scandal to rigid churchmen, and did not much raise his character even in the opinion of Whigs.
Reserving the question whether history gains or loses by being written in this way—a most important reservation—it must be allowed that of its kind this is nearly as good as it can be. The sprightly vivacity of the scene is worthy of any novel, yet it is all a mosaic of actual fact. We may call it Richardson grafted on Hume.

Passages like these, as every reader knows, are incessant in Macaulay's *History*, and have been the foundation of a common charge of "excess of ornament." In this there seems to be some misconception, or even confusion of mind, on the part of those who bring the accusation. It is obviously open to us to object to this mode of treating history altogether. We may say that to recount the history of a great state in a sensational style befitting the novel of adventure is a mistaken proceeding. But this objection eliminates Macaulay's *History* from the pale of toleration. According to his scheme such passages are not mere ornament, but part and parcel of the whole structure; to remove them would not be to remove mere excrescences, but a large portion of the substance as well. We must make our choice between two styles of history—the one in which the interest centres round human characters, and the other in which it centres round the growth and play of social forces. Perhaps the two may very well exist side by side—perhaps not; but in any case we cannot with fairness employ the principles of the one to criticize the methods of the other. Macaulay wittingly, and after mature thought, adopted the style we know, and carried it out with a sumptuous pomp that has never been surpassed. His ornament, it will be generally found, is no idle embellishment, stuck on with vulgar profusion in obedience to a faulty taste, but structurally useful parts of the building, supporting, according to size
and position, a due share of the weight; or, in other words, mere additional facts for which he is able to find a fitting place. Take, for instance, this little vignette of Monmouth and the Princess of Orange:

The duke had been encouraged to hope that in a very short time he would be recalled to his native land and restored to all his high honours and commands. Animated by such expectations, he had been the life of the Hague during the late winter. He had been the most conspicuous figure at a succession of balls in that splendid Orange hall which blazes on every side with the most ostentatious colouring of Jordaens and Hondt Horst. He had taught the English country-dance to the Dutch ladies, and had in his turn learned from them to skate on the canals. The princess had accompanied him in his expeditions on the ice; and the figure which she made there, poised on one leg, and clad in petticoats shorter than are generally worn by ladies so strictly decorous, had caused some wonder and mirth to the foreign ministers. The sullen gravity which had been characteristic of the Stadholder’s court, seemed to have vanished before the influence of the fascinating Englishman. Even the stern and pensive William relaxed into good-humour when his brilliant guest appeared.

Will any one say that this is idle and redundant ornament? Could the two men who came to deliver England from the dull folly of James II. be more clearly and rapidly sketched, and the failure of the one and the success of the other more suggestively traced back to the difference of their respective characters?

A similar remark applies to the careful and elaborate portraits by which all the chief and most of the secondary characters are introduced. They have been much blamed—and with reason—by those whose notions of history are opposed to Macaulay’s. It must be admitted also that he
had not a quick eye for character, and little of that skill which sketches in a few strokes the memorable features of a face or a mind. Still from his point of view such portraits were quite legitimate, and it cannot be denied that in their way they are often admirably done. They overflow with knowledge, they convey it in an attractive form, and they are inserted with great art just when they are wanted. Even their length, which sometimes must be pronounced excessive, never seems to interfere with the action of the story. In such an extensive gallery it is difficult to make a selection. Perhaps the Twentieth chapter, containing the fine series of portraits of Sunderland, Russell, Somers, Montague, Wharton, and Harley, may be named as among the most remarkable. Taken altogether they occupy more than twenty pages. An important subject—the first formation of a Ministry in the modern sense of the word—is dropped for the purpose of introducing them, yet so skilful is the handling that we are conscious of no confusing interruption. This merit distinguishes Macaulay’s illustrations, and even digressions, almost invariably. They never seem to be digressions. Instead of quenching the interest they heighten it; and after his widest excursions he brings the reader back to the original point with a curiosity more keen than ever in the main story. Greater evidence of power could hardly be given.

In criticizing Macaulay’s History we should ever bear in mind it is after all only a fragment, though a colossal fragment. We have only a small portion of the edifice that he had planned in his mind. History, which has so many points of contact with architecture, resembles it also in this, that in both impressiveness largely depends on size. A few arches can give no adequate notion of the long
colonnade. Of Macaulay's work we have, so to speak, only a few arches. It is true that he built on such a scale that the full completion of his design was beyond the limited span of one man's life and power. But had he lived ten or fifteen years longer—as he well might, and then not have exceeded the age of several of his great contemporaries, Hallam, Thiers, Guizot, Michelet, Ranke, Carlyle—and carried on his work to double or treble its present length, it is difficult to exaggerate the increased grandeur which would have resulted. Such a structure, so spacious and lofty, required length for harmonious proportion. As it is, the History of England reminds one of the unfinished cathedral of Beauvais. The ornate and soaring choir wants the balance of a majestic nave, and the masterpiece of French Gothic is deprived of its proper rank from mere incompleteness.

Unfortunately the History can be reproached with more serious faults than incompleteness. The most common objections are the unfair party-spirit supposed to pervade the book, and its strange inaccuracies as to matters of fact.

