

Thomas Carlyle : table talk.

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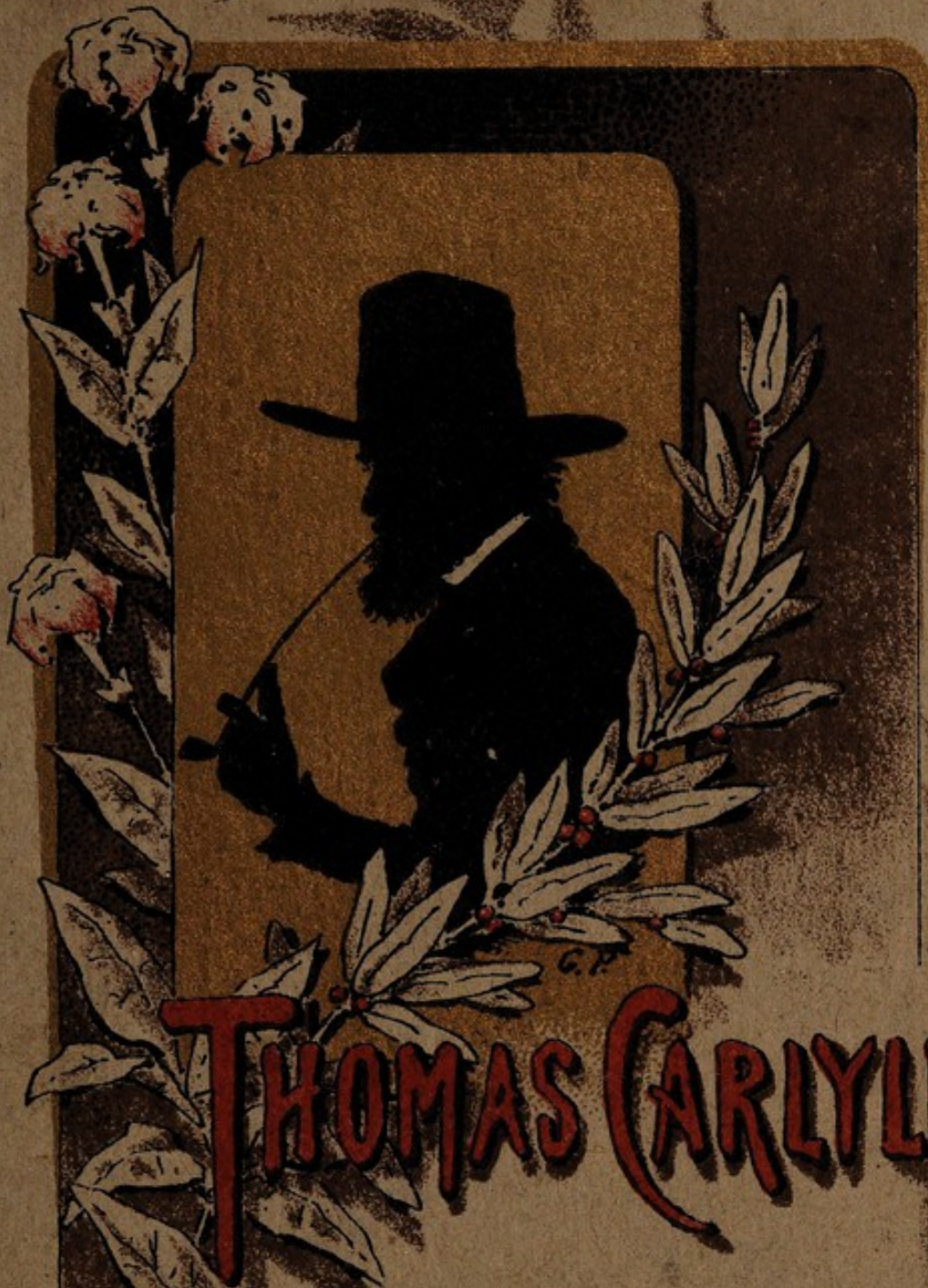
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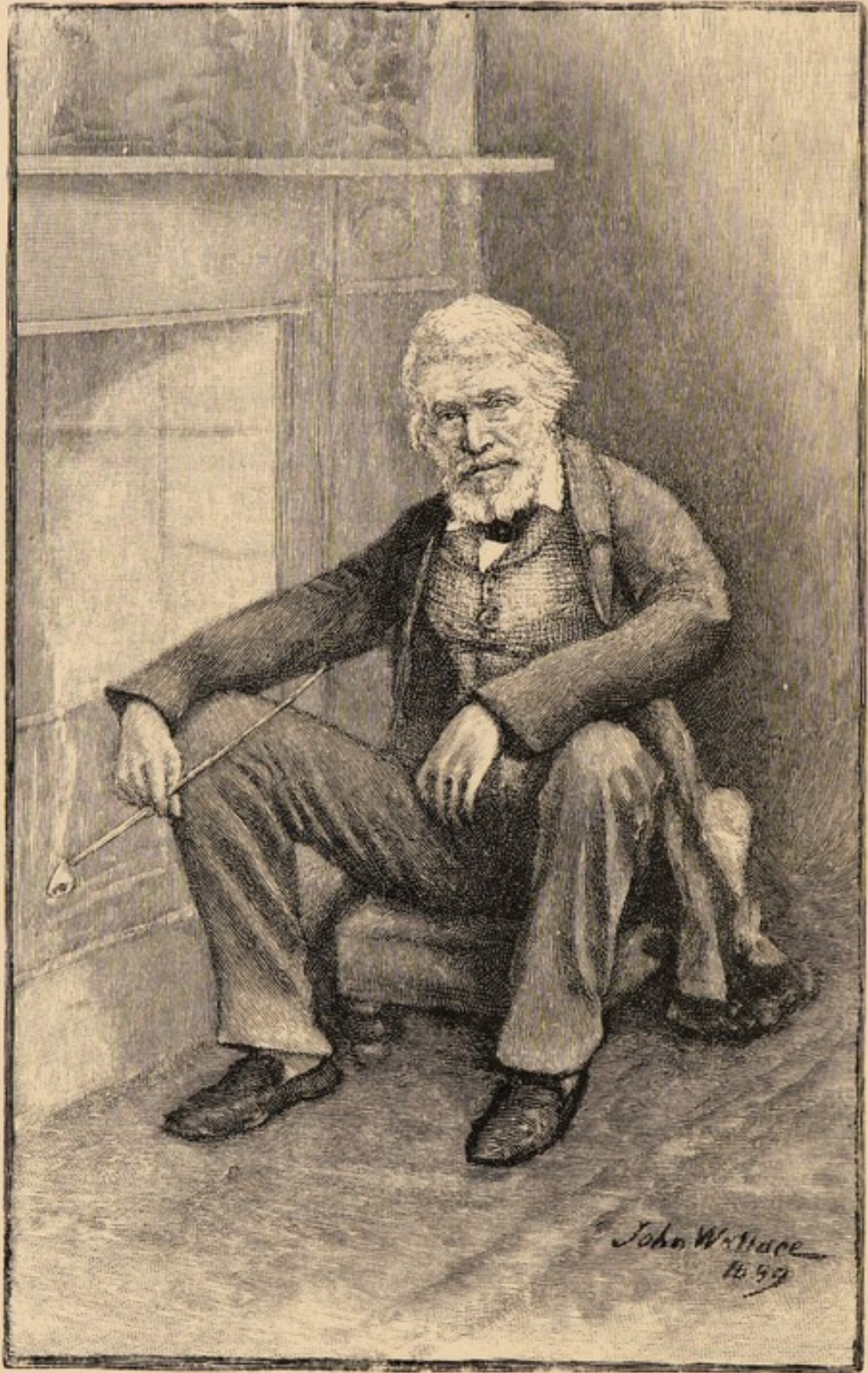
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THOMAS CARLYLE.