The accusation of party-spirit seems on the whole to be unfounded, and we may suspect is chiefly made by those whose own prejudices are so strong that they resent impartiality nearly as much as hostility. He that is not with them is against them. Macaulay when he wrote his History, had ceased to be a party man as regards contemporary politics, and in his work he is neither a Whig nor a Tory but a Williamite. He over and over condemns the Whigs in unqualified terms, and he always does justice to the really upright and high-minded Tories. The proof of this will be found in the warmth of his eulogy and admiration for eminent nonjurors, such as Bishop Ken.
and Jeremy Collier. As clergymen and uncompromising Tories they would have been equally repugnant to him, if party-spirit had governed his sympathies to the extent supposed. The fact is that there are few characters mentioned in the whole course of his History of whom he speaks in such warm, almost such enthusiastic, praise. Of the sainted Bishop of Wells he writes with a reverence which is not a common sentiment with him for anybody. Of the author of a Short View of the English Stage, he is likely to be thought by those who have read that book to speak with excessive eulogy. But he considered them very justly to be thoroughly upright and conscientious men, and for such it must be admitted he had a very partial feeling. It would not be easy to show that he has ever been unjust or at all unfair to the Tories as a party, or as individuals. He blames them freely; but so he blames the Whigs. The real origin of this charge of party-spirit may probably be traced to the unfavourable impression he conveys of the house of Stuart. The sentimental Jacobitism fostered by Scott and others, took offence at his treatment of the king of the cavaliers and his two sons. But is he unfair, or even unduly severe? If ever a dynasty of princes was condemned, and deserved condemnation, at the bar of history, it was that perverse and incompetent race, who plotted and carried out their own destruction with a perseverance which other sovereigns have brought to the consolidation of their power. Are impartial foreigners, such as Ranke and Gneist, less severe? On the contrary. "Another royal family," says the latter, "could hardly be named which has shown on the throne in an equal degree such a total want of all sense of kingly duty." Nay, we have what some persons will consider the highest authority pronouncing in Macaulay's favour. We read in his diary
of March 9, 1850: “To dinner at the palace. The Queen was most gracious to me. She talked much about my book, and owned she had nothing to say for her poor ancestor James II.” One can understand a preference for arbitrary power; one can appreciate an admiration for the heroic Strafford. But Charles I. and James II. were mere blunderers, whose lust for power was only equalled by their inability to use it.

✓ With regard to individuals the case is different. He allowed himself to cultivate strong antipathies towards a number of persons—statesmen, soldiers, men of letters—in the past, and he pursued them with a personal animosity which could hardly have been exceeded if they had crossed him in the club or the House of Commons. He conceived a contemptuous view of their characters; his strong historical imagination gave them the reality of living beings, whom he was always meeting “in the corridors of Time,” and each encounter embittered his hostility. Marlborough, Penn, and Dundee (in his History), Boswell, Impey, and Walpole (in his Essays), always more or less stirred his bile, and his prejudice leads him into serious inaccuracies. One naturally seeks to inquire what may have been the cause of such obliquity in a man who was never, by enmity itself, accused of wanting generous feelings, and whom it is almost impossible to suspect of conscious unfairness. The truth seems to be that Macaulay had, like most eminent men, les défauts de ses qualités. One of his qualities was a punctilious regard for truth and straightforward dealing. Another was supreme common sense. The first made him hate and despise knaves, the second made him detest dunces; and he did both with unnecessary scorn—with a sort of donnish and self-righteous complacency which is anything but winning. He made
up his mind that Boswell was a pushing impertinent fool; and for fools he had no mercy. He satisfied himself that Bacon was a corrupt judge; that Impey was an unjust judge; that Marlborough was a base, avaricious timeserver; and that Penn was a pompous hypocrite, or something very like it. For such vices he had little or no tolerance, and he was somewhat inclined to lose his head in his anger at them. That in all the cases referred to, he showed precipitancy, and what is worse, obstinate persistence in error, unfortunately cannot be denied. But there was nothing unworthy in his primary impulse. It was a perverted form of the sense of justice to which upright men are sometimes prone, somewhat resembling that arrogance of virtue which misleads good women into harshness towards their less immaculate sisters.

Whatever this plea may be worth, it cannot blind us to the serious breaches of historical fidelity which he has been led to commit. Mr. Paget, in his New Examen, has proved beyond question that, with regard to Marlborough and Penn, Macaulay has been guilty of gross inaccuracy, nay, even perversions of the truth. For details of the evidence, the reader must consult Mr. Paget. The miscarriage of the attack on Brest, which Macaulay lays exclusively "on the basest of all the hundred villanies of Marlborough," is shown to have failed through the imprudent valour of Talmash. William and his ministers were well aware that the French knew of the expedition, and had long been prepared to repel it. The king writes, "They were long apprised of our intended attack;" and mildly lays the blame on the rashness of his own general. But Macaulay makes it appear that through Marlborough's treachery the English forces went blindly to their own destruction. Expecting to surprise the French,
we are told they found them armed to the teeth, solely in consequence of information sent to James II. by Churchill; hence the failure, and the deaths of Talmash and many brave men, of whom Macaulay does not scruple to call Marlborough the "murderer." It must be owned that this is very serious: and it does not much mend the matter to ascribe, as we surely may, Macaulay's inaccuracy to invincible prejudice, rather than to ignorance or dishonesty. He was thoroughly convinced that Marlborough was a faithless intriguer, which may be quite true; but that was no reason for charging him with crimes which he did not commit. Let it be noticed, however, that the refusal to be dazzled by military glory, and to accept it as a set off to any moral delinquency, is no vulgar merit in an historian. Mr. Carlyle has been heard to say that Rhadamantus would certainly give Macaulay four dozen lashes when he went to the Shades, for his treatment of Marlborough. This is quite in character for the Scotch apostle of "blood and iron." Macaulay could admire military genius when united with magnanimity and public virtue as warmly as any one. But he could not accept it as a compensation for the want of truth and honour.

His treatment of Penn admits of the same kind of imperfect palliation. He had satisfied himself that the Quaker was, for a time at least, a time-server and a sycophant. And he allowed his disgust at such a character to hurry him into culpable unfairness, which has been exposed by the late Mr. Hepworth Dixon, and Mr. W. E. Forster, as well as by Mr. Paget. The animosity with which he pursues Penn—the false colouringamounting, in places, to real misrepresentation, which he gives to actions innocent or laudable, can only excite astonishment and regret. His account of Penn's inter-
ference in the dispute between the king and Magdalen College is almost mendacious. He would make it appear that Penn acted merely as a ready and unscrupulous tool of James II. "The courtly Quaker did his best to seduce the College from the right path. He first tried intimidation." (Hist. cap. viii.) Now nothing is more certain than that it was the College which invoked Penn's mediation with the king. The whole subject is a painful one, and we would gladly leave it. The only inducement we can have to linger over it is the query What was the chief motive or origin of such historical unfaithfulness? A partial answer to this question has been attempted above, —that a wrong-headed species of righteous indignation got possession of the writer's mind, and led him into the evil paths of injustice and untruth. But there was besides another temptation to lead Macaulay astray, to which few historians have been exposed in an equal degree. His plan of assimilating real to fictitious narrative — of writing history on the lines of the novel—obscured or confused his vision for plain fact. His need of lighter and darker shades caused him to make colours when he could not find them; his necessities as an artist forced him to correct the adverse fortune which had not provided him with the tints which his purpose required. No well-constructed play or novel can dispense with a villain whose vices throw up in brighter relief the virtues of the hero and heroine. That he did yield to this temptation, we have ample evidence. It caused him to use his authorities in a way that serious history must entirely condemn. Mr. Spedding has shown how freely he deviated into fiction in his libel on Bacon: a molecule of truth serves as a basis for a superstructure of fancy. To Bacon's intellectual greatness a contrast was needed—.
and it is found partly in the generosity of Essex, and partly in his own supposed moral baseness. A good instance of Macaulay’s tendency to pervert his authorities to artistic uses, will be found in his account of the dying speech of Robert Francis, who was executed for the alleged murder of Dangerfield, by striking him in the eye with a cane. Repelling a scandalous report that the act had been prompted by jealousy, on the ground of Dangerfield’s criminal relations with his wife, Francis declared on the scaffold that he was certain that she had never seen him in her whole life, and added, “besides that, she is as virtuous a woman as lives; and born of so good and loyal a family, she would have scorned to prostitute herself to such a profligate person.” In Macaulay’s version this statement is altered and dressed up thus:—

The dying husband, with an earnestness half ridiculous half pathetic, vindicated the lady’s character; she was, he said, a virtuous woman, she came of a loyal stock, and if she had been inclined to break her marriage vow, would at least have selected a Tory and a churchman for her paramour.

This is the result of treating history in the style of romance. It is, no doubt, probably true, that if the virtuous and calumniated Mrs. Francis had permitted herself to have a paramour, he would have been a Tory and a churchman. But what are we to think of an historian who presents in oratio obliqua this poetic probability as the actual assertion of the dying husband?

It is even less easy to account for Macaulay’s treatment of the Anglican clergy. No one thing in his History gave such deep and permanent offence. It is difficult even to surmise a reason for the line he took. The imperfect excuses which may be pleaded for his injustice to indivi-
duals, will not avail in this case. Neither an ill-regulated zeal for virtue, nor the needs of picturesque history, demanded the singular form of depreciation of the English clergy which he has allowed himself. He does not arraign their morality, or their patriotism, or even their culture on the whole—but their social position; they were not gentlemen; they were regarded as on the whole a plebeian class; “for one who made the figure of a gentleman, ten were menial servants.” He must have been well aware that such a reflection conveyed an affront which in our society would not readily be forgiven. Nor has it been. One frequently meets with persons who will not tolerate a good word for Macaulay; and if the ground of their repugnance is sought for, we generally find it in these remarks upon the clergy. The climax of insult was reached in the aspersion thrown on the wives of clergy men, that they were generally women whose “characters had been blown upon;” and this is based on no better authority than a line in Swift—unusually audacious, cynical, and indecent, even for him. The tone of the whole passage—some eight or ten pages—savour s more of satire and caricature than of sober history. Whether that “invincible suspicion of parsons” which Mr. Leslie Stephen declares to be a characteristic of the true Whig, was at the bottom of it, one would not like to say. But few would deny that Macaulay, in his treatment of the Church of England has more openly yielded to the promptings of party-spirit than any in other portions of his History.

Nevertheless, they deceive themselves who think that they can brand Macaulay with the stigma of habitual and pervading unfaithfulness. He does not belong to that select band of writers whose accuracy may be taken
for granted—to the class of Bentley, Gibbon, and Bayle—who seem provided with an extra sense which saves them from the shortcomings of other men. He has a share of ordinary human infirmity, but not a large share. He can be prejudiced and incorrect; but these failings are most assuredly the exception, not the rule. Above all, he impresses all impartial judges with a conviction of his honesty. "There never was a writer less capable of intentional unfairness," says Mr. Gladstone, who still is well aware how inaccurate he could be on occasion. His inaccuracy arose from hearty dislike for men of whom he honestly thought ill. Of conscious duplicity and untruth, no one who knows him can conceive him guilty.

We now turn to the reservation made a few pages back, and inquire how far Macaulay's conception of history deserves to be commended in itself, irrespective of the talent with which he put it into execution.

In a letter to Macvey Napier, Macaulay wrote: "I have at last begun my historical labours. . . . The materials for an amusing narrative are immense. I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies." We did not need this intimation to make us acquainted with the chief object which the writer had in view; but it is satisfactory to have it, as now no doubt remains on the subject. This, then, was Macaulay's pole-star, by which he guided his historical argosy over the waters of the past—young ladies for readers, laying down the novel of the season to take up his History of England. His star led him to the port for which he steered. But how widely it made him depart from the great ocean highway frequented by ships bound for more daring ventures, it is now our business to examine and show.
The chief objections which may be made against the History are the following:—

(1.) Want of generalized and synthetic views.

(2.) Excessive diffuseness.

(3.) Deficient historical spirit.

(1.) As a work of art the History is so bright and impressive, it appeals so strongly to the imagination, that we do not at first perceive how little it appeals to the reason, or how little it offers by way of enlightenment to the mind. Any page, or even chapter taken at random, is almost sure to charm us by its colour, variety, and interest. But when we read a whole volume, or still more the whole work through, pretty rapidly, we become conscious of a great omission. In spite of the amazing skill of the narrative, of the vivid and exciting scenes that are marshalled past us as on some great stage, the reflective faculty finds its interest diminishing; while the eye and the fancy are surfeited with good things, the intellect is sent empty away. It is not easy to retain any definite impression of what the book has taught us. We remember that while reading it we had a most amusing entertainment, that crowds of people in old-fashioned costumes who took part in exciting scenes were presented us. But our recollection of the whole resembles very much our recollection of a carnival or a masqued ball a few weeks after it is over. Our memory of English history seems to have been at once brightened and confused.