THOMAS CARLYLE

TABLE TALK.



LIVERPOOL :

AT THE OFFICE OF "COPE'S TOBACCO PLANT."

1890.

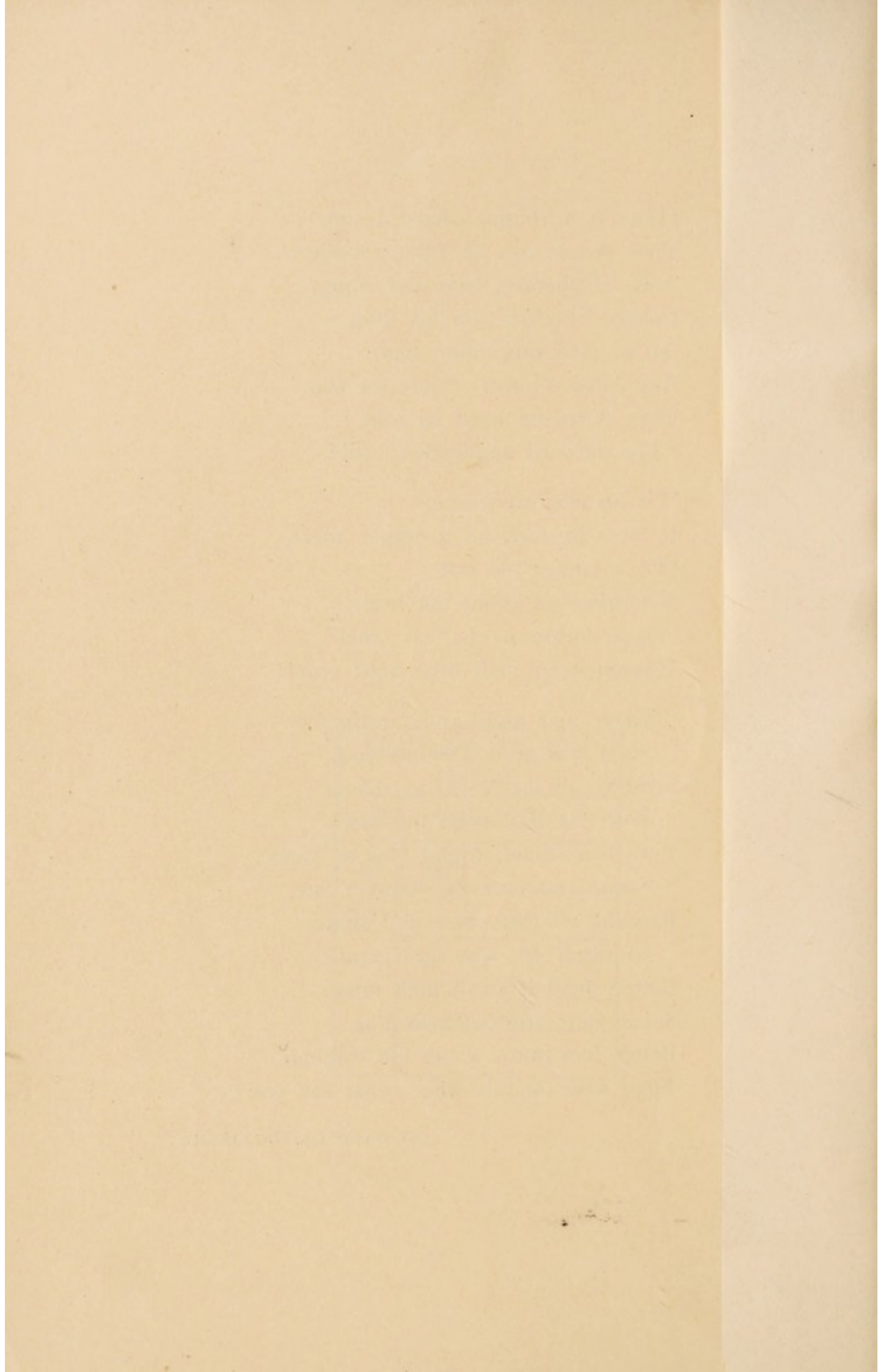
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HERE is a volume—have a care!—
That should not be left everywhere;
And, as chemist, trim and smug,
Labels “Poison” on his drug,
So we take precaution here,
And label VENOM—“just for fear.”
This, it hardly need be told,
“For outward application” sold.

’Tis an acid so severe—
It bites through all it comes anear,
’Tis a vinegar so tart—
It curdles all about the heart,
’Tis a poison so d——d cruel—
Heaven keep such from your gruel!

“Knave and fool—and mostly fool”—
So it was grim Thomas said,
Sending all the world to school
With “a box aside the head.”
Yet, dear friend, friend fool or knave,
Seems not ours the happier fate,
Reading all this sweet and suave
Gratitude for wise and great?
Better small if small men miss
Sneer and satire such as this,
Better fool one’s whole life through
Than wise on this wise—what say you?

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



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MEMORANDUM

TO :

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CARLYLE AS A TALKER.

PROBABLY Mr. Matthew Arnold was right in refusing to classify Carlyle as "a great writer;" for he did not mean thereby that Carlyle was not a writer of great things, but simply that he was not primarily and supremely a man of letters. Carlyle's strongly pronounced dislike to literary work goes far to justify Mr. Arnold's opinion. Writing his books was always a trouble to him, and, without going so far as to assume that he meant all the harsh things he said about them, it is quite clear that to get them out of hand was an immense relief. Had he been a true man of letters he would have derived pleasure from his work. Carlyle was, as Goethe said, "a moral force of great significance." He was a preacher who used the press instead of the pulpit. He adopted literature as his mode of expression, not because he found it good but because no other was so available. His early purpose had been to use the Presbyterian pulpit, but the conditions were too irksome. Later, for some years, he endeavoured to use the platform, and the testimony of those who heard him is that he succeeded well. At one time it was quite within the bounds of possibility that he would cease, in part at least, to be a "writer of books" and would become a public lecturer. An urgent invitation came from America which he seriously thought of accepting, and indeed never did formally and finally decline. "Had he gone," says Mr. Froude, "it might have been the ruin of him, for he had all the qualities which, with practice, would have made him a splendid orator." What Mr. Froude means is that success as a lecturer would, in Carlyle's case, have

been ruin in this way,—that it would have withdrawn him from what, in Mr. Froude's opinion at anyrate, was work of a higher order. That he would have maintained his integrity, and still been "a moral force of great significance," if he had succeeded on the platform, is not doubtful.

While we may well be pleased that Carlyle has left his teaching in the more permanent form of books, it is fairly open to question whether nature did not design him to use his tongue rather than his pen. When we consider it, we see that he was pre-eminently a Talker. As a writer of the obituary notice in *The Times* remarked: "It was knowing Mr. Carlyle imperfectly to know him only by his books. One must have talked with him, or, to be more accurate, allowed him to talk, in order to understand how his influence had burnt itself so deep into all men who knew him well." The style of Carlyle's books is the style of the talker rather than of the writer. It is talk elaborated and classified.