The reason, as Macaulay would have said, is very obvious: while no historian ever surpassed him in the art of brilliantly narrating events, few among the men of mark have been so careless or incapable of classifying them in luminous order which attracts the attention of the mind. Engrossed with the dramatic and pictorial side of history,
he paid little attention to that side which gives expression to general views, which embraces a mass of details in an abstract statement, thereby throwing vastly increased light and interest on the details themselves. He never resumes in large traits the character of an epoch—never traces in clear outline the movement (entwicklungsgang) of a period, showing as on a skeleton map the line of progress. It does not appear that he yielded to the silly notion that abstract history must necessarily be incorrect. All history unfortunately is liable to be incorrect, and concrete history as much as any. It is nearly as easy to blunder in summing up the character of a man—as Penn or Marlborough—as in summing up the character of a period. There can be no doubt, however, which is the more valuable and important thing to do. History must become a chaos, if its increasing volume and complexity are not lightened and methodized by general and synthetic views. It is in this respect that the modern school of history is so superior to the ancient. We may see this by remarking the errors into which the greatest men formerly fell, from which very small men are now preserved. When we find such a statesman as Machiavelli ascribing the fall of the Roman Empire to the treachery and ambition of Stilicho, who "contrived that the Burgundians, Franks, Vandals, and Alans should assail the Roman provinces;" when we find such a genius as Montesquieu accounting for the same catastrophe by the imprudent transfer of the seat of empire, which carried all the wealth from Rome to Constantinople; or such a scholar as Gibbon still explaining the same event by the refusal of the Roman legionaries to wear defensive armour, we are able to appreciate the progress that has been made in comprehending the past. Those great men saw nothing absurd in at-
tributing the most momentous social transformation recorded in history to quite trivial and superficial causes. If we know better, it is because the study of society, whether past or present, has made some progress towards scientific shape. This progress was not furthered by Macaulay. He contributed nothing to our intelligence of the past, though he did so much for its pictorial illustration.

For instance. He has not grasped and reproduced in well-weighed general proportions the import and historical meaning of the Stuart period, which was his real object. He has painted many phases of it with almost redundant fulness. But he has not traced the evolution of those ideas and principles which mark its peculiar character. He mentions the "strange theories of Filmer," but instead of pointing out their origin, and the causes of their growth (which was the historical problem) he seriously controverts them from the modern point of view, as if Filmer needed refuting now-a-days. He devotes over two pages to this work of supererogation. But if we ask why this notion of divine right rose into such prominence at this particular time, he has nothing to say. He rarely or never accounts for a phase of thought, institution, or line of policy, tracing it back to antecedent causes, and showing how under the circumstances it was the natural and legitimate result. What he does is to describe it with often wearisome prolixity. He describes the Church of England over and over again from the outside, from a sort of dissenter's point of view; but except the not recondite suggestion that the Church of England was a compromise between the "Church of Rome and the Church of Geneva," he really tells us nothing. This idea of a compromise strikes him as so weighty and important that he develops it with
an elaboration which is common with him, and which Mr. Leslie Stephen irreverently calls his zeal "for blacking the chimney." Thus:

In every point of her system the same policy may be traced. Utterly rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, and condemning as idolatrous all adoration paid to sacramental bread and wine, she yet, to the disgust of the Puritan, required her children to receive the memorials of Divine love meekly kneeling upon their knees. Discarding many rich vestments which surrounded the altars of the ancient faith, she yet retained, to the horror of weak minds, the robe of white linen, which typified the purity which belonged to her as the mystical spouse of Christ. Discarding a crowd of pantomimic gestures, which in the Roman Catholic worship are substituted for intelligible words, she yet shocked many rigid Protestants by marking the infant just sprinkled from the font, with the sign of the cross. The Roman Catholic addressed his prayers to a multitude of saints, among whom were numbered many men of doubtful, and some of hateful character. The Puritan refused the addition of saint, even to the Apostle of the Gentiles and to the disciple whom Jesus loved. The Church of England, though she asked for the intercession of no created being, still set apart days for the commemoration of some who had done and suffered great things for the faith. She retained confirmation and ordination, as edifying rites, but she degraded them from the rank of sacraments. Shrift was no part of her system; yet she gently invited the dying penitent to confess his sins to a divine, and empowered her ministers to soothe the departing soul by an absolution which breathed the very spirit of the old religion. In general, it may be said that she appeals more to the understanding, and less to the senses and the imagination, than the Church of Rome; and that she appeals less to the understanding, and more to the senses and imagination, than the Protestant churches of Scotland, France, and Switzerland.

There are five pages more of a quality quite up to this
sample. Now the point to be noticed is that this is not history at all. The historian of the seventeenth century is not concerned with what the Church of England is or is not; but with how she came to be what she was in the days of the Stuarts. What we want to know is how and why the Puritan bishops of Elizabeth were succeeded in a few years by the High Church bishops of James and Charles. Those who ask these questions must not address themselves to Macaulay. He can only tell them that “the Arminian doctrine spread fast and wide,” and that “the infection soon reached the court.” Why the transformation of opinion took place he does not attempt to explain. The singular theory which he held as to the inherent unreasonableness of all religious opinion, that it was a matter of mere accident and caprice, no doubt seriously hampered him in his treatment of these topics. But it is strange that he was not surprised at his own inability to deal with a whole order of historical phenomena of constant recurrence since Europe became Christian. How differently did Gibbon handle a vastly more difficult theme—the orthodox and heretical dogmas of the early Church.

Even the constitutional side of his subject is neglected, though probably few historians or politicians have known it better or have valued it more. But we look in vain in his pages for a clear exposition, freed from the confusion of details, of the progressive stages of the conflict between the crown and the parliament during the Stuart period—the momenta of the struggle set forth in luminous order, showing how a move on one side was answered by a move on the other. In vivid concrete narrative Macaulay has few equals; but in that form of abstract narrative which traces the central idea and energy of a social movement, carefully excluding the disturbing intrusion of particular facts, he showed
little aptitude; when he attempts it, he cannot maintain it for long; he falls off into his bright picturesque style. It is not easy to see what purpose Macaulay had in view by writing his first chapter in its present form. A brief and weighty sketch of the growth and progress of the English constitution would have been a worthy preface to his history of the last great struggle for parliamentary government. But he has not attempted anything of the kind. It would not have occurred to every one to review English history from the Saxon times, and not mention once Simon de Montfort's name, nor even refer to the institutions he fostered, except with a vagueness that was utterly unmeaning. The thirteenth century he describes as a "sterile and obscure" portion of our annals. He even does his best to appear guilty of an ignorance with which it is impossible to credit him. Speaking of the Norman Conquest, he says "the talents and even the virtues of the first six French kings were a curse to England; the follies and vices of the seventh were her salvation." And why? Because "If John had inherited the great qualities of his father, of Henry Beauclerc, or of the Conqueror . . . . the house of Plantagenet must have risen to unrivalled ascendency in Europe." Frightful results would have followed. "England would never have had an independent existence . . . . the noble language of Milton and Burke would have remained a rustic dialect, without a literature, a fixed grammar, or a fixed orthography." It is not easy to believe that Macaulay was unaware of the debt that England owed to her vigorous Norman and Angevin kings—that their strong despotism carried our country rapidly through several stages of political development, for which other nations had to wait for centuries. In the same light vein he has a strange paragraph about the "parliamentary assem-
bles" of Europe, in which he contrasts the failure of parliamentary government on the Continent with its success in England. The reason was that those assemblies were not wise like the English parliament was, they were not sufficiently vigilant and cautious in voting taxes. The policy which they "ought to have adopted was to take their stand firmly on their constitutional right to give or withhold money, and resolutely to refuse funds for the support of armies, till ample securities had been provided against despotism. This wise policy was followed in our country alone." This policy succeeded in England alone; but it was tried repeatedly in France and Spain during several centuries, and if it failed it was certainly not because Frenchmen and Spaniards overlooked its wisdom, but because that unanimity of national life which the Norman Conquest had produced in England was absent in those countries. But Macaulay as an historian cared for none of these things. His morbid dread of dulness made him shrink from them. In this very chapter, where he cannot find space for the most important topics of English history, he readily dilates in his picturesque way on the manners of the Normans during a page and a half.

(2.) As regards his diffuseness there can be but one opinion. The way in which he will go on repeating the same idea in every form and variation that his vast resources of language enabled him to command, is extraordinary to witness. He seems to take as much pains to be redundant and prolix as other men take to be terse and compressed. When he has to tell us that the Reformation greatly diminished the wealth of the Church of England, it costs him two pages to say so.1 When he has to describe the change that came over Tory opinion.

1 Hist. cap. iii.
after the trial of the seven bishops, he requires six pages to deliver his thought. And this is his habitual manner whenever he depicts the state of religious or political opinion. That it was intentional cannot be doubted; it was his way of "making his meaning pellucid," as he said; which it certainly did, rendering it as clear as distilled water, and about as strong. But it would be rash to assume that it was a mistake from his point of view. The young ladies on whom he had fixed his eye when he began to write had to be considered; a Sallustian brevity of expression would easily drive them back to their novels, and this was a danger to avoid.

(3.) The most serious objection remains, and it is nothing less than this, that he was deficient in the true historic spirit, and often failed to regard the past from the really historical point of view. What is the historical point of view? Is it not this: to examine the growth of society in bygone times with a single eye for the stages of the process—to observe the evolution of one stage out of another previous stage—to watch the past as far as our means allow, as we watch any other natural phenomena, with the sole object of recording them accurately? The impartiality of science is absolute. It has no preferences, likes, or dislikes. It considers thelowest and the highest forms oflife with the same interest and the same zeal; it makes no odious comparisons between lower and higher, between younger and older; but simply observes coordinates, in time rising to generalizations and deductions. The last work of the greatest of English biologists was devoted to earth-worms, a subject which earlier science would have treated with scorn. Now what does Macaulay do in his observation of the past? 

*He compares it, to its* [Hist. cap ix.]
disparagement, with the present. The whole of his famous Third chapter, on the State of England, is one long pean over the superiority of the nineteenth century to the seventeenth century—as if an historian had the slightest concern with that. Whether we are better or worse than our ancestors is a matter utterly indifferent to scientific history, whose object is to explain and analyze the past, on which the present can no more throw light than the old age of an individual can throw light on his youth. Macaulay's constant preoccupation is not to explain his period by previous periods, but to show how vastly the period of which he treats has been outstripped by the period in which he lives. Whatever may be the topic—the wealth or population of the country, the size and structure of the towns, the roads, the coaches, the lighting of London, it matters not—the comparison always made is with subsequent England, not previous England. His enthusiasm for modern improvements is so sincere that it produces the comical effect of a countryman's open-eyed astonishment at the wonders of Cheapside. Of Manchester he says:—

That wonderful emporium was then a mean, ill-built market town, containing under six thousand people. It then had not a single press: it now supports a hundred printing establishments. It then had not a single coach: it now supports twenty coach-makers.

Of Liverpool:—

At present Liverpool contains more than three hundred thousand inhabitants. The shipping registered at her port, amounts to between four and five hundred thousand tons. Into her custom-house has been repeatedly paid in one year, a sum more than thrice as great as the whole income of the English
crown in 1685. The receipts of her post office, even since the
great reduction of the duty, exceed the sum which the postage
of the whole kingdom yielded to the Duke of York. Her endless
quays and warehouses are among the wonders of the world.
Yet even those docks and quays and warehouses seem hardly to
suffice for the gigantic trade of the Mersey; and already a rival
city is growing fast on the opposite shore.

Of Cheltenham we are told: “Corn grew and cattle
browsed over the space now covered by that long succession
of streets and villas.”

In Tunbridge Wells—

we see a town which would a hundred and sixty years ago
have ranked in population fourth or fifth among the towns of
England. The brilliancy of the shops, and the luxury of the
private dwellings, far surpasses anything that England could
then show.

The list might be infinitely extended. A word
may be added on Macaulay’s delight in villas. They
were evidently to him one of the most attractive features
in a town or a landscape. Contrasting the London of
Charles II. with the London of the present day, he says:—

The town did not as now fade by imperceptible degrees into the
country. No long avenues of villas, embowered in lilacs and
laburnums, extended from the great centre of wealth and civiliza-
tion almost to the boundaries of Middlesex . . . On the west,
scarcely one of those stately piles of building which are inhabited
by the noble and the wealthy, was in existence.