In the year 1822 Miss Jane Baillie Welsh wrote to her kinswoman and friend Miss Eliza Stodart in these terms: "Carlyle was with us two days, during the greater part of which I read German with him. "It is a noble language! I am getting on famously. "He scratched the fender dreadfully. I must have a pair of carpet shoes and handcuffs prepared for him the next time. His tongue only should be left at liberty. His other members are fantastically awkward." His tongue always was left at liberty and he used it with effect. Never eager for society but, on the contrary, disposed to shun it, Carlyle was always ready, when occasion offered, to discourse to his friends in a fashion which sometimes delighted and quite as often offended them. It was not his fortune to be attended—like Dr. Johnson—by any one devoted, constant and untiring Boswell, else the record of his table talk would fill more volumes than have been found necessary for the exposition of his

gospel of silence ; but at one time and another various persons temporarily filled the useful if humble office. These amateur Boswells must be accepted with some amount of caution, for they are liable to give a tone or colour of their own to their reports. Thus, one of the most devoted of them all,—Mr. Moncure D. Conway—while he would never wilfully misstate, is gifted with what has been aptly termed an “imaginative memory.” Carlyle, on Mr Conway’s shewing, was decidedly a weeping philosopher. Tears seem to have welled up and trickled down on the smallest provocation when Mr. Conway was present. Again, the Rev. Dr. Cuyler, another American, an interviewer of a different stamp,—a determined anti-liquor man, teetotaller, prohibitionist, &c., &c.—when he visited Carlyle in 1872, actually found in him an ardent ally: “heartily in favour of the prohibitory movement ;” “Gough never surpassed the red-hot vehemence of the old man’s philippic against the ‘horrible and detestable ‘damnation of whiskey and every kind of strong ‘drink.’” In the case of the most distinguished of all the Carlylean Boswells—Mr. James Anthony Froude—a defective sense of humour has led to consequences almost tragic. If Mr. Froude had only been able to understand Carlyle as a humourist, what a different biography he would have produced!

One doubts the tears and more than doubts the good-templarity, but the reader of Carlyle’s works, at anyrate, is not likely to go far wrong in determining what to receive and what to reject. There is an air of veracity not to be mistaken in the account given by the late Mr. William Maccall of an interview he had with Carlyle in 1872. Mr. Maccall was a frequent contributor to the *Tobacco Plant* for many years, and it will be seen that he makes reference to this connection. This is what Mr. Maccall says: “Carlyle asked me what my literary labours “now were. I informed him that I was writing a good “deal for a particular periodical on subjects directly

“or indirectly connected with Tobacco, and jestingly
 “alluding to my unprosperous career, I said that my
 “life had begun in smoke and seemed destined to end
 “in smoke. The most pathetic, the most pictorial
 “harangue on Tobacco was evoked by my words
 “from Carlyle’s lips. He lauded Tobacco as one of
 “the divinest benefits that had ever come to the
 “human race, arriving as compensation and consola-
 “tion at a time, too, when social, political, religious
 “anarchy, and every imaginable plague made the
 “earth unspeakably miserable. Carlyle declared
 “that he could never think of this miraculous blessing
 “from the gods without being overwhelmed by a
 “tenderness for which he could find no adequate
 “expression. He had been a smoker from the age
 “of eleven. Mrs. Carlyle [presumably his mother]
 “used to fill his long clay pipe, light it, take one or
 “two whiffs, then hand the pipe to him. That he
 “had been a snuffer before being a smoker he
 “informed me in his most humorous fashion:—
 ““When I was a very little boy, perhaps not more
 ““than four years old, and before I was admitted to
 ““the dignity of trousers, I went to the house of
 ““two old ladies who were fond of snuff. Their
 ““box to me was something wonderful. Either as
 ““a cruel jest or in utter foolishness, they asked
 ““me to take a pinch—I really not knowing at the
 ““time what snuff was. Urged and instructed by
 ““the ladies I took a very big pinch indeed. An
 ““explosion, or rather a succession of explosions
 ““followed, and I thought my head was blown off.
 ““Doubtless the old ladies did their best to soothe
 ““me by jam or marmalade, or perhaps by the
 ““present of a small coin. But my first experience
 ““of snuff was one of my first tragedies.’”

Margaret Fuller, herself no mean talker, saw
 Carlyle in 1843. She was not a Boswell but a critic.
 On her first visit to Cheyne Row she found Carlyle
 “in a very sweet humour, full of wit and pathos,
 “without being overbearing or oppressive. He

“even let me talk now and then, enough to free my lungs and change my position, so that I did not get tired.” But the second time, the occasion being a dinner party, all this was changed, for Carlyle was in his more acrid mood and, though much more brilliant than on the former evening, grew wearisome to me, who disclaimed and rejected almost everything he said.” There was no exhibition of the weeping philosopher that night, and the conclusion about Carlyle, reached by Margaret Fuller, was that he was “arrogant and overbearing; but in his arrogance there is no littleness, no self-love.” Of his conversation she said: “He pours upon you a kind of satirical, heroical, critical poem, with regular cadences, and generally catching up, near the beginning, some singular epithet, which serves as a refrain when his song is full.”

It must be owned that Carlyle was not a courteous kind of man and that, keenly sensitive himself, he had little regard for sensitiveness in others. He wounded his friends as well as his foes by his random utterances, being probably not fully aware of the force of his words. Irritability, too, had a good deal to do with the matter: an appeal from Carlyle vexed, to Carlyle amiable, would have led to many reversals of judgments. He frequently talked “for effect”—to astonish by his extravagance, to stimulate opposition and to bear it down. Besides all this Carlyle’s attack was, as Mr. Conway says, often “a feint.” If he met with “a sturdy defence implying character he knew how to surrender graciously,”—still more graciously probably if, instead of “a sturdy defence,” his visitor understood the joke and laughed.

Carlyle’s too rough and ready modes of speech sometimes brought him into trouble. A notable instance occurs in the *Letters and Memorials* of his wife which he edited. The phrase “whinner,” appears in two separate letters. On the first occasion Carlyle remembered that it was a phrase of his father’s and accordingly appended a footnote: “My father’s

“account of a precentor who lost his tune, desperately “tried several others and then died away into an “unintelligible whinner.” On the second occasion, however, memory proved treacherous, so in his usual forcible way he wrote: “Some fool’s speech “to me, I forget whose!”

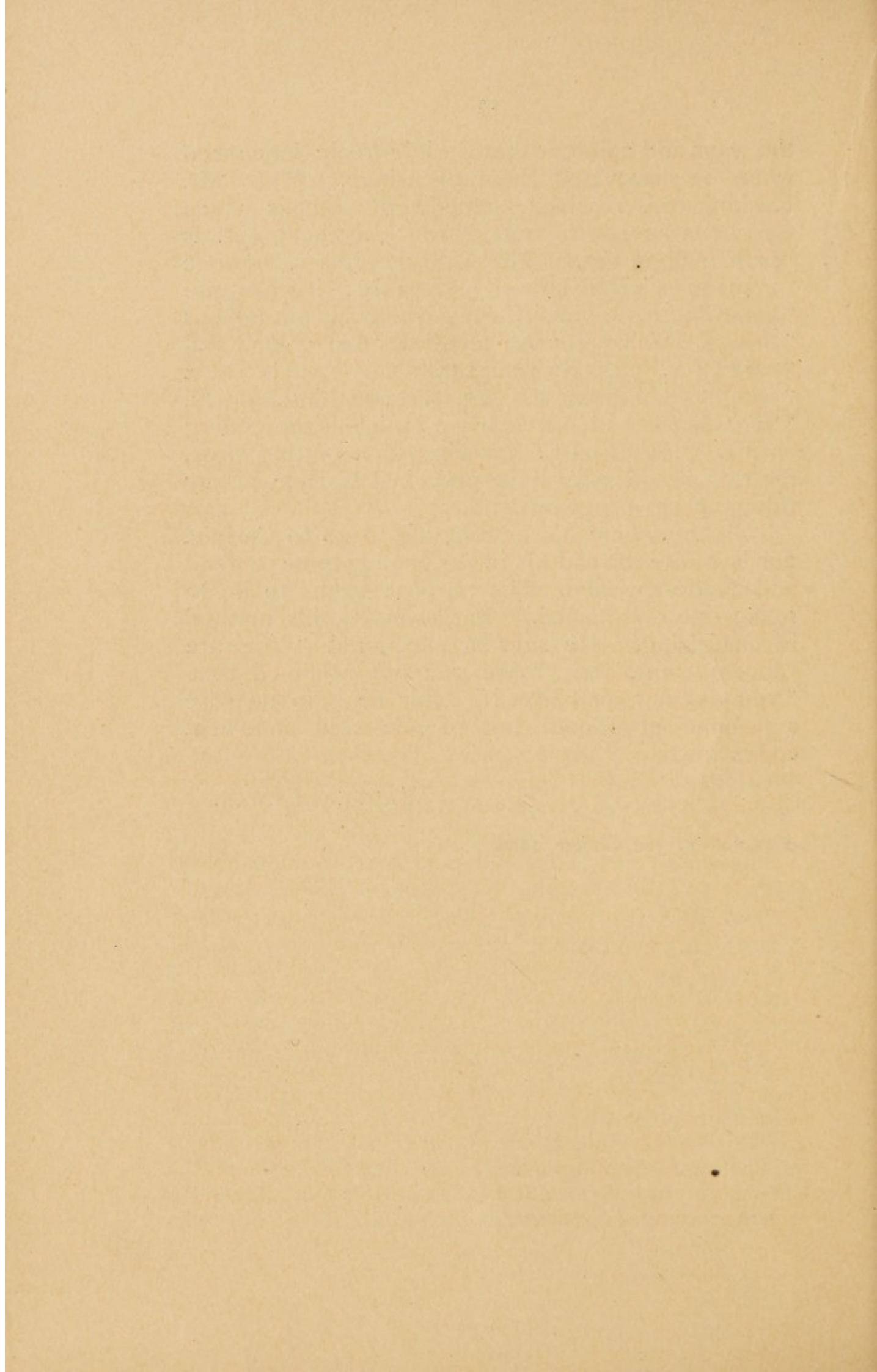
Nothing in Carlyle’s Table Talk is more striking than his descriptions of men and women. As Mr. Froude says, he had “great insight into the “human face and into the character which lay “behind it.” In a pithy sentence he could hit off, not indeed the whole character, in all its height and breadth, but a significant feature and general likeness. In this way “he produces a gallery of “portraits, each so distinctly, that whenever studied, “it can never be forgotten.” Note particularly in these portraits how often the nose is especially indicated. Evidently Carlyle regarded the nose as peculiarly expressive of character. The portraits are for the most part, in some degree, caricatures,—drawn intentionally out of proportion. In several instances two portraits of the same person, produced at no great interval of time, are worth placing side by side for the sake of the contrast. Much depended on the temper of the artist whether the likeness was agreeable or not. “Carlyle’s conversation and “general views are curiously dyspeptic, his indigestion colouring everything,” wrote Caroline Fox in her famous journal. Perhaps, too, an undercurrent of jealousy in Carlyle’s nature sometimes influenced his judgment. His grudging estimate of Scott is notorious. If Scott had actively interested himself in the rising author, would the estimate, when it came to be written, have been so grudging? On the other hand, Carlyle’s general denunciation of “bores” did not prevent him from enjoying hero-worship when he was himself the hero. Mr. Ruskin who called him “master” and, metaphorically, sat at his feet, was always welcome, notwithstanding that so many of Mr. Ruskin’s ways and opinions were just

the ways and opinions that Carlyle freely denounced when he discovered them elsewhere. That Mr. Ruskin, too, received some hard knocks when Carlyle was in the mood to deal them out, is likely enough, but, as Mrs. Carlyle reports, "no one managed Carlyle so well as Ruskin; it was quite beautiful to see him. Carlyle would say outrageous things, running counter to all Ruskin valued and cared for. Ruskin would treat Mr. Carlyle like a naughty child, lay his arms around him and say, "This is too bad'"—clearly a judicious proceeding on Mr. Ruskin's part; far wiser than getting cross, for this would only have provoked Carlyle to say things more outrageous still.

On the whole it was not safe to go to Carlyle, nor is it safe to read his books, hoping to be soothed and made satisfied. His purpose seems to be to make one dissatisfied. But, even so, his method is energising. He says in effect, not "You are incompetent," but "Are you not ashamed that you did not do better?" For he is in no wise a prophet of despair but of new and strenuous endeavour.

WALTER LEWIN.

BEBINGTON, 31st October, 1889.



PERSONAL.

In conversation with Alexander Gilchrist, Carlyle compared a man of genius to a burning ship which has been set on fire for the glorification of the spectators on land.

A thinker, I take it, in the long run finds that essentially he must ever be and continue alone;—alone: “silent rest over him the stars, and under him the graves”! The clatter of the world, be it a friendly, be it a hostile world, shall not intermeddle with him much.

I am used to several hours of solitude every day; and cannot be said ever to weary of being left well alone.

I decline all invitations of society that are declinable: a London rout is one of the maddest things under the moon; a London dinner makes me sicken for a week, and I say often, it is better to be even dull than to be witty, better to be silent than to speak.

Solitude is what I long and pray for. In the babble of men my own soul goes all to babble; like soil you were for ever screening, tumbling over with shovels and riddles; in which soil no fruit can grow.

Dr. John Carlyle, “declared himself shocked and almost terror struck” at the effect upon Carlyle’s prospects likely to result from the publication of *The French Revolution*, to which Carlyle answered: Jack, innumerable men give their lives cheerfully to defend falsehoods and half-falsehoods; why should not one writer give his life cheerfully to say in plain Scotch-English, in the hearing of God and man, To me they seem false and half-false? At all events thou seest, I cannot help it. It is the nature of the beast.

Carlyle was speaking in his stormy way of the tendency of the age to expend itself in talk. Mrs. Carlyle said archly, "And how about Mr. Carlyle?" He paused a moment; then answered in a low tone: Mr. Carlyle looked long and anxiously to find something he could do with any kind of veracity; he found no door open save that he took, and had to take, though it was by no means what he would have selected.

If almost all books were burnt (my own laid next the coal), I sometimes, in my spleen, feel as if it really would be better with us.

The wealth of a man is the number of things which he loves and blesses, which he is loved and blessed by!

A friendly thought is the purest gift that man can afford to man.

The whole earth has no blessing within its circuit worthy to be named along with health. The loss of it I reckon the very dearest item in the lot of man. I often think I could snap my fingers in the face of every thing if it were not for this.

Complaint is generally despicable, always worse than unavailing.

CARLYLE said to DR. CALVERT: I can't wish Satan anything worse than to try and digest for all eternity with my stomach; we shouldn't want fire and brimstone then.

Pandora's box was but a toy compared with biliousness.

It is a dreadful thing sickness; really a thing which I begin frequently to think *criminal*—at least in myself. Nay, in myself, it really is criminal; wherefore I determine to be *well* one day.

Surely no man has such friends as I. We ought to say, May the heavens give us thankful hearts! For, in truth, there are blessings which do, like sun-gleams in

wild weather, make this rough life beautiful with rainbows here and there. Indicating I suppose that there is a sun, and general heart of goodness, behind all that;—for which, as I say again, let us be thankful evermore. (1838.)

One good is still possible to me in life, one only,—to screw a little more work out of myself, my miserable, despicable, yet living, acting, and so far imperial and celestial self; and this, God knows, is difficult enough. (1842.)

Yesterday, [27th March, 1842] one of the stillest Sundays, I sat long by the side of the swift river Nith; sauntered among woods all vocal only with rooks and pairing birds. The hills are often white with snow-powder, black brief spring-tempests rush fiercely down from them, and then again the sky looks forth with a pale pure brightness,—like Eternity from behind Time. The sky, when one thinks of it, is always blue, pure changeless azure; rains and tempests are only for the little dwellings where men abide.

We have wet wind at north-east, somewhat of the dearest:—courage! a *little* way above it reigns mere blue, and sunshine eternally.

A sad feature in employments like mine,—that you cannot carry them on continuously. My work needs all to be done with my nerves in a kind of blaze; such a state of soul and body as would soon kill me, if not intermitted.