Even in the crisis of his hero’s fate, when William is
about to land at Torbay, he cannot forget to do justice to
his favourite form of domestic architecture. Speaking of
Torquay he says:—
The inhabitants are about ten thousand in number. The newly built churches and chapels, the baths and libraries, the hotels and public gardens, the infirmary and museum, the white streets rising terrace above terrace, the gay villas peeping from the midst of shrubberies and flower-beds, present a spectacle widely different from any that in the seventeenth century England could show.

Now the serious question is whether the very opposite of the historical spirit and method is not shown in remarks of this kind? Supposing even we share Macaulay’s singular partiality for villas—which is the last thing many would be disposed to do—yet what bearing have modern villas on the history of England in the seventeenth century? This is to invert the historical problem; to look at the past through the wrong end of the telescope. The explanation of this singular aberration will probably be found in Macaulay’s constant immersion in politics. Many passages of his history have the appearance of fragments of a budget speech setting forth the growth of the country in wealth and population, and consequent capacity to supply an increased revenue. When he answered poor Southey’s sentimental dreams about the virtue and happiness of the olden time, he was nearly wholly in the right. But he did not see that this polemical attitude was out of place in history. He became at too early a period in life a serious politician, not to damage his faculty as an historian. Guizot never recovered his historical eye after he was Prime Minister of France, though he lived for nearly thirty years in enforced leisure afterwards. Gibbon and Grote had just as much of politics as an historian can bear, and neither of them remotely equalled Macaulay’s participation in public affairs.
CHAPTER VI.

THE END.

Macaulay seems to have enjoyed almost uninterrupted good and even robust health until he had passed his fiftieth year. Neither his incessant work, nor the trying climate of India, nor the more trying climate of the House of Commons, produced more than temporary indisposition, which he speedily shook off. He was a broad-chested active man, taking a great deal of exercise, which was however almost confined to walking. "He thought nothing of going on foot from the Albany to Clapham, and from Clapham on to Greenwich," and as late as August in the year 1851, he mentions in his diary having walked from Malvern to Worcester and back—say sixteen miles. He had the questionable habit of reading during his walks, by which the chief benefit of the exercise both to mind and body is probably lost. The solitary walker is not without his compensations, or even his delights. A peculiarly vivid meditation is kindled in some men by the unfatiguing movement, and a massive grouping and clarifying of ideas is obtained by a long ramble, which could not be reached in the study or at the desk. Rousseau and Wordsworth habitually composed in their walks. They were reading in their own way, but not in the same book as Macaulay. The quantity of printed
matter that he could get through on these occasions was prodigious, and on a lesser authority than his own hardly to be believed. In the walk just mentioned, between Worcester and Malvern, he read no less than fourteen books of the Odyssey. This was only a particular instance of that superabundant energy and pervading over-strenuousness which belonged to the constitution of a mind that was well-nigh incapable of repose and thoughtful brooding. On a journey "his flow of spirits was unfailing—a running fire of jokes, rhymes, puns never ceasing. It was a peculiarity of his that he never got tired on a journey. As the day wore on he did not feel the desire to lie back and be quiet, and he liked to find his companions ready to be entertained to the last."\(^1\) Even when he and his fellow-travellers had gained the timely inn, his overpowering vivacity was not quenched, but he would produce impromptu translations from Greek, Latin, Italian, or Spanish writers, or read selections from Sterne, Smollett, or Fielding, or fall to capping verses or stringing rhymes with his nephew and nieces. His swift energy impressed even strangers as something portentous. A bookseller with whom he dealt informs me that he never had such a customer in his life; that Macaulay would come into his shop, run through shelf after shelf of books, and in less time than some men would take to select a volume, he would order a pile of tomes to be sent off to the Albany.

Whether this life at constant high pressure was the cause of his health giving way does not appear, but in July, 1852, he was suddenly stricken down by heart disease, which was soon followed by a confirmed asthma. This sudden failure of health seems to have taken him

\(^1\) *Travels*, vol. ii. cap. xi.
by surprise; but even his own journal shows that he had received warnings which to a man of a more introspective turn would have been full of significance. But the malady declared itself at last with a malignity which even he could not overlook. "I became," he says, "twenty years older in a week. A mile is more to me now than ten miles a year ago." Forty years of incessant labour had done their work.

What follows right up to the closing scene is very touching, and shows that courageous side of Macaulay's nature on which his uniformly prosperous life never made adequate demands. No man probably would have fought a long doubtful uphill fight with more resolute fortitude than he. Had his lot been cast in arduous times, had he been tried by misfortune, or injustice, or persecution, his biography, we may be sure, would have been far more exciting than it is. Though he was the most peaceful of men, he was thoroughly courageous. If he had lived in the times of which he was the historian, he would have stood in the breach either as a soldier or a politician among the bravest: he would have led a forlorn hope either civic or military when other men's hearts were failing them for fear. Physical or political courage of an exceptional kind he was never called upon to show. But the calm patient endurance with which he supported the slow invasion of a mortal disease adds another trait to the amiability of a character which was unselfish from first to last. Though well aware of the nature of his illness, he allowed his sister, Lady Trevelyan, the consolation of thinking that he did not know how ill he was. Oppressed as he was with asthma and heart disease, though so weak at times that he could hardly walk even with a stick, he resolutely faced and accom-
plished his daily "task," and wrote the whole of the fourth and fifth volumes with undiminished animation and thoroughness. Unfortunately he was again a member of the House of Commons. The people of Edinburgh had promptly regretted and repented the disgrace they had done themselves by unseating him in 1847 for his sturdy conscientiousness in supporting the Maynooth Grant, and placed him at the head of the poll in the general election of 1852, even after he had haughtily refused to give any pledge, or even to stand for the city. Although his constituents were willing to grant him every indulgence, and his attendance in the House was by no means assiduous, yet he often did attend when prudence would have kept him at home. "We divided twice," he wrote in his diary, "and a very wearisome business it was. I walked slowly home at two in the morning, and got to bed much exhausted. A few such nights will make it necessary for me to go to Clifton again." On another occasion, "I was in pain and very poorly. I went down to the House and paired. On my return just as I was getting into bed, I received a note from Hayter to say that he had paired me. I was very unwilling to go out at that hour" (it was in January), "and afraid of the night air; but I have a horror of the least suspicion of foul play; so I dressed and went again to the House, settled the matter about the pairs, and came back at near twelve o'clock." The old insatiable appetite for work returned upon him during the intermissions of his malady. He was chairman of the committee which was appointed to consider the proposal to throw open the Indian Civil Service to public competition, and had to draw up the report. "I must and will finish it in a week," he wrote, and was as good as his word.
He made only three speeches during his last four years in the House, all in the year 1853. The effort was far too great and exhausting to his shattered strength. Yet one of these speeches was a brilliant oratorical triumph, a parallel to his performance on the copyright question, when he defeated a measure which but for his intervention would undoubtedly have been carried. Lord Hotham’s bill for the exclusion of judges from the House of Commons had passed through all stages but the last without a division. Macaulay determined to oppose it, but went down to the House very nervous and anxious about the result. The success was complete, indeed overwhelming. The bill “was not thrown out, but pitched out.” But the cost was excessive. Macaulay said he was knocked up; and a journalist who has left an impressive account of the whole scene remarked that he was “trembling when he sat down, and had scarcely the self-possession to acknowledge the eager praises which were offered by the ministers and others in the neighbourhood.”