My voice sounds to me like a One Voice in the world, too frightful to me, with a heart so sick and a head growing grey. (1849.)

Last night, in getting to bed, I said to myself at last, —Impossible, sir, that you have no friend in the big Eternities and Immensities, or none but Death, as you whimper to yourself. You have had friends who, before the birth o' you even, were good to you, and did give you several things. Know that you have friends unspeakably important. (1862.)

The blessed silence of Sabbath! No one loves his Sabbath as I do. There is something quite divine to me in that cessation of barrel organs, pianos, tumults, and jumbings

Old age is not in itself matter for sorrow. It is matter for thanks if we have left our work done behind us.

There is a certain solemn consolation which reconciles me to almost everything, in the thought that I am myself fairly *old*; that all the confusions of life, whether of this colour or that, are soon about to sink into nothing, and only the soul of one's work, if one did any that had a soul, can be expected to survive.

In general, Death seems beautiful to me; sweet and great. But life also is beautiful, is great and divine, were it never to be joyful any more.

[Mrs. Carlyle being asked which work her husband had had the greatest pleasure in writing, replied: Oh! he has pleasure in none, he is always so dissatisfied with what he does.]

SARTOR RESARTUS: I sometimes think the book will prove a kind of medicinal assafœtida for the pudding stomach of England, and produce new secretions there.

HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: The book I do honestly apprehend, will never be worth almost anything. What a deliverance, however, merely to have done with it!

LECTURES ON HEROES: Nothing which I have ever written pleases me so ill.

PAST AND PRESENT: A most questionable, red-hot, indignant thing, for my heart is sick to look at the things now going on in this England; and the two millions of men sitting in poor-law bastilles seem to ask of every English soul, "Hast thou no word to say for us?"

CROMWELL'S LETTERS AND SPEECHES: A thousand times I have regretted that this task was ever taken up. My heart was never rightly in it. My conscience it rather was that drove me on. My chief motive now is a more and more burning desire to have done with it.

LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS: On these wretched *Pamphlets* I set no value at all, or even less than none; to me their one benefit is, my own heart is clear of them.

LIFE OF JOHN STERLING: Will not be good for much but will, as usual, gratify me by taking itself off my hands.

LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT: It is a bad book, poor, misshapen, feeble, nearly worthless.

PORTRAITS.

Human portraits, faithfully drawn, are of all pictures the welcomest on human walls.

DEAN SWIFT: What a burst of laughter lay within that man over the present scene of things! what a legion of fancies! but what an awful tragedy he had at last to enact! If he had foreseen the part he had to play, would he have stayed to play it?

Good man MAHOMET, on the whole; sincere; a fighter, not indeed with perfect triumph, yet with honest battle. No mere sitter in the chimney-nook with theories of battle, such as your ordinary "perfect" characters are. The "vein of anger" between his brows, beaming black eyes, brown complexion, stout middle figure; fond of cheerful social talk—wish I knew Arabic.

You make a right distinction about GOETHE: he is a great genius *and does not make you cry*.

COLERIDGE: Figure a fat, flabby, incurvated personage, at once short, rotund and relaxed, with a watery mouth, a snuffy nose, a pair of strange brown, timid, yet earnest-looking eyes, a high tapering brow, and a great bust of grey hair; and you have some faint image of Coleridge. He is a kind, good soul, full of religion and affection and poetry and animal magnetism. His cardinal sin is that he wants *will*. He has no resolution. He shrinks from pain or labour in any of its shapes.

I reckon him a man of great and useless genius: a strange, not at all a great man.

A great possibility that has not realised itself.

I do *not* honour the man, I pity him (with the opposite of contempt); see in him one glorious up-struggling ray (as it were) which perished, all but ineffectual, in a lax, languid, impotent *character*.

Carriages in long files, as I hear, were rushing all round Highgate when the old man lay near to die. Foolish carriages! Not one of them would roll near him (except to splash him with their mud) while he lived; had it not been for the noble-mindedness of Gilman, the Highgate Apothecary, he might have died twenty years ago in a hospital or in a ditch. To complete the farce-tragedy they have only to bury him in Westminster Abbey.

COWPER was the last of our poets of the Old School; a man of pure genius, but limited and ineffectual; as indeed his bodily health was too feeble, had there been no other deficiency.

BYRON: His fame has been very great, but I see not how it is to endure; neither does that make *him* great. No genuine productive thought was ever revealed by him to mankind; indeed no clear undistorted vision into anything, or picture of anything; but all had a certain falsehood, a brawling theatrical, insincere character. The man's moral nature, too, was bad; his demeanour, as a man, was bad. What was he, in short, but a huge sulky dandy; of giant dimensions, to be sure, yet still a dandy; who sulked, as poor Mrs. Hunt expressed it "like a schoolboy that had got a plain bun given him instead of a plum one"? His bun was, nevertheless, God's universe, with what tasks are there; and it had served better men than he: I love him not; I owe him nothing; only pity and forgiveness: he taught me nothing that I had not again to forget.

Byron we call a dandy of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That is a brief definition of him.

SOUTHEY: A lean, grey, white-headed man of dusky complexion, unexpectedly tall when he rises, and still leaner then—the shallowest chin, prominent snubbed Roman nose, small carelined brow, huge bush of white grey on high crown and projecting on all sides, the most

vehement pair of faint hazel eyes I have ever seen—a well-read, honest, limited (strait-laced even) I kindly-hearted, most irritable man.

WORDSWORTH: A genuine man, which is much, but also essentially a small genuine man.

A genuine but a small, diluted man.

ROGERS is still brisk, courteous, kindly-affectioned—a good old man, pathetic to look upon (1840).

Old Rogers stayed the longest, indeed as long as ourselves. I do not remember any old man (he is now eighty-three) whose manner of living gave me less satisfaction. A most sorrowful, distressing, distracted old phenomenon, hovering over the rim of deep eternities with nothing but light babble, fatuity, vanity, and the frothiest London wit in his mouth. Sometimes I felt as if I could throttle him, the poor old wretch! (1846).

THOMAS CAMPBELL: There is no living well of thought or feeling in him. His head is a shop, not a manufactory; and for his heart, it is as dry as a Greenock kipper.

JOHN KEATS: Milnes has written this year a book on Keats. This remark to make on it: An attempt to make us eat dead dog by exquisite currying and cooking. Won't eat it! A truly unwise little book. The kind of man that Keats was gets ever more horrible to me. Force of hunger for pleasure of every kind, and want of all other force—that is a combination!

BARRY CORNWALL: A slender, rough-faced, palish, gentle, languid-looking man, of three or four and thirty. There is a dreamy mildness in his eye; he is kind and good in his manners, and I understand in his conduct. He is a poet by the ear and the fancy, but his heart and intellect are not strong. He is a small poet.

RICHARD MONKTON MILNES (Lord HOUGHTON): A most bland-smiling, semi-quizzical, affectionate, high-bred, Italianized little man, who has long olive-blond hair, a dimple, next to no chin, and flings his arm round your neck when he addresses you in public society!

He is really a pretty little robin-redbreast of a man.

A man very easy to see and get into flowing talk with: a man of much sharpness of faculty, well tempered by several inches of Christian fat he has upon his ribs for covering. One of the idlest, cheeriest, most gifted of fat little men.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH: A man more vivid, ingenious, veracious, mildly radiant, I have seldom met with, and in character so honest, modest, kindly. I expected very considerable things of him.

TENNYSON: One day we had Alfred Tennyson here; an unforgettable day. He staid with us till late; forgot his stick: we dismissed him with *Macpherson's Farewell*. Macpherson (see Burns) was a Highland robber; he played that Tune, of his own composition, on his way to the gallows; asked "If in all that crowd the Macpherson had any clansman"? holding up the fiddle that he might bequeath it to someone. "Any kinsman, any soul that wished him well"? Nothing answered, nothing durst answer. He crashed the fiddle under his foot and sprang off. The Tune is rough as hemp, but strong as a lion. I never hear it without something of emotion,—poor Macpherson; though the Artist hates to play it. Alfred's dark face grew darker, and I saw his lip slightly quivering.

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

Alfred is one of the few British or foreign figures, a not increasing number I think, who are and remain beautiful to me;—a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother!

A man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom,—carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos.

One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusty-dark hair; bright-laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy;—smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe!

We read Tennyson's *Idylls* with profound recognition of the finely elaborated execution, and also of the inward perfection of vacancy—and, to say truth, with considerable impatience at being treated so very like infants, though the lollipops were so superlative.

ROBERT BROWNING: Abstruse but worth knowing.

The Ring and the Book: It is a wonderful book, one of the most wonderful poems ever written. I re-read it all through—all made out of an Old Bailey story, that might have been told in ten lines and only wants forgetting.

CHARLES LAMB: Humour—he had no humour; it was only a thin streak of Cockney wit. I daresay you must have known some—I have known scores of Scotch moorland farmers who for *humour* could have blown Lamb into the zenith. The only thing really humorous about Lamb was his personal appearance. His suit of rusty black, his spindle-shanks, his knee breeches, the bit ribbons fleain' at the knees o' him: indeed he was humour personified.

LEIGH HUNT: Man of genius in the shape of a Cockney, is my near neighbour, full of quips and cranks, with good humour and no common sense.

LORD JEFFREY: A good man and bad critic (1831).

He is becoming an amiable old fribble, very cheerful, very heartless, very forgettable and tolerable (1838).

MACAULAY: I noticed the homely norse features that you find everywhere in the Western Isles and I thought to myself: well, anyone can see that you are an honest, good sort of fellow, made out of oatmeal.

Macaulay is always spirited and emphatic, worth reading even on a worn out matter.

Niagara of eloquent common-place talk from Macaulay. "Very good natured man!" Man cased in official mail of proof; stood my impatient fire-explosions with much patience, merely hissing a little steam up,—and continued his Niagara.

A squat, thickset, low-browed, short, grizzled little man of fifty.

SYDNEY SMITH: A mass of fat and muscularity, with massive Roman nose, piercing hazel eyes, huge cheeks, shrewdness and fun, not humour or even wit, seemingly without soul altogether.

BENTHAM is a denier: he denies with a loud and universally convincing voice; his fault is that he can affirm nothing, except that money is pleasant in the purse, and food in the stomach, and that by this simplest of all beliefs he can reorganise Society. He can shatter it to pieces—no thanks to him, for its old fastenings are quite rotten—but he cannot reorganise it; this is work for quite others than he.

GEORGE GROTE: Radical Grote was the only novelty, for I had never noticed him before—a man with strait upper lip, large chin, and open mouth (spout mouth); for the rest, a tall man with dull thoughtful brows and lank dishevelled hair, greatly the look of a prosperous dissenting minister.

HALLAM: A broad, old, positive man, with laughing eyes.

JOHN STUART MILL: One of the best clearest-headed and clearest hearted young men now living in London.

A fine clear enthusiast who will one day come to something, yet to nothing poetical, I think; his fancy is not rich; furthermore, he cannot laugh with any compass.

I used to see a good deal of Mill once, but we have silently, I suppose inevitably parted company. He was a beautiful person,—affectionate, lucid; he had always

the habit of studying out the thing that interested him, and could tell how he came by his thoughts and views. But for many years now, I have not been able to travel with him on his ways, though not in the least doubtful of his own entire honesty therein. His work *On Liberty* appears to me the most exhaustive statement of precisely what I feel to be untrue on that subject.

Ah! poor fellow, he has had to get himself out of Benthamism; and all the emotions and sufferings he has endured have helped him to thoughts that never entered Bentham's head. However, he is still too fond of demonstrating everything. If John Mill were to get up to heaven, he would hardly be content until he had made out how it all was.

WILBERFORCE, the famous nigger-philanthropist, drawing-room Christian and busy man and politician.

DANIEL WEBSTER: I will warrant him one of the stiffest logic buffers and parliamentary athletes anywhere to be met with in our world at present—a grim, tall, broad-bottomed, yellow-skinned man, with brows like precipitous cliffs, and huge, black, dull, wearied, yet unwearable-looking eyes under them; amorphous projecting nose, and the angriest shut mouth I have anywhere seen. A droop on the sides of the upper lip is quite mastiff-like—magnificent to look upon; it is so quiet withal. I guess I should like ill to be that man's nigger. However, he is a right clever man in his way, and has a husky sort of fun in him too.

CHARLES SUMNER: An ingenious, cultivated, courteous man; a little sensitive or so, and with no other fault that I discerned.

MAZZINI: I remember well when he sat for the first time on the seat there, thirty-six years ago. A more beautiful person I never beheld, with his soft flashing eyes and face full of intelligence.

Whatever I may think of his practical insight and skill in worldly affairs I can with great freedom testify to all men that he, if I have ever seen one such, is a man of

genius and virtue, a man of sterling veracity, humanity and nobleness of mind; one of these rare men, numerable, unfortunately, but as units in this world, who are worthy to be called martyr souls; who, in silence, piously, in their daily life, understand and practise what is meant by that.

A beautiful little man, full of sensibilities, of melodies, of clear intelligence and noble virtue.

True as steel; the word, the thought of him pure and limpid as water; by nature a little lyrical poet; plenty of quiet fun in him too, and wild emotion, rising to the shrill key, with all that lies between these two extremes. His trade, however, was not to write verses.

LOUIS BLANC: A pretty little miniature of a man, well shaped, long black head, brown skin; every way French aspect: quick, twinkling, earnest black eyes; a smallish, melodious voice, which rather quavers in its tones; free, lively, ingenious utterance, full of friendliness, transparency, logical definiteness, and seeming good faith, not much vanity either; a good little creature to whom, deeply as I dissented from him, I could not help wishing heartily well.

REV. DR. CHALMERS: Grave, deliberate, very gentle in his deportment, but with plenty too of soft energy; full of interest still for all serious things; full of real kindness, and sensible even to honest mirth in a fair measure. He sate with us an hour and a half, went away with our blessing and affections. It is long since I have spoken to so good and really pious hearted and beautiful an old man.

BISHOP WILBERFORCE: Ah! Sam is a very clever fellow; I do not hate him near so much as I fear I ought to do.

FATHER MATHEW: A broad, solid, most excellent looking man with grey hair, mild intelligent eyes, massive, rather aquiline nose and countenance. The very face of him attracts you.

LORD ASHLEY (afterwards Lord SHAFTESBURY): Very straight between the eyes—a bad form of physiognomy; otherwise a stately aristocratic looking man.

ALCOTT: Emerson is going to send me a man called Alcott, who is coming over with some “new ideas” about making a new world, but it hasn’t seemed to strike him that he has a world within his own waistcoat which would employ all his thought and energy if he would but give it.

A genial, innocent, simple-hearted man, of much natural intelligence and goodness, with an air of rusticity, veracity, and dignity withal, which in many ways appeals to one. The good Alcott: with his long, lean face and figure, with his gray worn temples and mild radiant eyes; all bent on saving the world by a return to acorns and the golden age; he comes before one like a kind of venerable Don Quixote, whom nobody can even laugh at without loving.

MARGARET FULLER: A strange liling, lean old maid, not nearly such a bore as I expected.

GEORGE BANCROFT: We had a call from Bancroft the other evening. A tough Yankee man; of many worthy qualities more tough than musical; among which it gratified me to find a certain small under-current of genial humour, or as it were hidden laughter, not noticed heretofore.

GEORGE GILFILLAN [author of *The Gallery of Literary Portraits, &c.*]: A young dissenting minister in Dundee; a person of great talent, ingenuousness, enthusiasm, and other virtues; whose position as a preacher of bare old Calvinism under penalty of death sometimes makes me tremble for him.