He was much moved by the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, as one might expect; but on neither was his line of thought or sentiment at all elevated above that of the multitude. An ardent admirer of Lord Palmerston, his patriotism was of the old-fashioned type—of a man who could remember Wellington’s campaigns. When travelling on the continent he was accustomed to say that he liked to think that he was a citizen of no mean city. Indeed there was a perceptible element of Chauvinism in his composition. The fact calls for no remark; it was quite in harmony with the rest of his character, which at no time betrayed the slightest tendency to press forward to wider and loftier views than those generally popular in
his time. Not a doubt seems to have crossed his mind as to the policy or expediency of the Crimean War, whether it was a wise thing even from a narrowly patriotic point of view. There is nothing to show that he had ever considered or come to any conclusion on the complicated problems of the Eastern question. His dislike of speculation even extended to the domain of politics. It would not be easy to cite from his letters and journals when travelling abroad a single sentence indicating interest in and observation of the laws, institutions, and local conditions of foreign countries. His utterances on the Indian Mutiny can only be read with regret, and show what an insecure guide the most benevolent sentiment may be when unsupported by reasoned principle. He verified Michelet's aphorism, "qu'il n'y a rien de si cruel que la pitié." In September, 1857, he wrote:—

"It is painful to be so revengeful as I feel myself. I who cannot bear to see a beast or a bird in pain, could look on without winking while Nana Sahib underwent all the tortures of Ravaillac. . . . With what horror I used to read in Livy how Fulvius put to death the whole Capuan Senate in the second Punic War! and with what equanimity I could hear that the whole garrison of Delhi, all the Moulavies and Mussulman doctors there, and all the rabble of the bazaar, had been treated in the same way! Is this wrong?" Clearly it was wrong in a man of Macaulay's culture and experience. He might have remembered with what just severity he had branded cruelty in his History and Essays, with what loathing he had spoken of the Duke of York's delight in witnessing the infliction of torture. One must take the liberty of entirely disbelieving his report of his own feelings, and of thinking that if the matter had been brought to a
practical test he would much have preferred being tortured by the Nana to torturing him himself. His tone, however, is curious as one of the many proofs of the untheoretic cast of his mind. Philosophy was well avenged for the scorn with which he treated her.

The glimpse we catch of Macaulay in these latter years, sitting with his eyes fixed on death, is touching even to strangers; and the reality must have been pathetic and painful beyond words to those who loved him and had ever experienced his boundless affection. He waited for the final summons with entire calmness and self-possession. "I am a little low," he wrote, "but not from apprehension, for I look forward to the inevitable close with perfect serenity; but from regret for what I love. I sometimes hardly command my tears when I think how soon I may leave them." He had also another regret, which might well have been a poignant one—the leaving of his work unfinished; but he refers to it very softly and sweetly. "To-day I wrote a pretty fair quantity of history. I should be glad to finish William before I go. But this is like the old excuses that were made to Charon." As he passed through "the cold gradations of decay" his spirit manifestly rose into a higher range. A self-watching tenderness of conscience appears, of which it would not be easy to find traces before. He was anxious lest the irritability produced by disease should show itself by petulance and want of consideration for others. "But I will take care. I have thought several times of late that the last scene of the play was approaching. I should wish to act it simply, but with fortitude and gentleness united." At last he had been forced to look down into the dark abyss which surrounds life, from which he had hitherto turned away with rather too marked a persistence. His tone of reso-
lute contentedness, before his illness, was apt to be too emphatic. "October 25, 1850. My birthday. I am fifty. Well, I have had a happy life. I do not know that any one whom I have seen close has had a happier. Some things I regret; but who is better off?" And there are other utterances of a similar kind. He clearly avoided, on principle as well as from inclination, dwelling on the gloomy side of things. It gave him pain to look towards the wastes which skirt human existence, and he found no profit in doing so. When troubles and trials came he knew he could bear them as well as the most; but he felt no call to go and look at them when afar off. He turned to the heart's and hearts warm with human love that he could trust, and willingly forgot the inclemency outside. His contentedness was no doubt corroborated by another circumstance, that his illness never apparently was of a gastric kind. He was never inspired by the tenth (demonic) muse of indigestion, the baleful goddess who is responsible for much of the Weltschmerz and passionate unrest which has found voice in modern times. But now he is brought face to face with realities which cannot be ignored. For, by one of those fatalities which seem to wait till a man has been brought low before they fall upon him with crushing weight, the beloved sister (Lady Trevelyan), in whom and in whose family for long years he had garnered up his heart, would be compelled in a few months to join her husband in India, where he had been appointed Governor of Madras. "He endured it manfully, and almost silently, but his spirits never recovered the blow." The full anguish of the blow itself he did not live to feel, for he died suddenly and peacefully on the evening of the 28th December, 1859, at

\[2 \text{Trevelyans}, \text{vol ii. cap. xv.}\]
Holly Lodge, whither he had removed in 1856, on leaving his chambers in the Albany. He was buried in Poet's Corner, in Westminster Abbey, on 9th January, 1860.