MACREADY’S deserts to the English Drama are notable here to all the world; but his dignified, generous, and everyway honourable deportment in private life is known fully, I believe, only to a few friends. I have often said, looking at him as a manager of great London theatres—

this man presiding over the unstablest, most chaotic province of English things is the one public man amongst us who has dared to take his stand on what he understood to be *the truth*, and expect victory from that: he puts to shame our bishops and archbishops. It is literally so.

THACKERAY has very rarely come athwart me since his return: he is a big fellow, soul and body; and many gifts and qualities (particularly in the Hogarth line, with a dash of Sterne superadded), of enormous appetite withal, and very uncertain and chaotic in all points except his outer breeding, which is fixed enough, and perfect according to the modern English style. I rather dread explosions in his history. A big, fierce, weeping, hungry man; not a strong one.

CHARLES DICKENS: He is a fine little fellow—Boz, I think, clear, blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches amazingly, large, protrusive, rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme mobility, which he shuttles about,—eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all,—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed à la D'Orsay rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest, a quiet, shrewd-looking little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and what others are.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR: A tall, broad, burly man, with gray hair, and large, fierce-rolling eyes; of the most restless, impetuous vivacity, not to be held in by the most perfect breeding,—expressing itself in high-coloured superlatives, indeed in reckless exaggeration, now and then in a dry, sharp laugh not of sport but of mockery; a wild man, whom no extent of culture had been able to tame!

A proud, irascible, trenchant, yet generous old man; quite a ducal or royal man in the temper of him.

SPIRIDIONE GAMBARDELLA*: The Signor Gambardella amuses and interests us not a little. His face is the

* An Italian Refugee. Carlyle sat to him for a portrait in 1841.

very image of the Classic God Pan's; with horns and cloven feet, we feel that he would make a perfect wood-god;—really, some of Poussin's Satyrs are almost portraits of this brave Gambardella.

HERAUD is a loquacious scribacious little man of middle age, of parboiled greasy aspect, whom Leigh Hunt describes as "wavering in the most astonishing manner between being something and nothing." To me he is chiefly remarkable as being still—with his entirely enormous vanity and very small stock of faculty—out of Bedlam. He picked up a notion or two from Coleridge many years ago; and has ever since been rattling them in his head, like peas in an empty bladder, and calling on the world to "list the music of the spheres." He escapes assassination, as I calculate, chiefly by being the cheerfulest, best-natured little creature extant. You cannot kill him he laughs so softly, even when he is like killing you. John Mill said, "I forgive him freely for interpreting the Universe, now when I find he cannot pronounce the *h's*." I mentioned to him once that Novalis had said "The highest problem of authorship is the writing of a bible." "That is precisely what I am doing," answered the aspiring unaspiring.

As to the D'ORSAY portrait, it is a real curiosity: Count D'Orsay, the Emperor of European Dandies portraying the prophet of spiritual sansculottism! He came rolling down hither one day, many months ago, in his sun chariot, to the bedazzlement of all bystanders; found me in dusty gray-plaid dressing gown, grim as the spirit of Presbyterianism (my wife said), and contrived to get along well enough with me. I found him a man worth talking to, once and away; a man of decided natural gifts; every utterance of his containing in it a wild caricature *likeness* of some object or other; a dashing man who might, some twenty years sooner born, have become one of Bonaparte's Marshalls, and *is*, alas,—Count D'Orsay!

HARRIET MARTINEAU: She is one of the strangest phenomena to me. A genuine little poetess, buckramed, swathed like a mummy into Socinian and Political Economy formulas; and yet verily alive in the inside of that!

I looked into COMTE once; found him to be one of those men who go up in a balloon, and take a lighted candle to look at the stars.

FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN: A man of fine university and other attainments, of the sharpest cutting and most restlessly advancing intellect, and of the mildest pious enthusiasm.

LEIBNITZ: Sage Leibnitz, a rather weak but hugely ingenious old gentleman, with bright eyes and long nose, with vast black peruke and bandy legs.

JOHN STERLING: I love Sterling, a radiant creature; but very restless; incapable either of rest or of effectual motion: aurora-borealis and sheet lightning.

CHARLES KINGSLEY: I have a vivid remembrance of Charles coming with his mother to see me. A lovely woman she was, with large, clear eyes, a somewhat pathetic expression of countenance, sincerely interested in all religious questions. The delicate boy she brought with her had much the same expression, and sat listening with intense and silent interest to all that was said. He was always an eager, loving, poetic nature.

BABBAGE continues eminently unpleasant to me, with his frog mouth and viper eyes, with his hide-bound, wooden irony and the acriddest egotism looking through it.

O'CONNELL, BOWRING, HICKSON, SOUTHWOOD SMITH—pinchbeck people all, what I called a literary, political swell-mob.

RUSKIN: He seems to me to have the best talent for preaching of all men now alive. (1862.)

I had Ruskin for some hours, really interesting and entertaining. He is full of projects, of generous prospective activities, some of which I opined to him would prove chimerical. There is in singular environment a ray of real heaven in Ruskin. (1869.)

There is nothing going on among us as notable to me as those fierce lightning-bolts Ruskin is copiously and desperately pouring into the black world of anarchy all around him. No other man in England that I meet has in him the divine rage against iniquity, falsity and baseness that Ruskin has, and that every man ought to have. (1872.)

POOR PEEL! he is really a clever looking man—large substantial head, Roman nose, massive cheeks with a wrinkle, half smile, half sorrow on them, considerable trunk and stomach, sufficient stubborn-looking short legs; altogether an honest figure of a man.

DUKE OF WELLINGTON at the age of 82: Truly a beautiful old man. I had never seen till now how beautiful, and what an expression of graceful simplicity, veracity and nobleness there is about the old hero when you see him close at hand.

Except Dr. Chalmers, I have not for many years seen so beautiful an old man.

JOHN BRIGHT, the Anti-Cornlaw Member, who had come across to meet me, with his cock nose and pugnacious eyes and Barclay-Fox-Quaker collar—John and I discorded in our views not a little.

GLADSTONE: I know him for a solid, serious, silent-minded man. (1839.)

I did hope well of him once and so did John Sterling, though I heard he was a Puseyite and so forth; still it seemed the right thing for a State to feel itself bound to God, and to lean on him, and so I hoped something might come of him; but now he has been declaiming that England is in such a wonderfully prosperous state, meaning that it has plenty of money in its breeches pockets and plenty of beef in its great ugly belly. But that's not the prosperity we want; and so I say to him: You are not the life-giver to England; I go my way, you go yours, good morning. (1867.)

DISRAELI: This clever conscious juggler.

A superlative Hebrew conjuror, spell-binding all the great lords, great parties, great interests of England, to his hand in this manner, and leading them by the nose, like helpless, mesmerised, somnambulant cattle. (1867.)

LORD HOLLAND: A very large bald head, small, grey, invincible, composed looking eyes, the immense tuft of an eyebrow which all the Foxes have, stiff upper lip, roomy mouth and chin, short, angry, yet modest nose. I saw there a fine old *Jarl*—an honest, obstinate, candid, wholesomely limited, very effectual and estimable old man.

LADY HOLLAND: A brown-skinned, silent, sad, concentrated, proud old dame. Her face, when you see it in profile, has something of a falcon character, if a falcon's bill were straight; and you see much of the white of her eye. Notable words she spake none—sate like one wont to be obeyed and entertained.

THE QUEEN: Yesterday, I saw her little Majesty taking her bit of departure for Windsor. I had seen her another day at Hyde Park Corner, coming in from the daily ride. She is decidedly a pretty-looking little creature: health, clearness, graceful timidity looking out from her young face, "frail cockle on the black bottomless deluges." One could not help some interest in her, situated a mortal seldom was. (April 12, 1838.)