In reviewing Macaulay's life and considering the application of his rare gifts, one is led to wish that fortune had either favoured him more or less. Had he been born to ancestral wealth and honours, or had he been condemned to prolonged poverty and obscurity, it is probable that he would have developed resources and powers which, as it happened, he was never called upon to display, which it is very likely he himself did not suspect. It must be regretted that he was not free to follow either politics or literature with undivided attention. Had he been a broad-aced squire with an historic name, we cannot doubt that his life would have been devoted to politics; and we can even less doubt that he would promptly have made his way into the front rank of contemporary statesmen. His unsurpassed business talent and faculty of getting through work; his oratorical gifts, which would soon with the proper training have developed into a complete mastery of debate; his prudence, vigour, self-command, and innate amiability; his vast knowledge and instantaneous command of it—all point to his possessing the stuff of which English Premiers are made. Who among his contemporaries can be named as more endowed with the qualities of a great parliamentary leader than he? Was Lord John Russell, or Lord Melbourne, or Lord Derby, or Sir James Graham, or Palmerston, or Cornwallis Lewis his equal? If we abstract the prestige conferred by great name or great fortune in our oligarchic society, he was not the equal, but the superior, of all of them excepting Peel and Disraeli; and he would be rash who ventured
to assert that if he had been a baronet with 40,000/ a year, like Peel, or had been such in a position as Lord Beaconsfield was to devote all his time, energy, and ambition to the House of Commons, he would have yielded to either. But like Burke—though his case is certainly much less shocking—the novus homo of genius was not allowed to compete for the honour of serving his country in the highest office.

On the other hand, suppose that circumstances had excluded him from politics altogether, and that he had been reduced to literature alone as an avenue to fame. I have already said that I think that politics were his forte, and that although he will live in memory chiefly as a writer, he was by nature a practical man. But it is not inconsistent with this view to hold that as a writer he would have been all the better if he had not meddled with politics at all, or only very sparingly. Politics are a good school for a student with an excessive tendency to seclusion. Gibbon was probably benefited by being a member of the House of Commons, because he was essentially a recluse, and a personal contact with public affairs supplied a useful corrective to his natural bent. But he never became an active politician like Macaulay, and Macaulay was in no need of the discipline which was useful to Gibbon. Macaulay's tendency was very far from being too esoteric and speculative. All the gymnastic he could have derived from a severe drilling in Hegelianism at Berlin or Tubingen, would barely have sufficed to correct his practical unspeculative tone of mind. Instead of this he had no gymnastic at all, except such as can be got from Greek and Latin grammar. Then, before he was thirty he became a member of Parliament—the very last place, as he well knew, likely to foster a broad and philosophic
temper. Considering what he did achieve in the whirl of business in which he lived till he was well advanced into middle age, can we doubt that a life of solitude and study would have led him into regions of thought and inquiry to which as a matter of fact he never penetrated? It is not the number or even the quality of the books read which makes for edification, wisdom, and real knowledge; but the open eye, the recipient spirit, the patience and humility contented to grope slowly towards the light. Macaulay's mode of life was adverse to inwardness, reflection, meditation; and he had no such innate tendency in that direction that he could dispense with help from any quarter. Outward circumstances alone prevented him from taking a first rank in politics; circumstances and inward disposition combined to deprive him of the very highest rank in literature.

The attempt to classify a great writer, to fix his true place on the scroll of fame, is not blameworthy, as if it were identical with disparagement. However imperfect the attempt may be, if made with good faith it may be useful as leading to a more accurate judgment later on. The settlement of the rank and position of eminent writers who have clearly passed into the permanent literature of a nation, cannot be left to the caprice of individual readers. Literary history would become a scene of intolerable confusion, without some effort towards grouping and classifying the numerous candidates for fame. Earlier attempts in this direction, like the present, are certain to be erroneous and faulty in many respects; but if they provoke their own rectification and supersession, they will not be useless. Among English men of letters, Macaulay must ever hold a place. The question is what place? He is still generally spoken of with somewhat indiscriminating
eulogy; but a serious opposition has already been made to the vulgar estimate of his merits, and it is more likely to grow than diminish with the coming years. An equitable agreement is manifestly desirable between those who think his eloquence unsurpassed and those who think his style detestable; a middle term will have to be found.

It is an error, not always corrected by age and experience, to ask of men and writers what they cannot give. Macaulay can give us sumptuous and brilliant pictures of past times, which so far have not had their equals. His narrative power among historians is quite unapproached, and on a level with that of the greatest masters of prose fiction. Here we may pause, and doubt whether eulogy can conscientiously go further. On the other hand, he has little to say either to the mind or the heart. He has not been a pioneer into any ground untrodden by previous speculators; he is not one of those writers whom we seek “when our light is low,” telling us of the things which belong unto our peace. But he has related—or may we not say sung?—many great events in English history with epic width and grandeur. He was, moreover, an honest, brave, tender-hearted man; a good citizen, a true friend, full of affection and self-sacrifice towards his kindred, virtuous and upright in every relation of life. It may be doubted whether his sweet, unselfish nature would have desired higher praise.

In the year 1875 a statue by Mr. Woolner was erected in the ante-chapel of Trinity College, for which the
following Inscription, at the request of the college, was written by Professor Jebb:—

THOMAE BABINGTON BARONI MACAULAY
HISTORICO DOCTRINA PIE DE VIVIDIS INGENII LUMINIBUS PRAECLARO
QUI PRIMUS ANNALES ITA SCRIPSIT
UT VERA FICITIS LIBENTIUS LEGERENTUR,
ORATORI REBUS COPIOSO SENTENTIIS PRESSO ANIMI MOTIBUS ELATO
QUI CUM OTIO STUDIIS UNICE GAUDERET
NUNQUAM REPUBLICAE DEFUIT,
SIVE INDIA LITTERIS ET LEGIBUS EMENDANDA
SIVE DOMI CONTRA LICENTIAM TUENDAM LIBERTAS VOCARET,
PONERE NIGIL HUMILE SPIRANTI
VIR O CUI CUNCTORUM VENERATIO
MINORIS FUIT QUAM SUORUM AMOR
HUIUS COLLEGII OLM SOCIO
QUOD SUMMA DUM VIXIT PIETATE COLUIT
AMICI MAESENTES S.S.E.C

Of all the posthumous honours Macaulay has received, this probably would have gratified him the most.
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