LITERATURE.

Of all the priesthoods, aristocracies, governing classes **at** present extant in the world, there is no class comparable for importance with that priesthood of the Writers of Books. The writers of newspapers, pamphlets, **books**, these are the real, working, effective Church of a **modern** country.

One might as well go on the stage and be a mountebank as take to literature.

A good book has no way of recommending itself except slowly and, as it were, accidentally from hand to hand. The man who wrote it must abide his time.

Homer's *Iliad* would have brought the author, had he offered it to Mr. Murray on the half-profit system, say five-and-twenty guineas. The prophecies of Isaiah would have made a small article in a review, which, paying not under the rate of three guineas a sheet (excluding extracts whereof there are none in Isaiah), could cheerfully enough have remunerated him with a five pound note. To speak of paying the writer of a true book is, on the whole, delirium. The thing is unpayable; the whole world could not buy it.

A pen is a pen, and worth something; though it expresses about as much of a man's meaning perhaps as the stamping of a hoof will express a horse's meaning; a very poor expression indeed.

Poetry is a most suspicious affair for me at present! You cannot fancy the oceans of twaddle that human creatures emit upon me in these times; as if, when the lines had a jingle in them, a nothing could be something and the point were gained!

Let a man try to the very uttermost to *speak* what he means, before *singing* is had recourse to.

It is part of my creed that the only poetry is history, could we tell it right.

When I see painful Professors of Greek, poring in their sumptuous Oxfords over dead *Greek* for a thousand years or more, and leaving live *English* all the while to develop itself under charge of Pickwicks and Sam Wellers, as if it were nothing and the other were all things; this and the like of it everywhere, fills me with reflections!

Really I think it very shocking that we run to Greece, to Italy, to &c., &c., and leave all at home lying buried as a nonentity. Were I absolute sovereign and chief pontiff here, there should be a study of the old English ages first of all. I will pit Odin against any Jupiter of them; find Sea-Kings that would have given Jason a Roland for his Oliver.

Even the biography of an utter scoundrel like Cagliostro is worth reading. If we cannot have a speaker and doer of truth, let us have the pleasure of beholding a decided liar.

I think it is a thousand pities that writing has ever, in any case, come to be valued by its length; better even, if we must have a universal standard, that it were valued by its shortness, for prolixity in word, and still more in thought, may be defined as the characteristic of all bad writing. Nay, the very weaver does not come and say, Here are so many yards of cloth I have woven; but, Here are so many yards of *such* cloth.

SOCIETY.

There is no use of writing of things past unless they can be made in fact things present; not yesterday at all, but simply to-day, and what it holds of fulfilment and of promises is ours: the dead ought to bury their dead, ought they not?

The Present Time, youngest born of Eternity, child and heir of all the past times with their good and evil, and parent of all the future, is ever a "new era" to the thinking man; and comes with new questions and significance, however common-place it look: to know *it* and what it bids us do, is ever the sum of knowledge for all of us.

The moment is the mother of ages.

This is a wild, fighting, loving, praying, blaspheming, weeping, laughing sort of world.

This wretched, fleering, sneering, canting, twaddling, God-forgetting generation. How can you explain men to apes by the Dead Sea? And I am very sickly too.

Man, all men seem radically dumb; jabbering mere jargons and noises from the teeth outwards; the inner meaning of them,—of them and of me, poor devils,—remaining shut, buried for ever.

Certainly, could one generation of men be forced to live without rhetoric, babblement, hearsay, in short, with the tongue well cut out of them altogether,—their fortunate successors would find a most improved world to start upon. For cant does lie piled on us, high as the Zenith.

I do believe, for one thing, a man has no right to say to his own generation, turning quite away from it, "Be damned."

My heart is sick and sore in behalf of my own poor generation; nay, I feel withal as if the one hope of help for it consisted in the possibility of new Cromwells and new Puritans: thus do the two centuries stand related to me, the seventeenth worthless except precisely in so far as it can be made the nineteenth; and yet let anybody *try* that enterprise!

It is *not* good always, or ever, to be "at ease in Zion"; good often to be in fierce rage in Zion; and the vile Pythons of this Mud-world do verily require to have sun-arrows shot into them and red-hot pokers stuck through them, according to occasion.

To men in their sleep there is nothing granted in this world.

Wretched being, do you hope to prosper by assembling six-hundred and fifty-eight poor creatures in a certain apartment, and getting them after debate, and "Divide—'vide, 'vide," and report in the *Times*, to vote that what is not, is? You will carry it, you, by your voting and your eloquencing and babbling; and the adamantine basis of the universe shall bend to your third reading and paltry bit of engrossed sheepskin and dog-latin? What will become of you?

Consider, in fact, a body of six-hundred and fifty-eight miscellaneous persons set to consult about "business," with twenty-seven millions, mostly fools, assiduously listening to them, and checking and criticising them: was there ever, since the world began, will there ever be till the world end, any business accomplished in these circumstances?

The question of Capital and Labour growing ever more anarchic, insoluble altogether by the notions hitherto applied to it, is pretty certain to issue in petroleum one day.

The leaders of Industry—if Industry is ever to be led—are virtually the captains of the world.

There is a set of people whom I cannot do with at all—those who are always declaring what an extremely perfect world this is, and how very well things are conducted in it; to me it seems all going wrong and tending irresistibly to change—which can't but be for the worse.

Alas, alas, the Future for us is not to be made of butter, as the platforms prophesy; I think it will be harder than steel for some ages! No noble age was ever a soft one, nor ever will or can be.

To find twenty persons in any locality who reverence worth to the extent of paying one pound sterling for it, is verily something in these days; days, as I sometimes feel when I reflect sorrowfully on them, altogether unexampled since the creation of the world in that respect! Even the fickle Athenians did at least put Socrates to death, had at least the grace to hate him, did not merely seek to amuse themselves with him!

Who has ever done any good in the world? Why there was one George Fox; he did some little good. He walked up to a man and said, “My fat-faced friend, thou art a damned lie. Thou art pretending to serve God Almighty, and art really serving the Devil. Come out of that, or perish to all eternity.” This—ay, and stronger language too—had he to say to his generation, and we must say it to ours in such fashion as we can. It is the one thing that must be said; the one thing that each must find out for himself is that he is really on the right side of the fathomless abyss, serving God heartily, and authorised to speak in his name to others.

Which times were the most genuine in England? Cromwell's? Henry VIII's? Why in each time it seems to me there was something genuine, some endeavour to keep God's commandments. Cromwell's time was only a revival of it. But now things have been going down, further and further, since George III.

Our worship of “beautiful sentiments,” &c., &c., is as contemptible a form of long-ears as any others, perhaps the most so of any. It is, in fact, damnable.

May the Lord deliver us from cant; may the Lord, whatever else he do or forbear, teach us to look Facts honestly in the face and to beware (with a kind of shudder) of smearing them over with our despicable and damnable palaver into irrecognizability, and so falsifying the Lord's own gospels to his unhappy blockheads of children, all staggering down to Gehenna and the everlasting swine's-trough for *want* of Gospels.

A lady speaking of the reception of Jesus by the Jews said: "How delighted we should all be to throw open our doors to him and listen to his divine precepts! Don't you think so, Mr. Carlyle?" Carlyle answered: No, Madam, I don't; I think that if he had come very fashionably dressed, with plenty of money, and preaching doctrines palatable to the higher orders, I might have had the honour of receiving from you a card of invitation, on the back of which would be written—"To meet our Saviour." But if he had come uttering his sublime precepts, and denouncing the Pharisees, and associating with the publicans and lower orders, as he did, you would have treated him as the Jews did, and cried out "Take him to Newgate and hang him." True, Lord Houghton might have invited him to breakfast.

The greatest of all past and present anti-gigmen* was Jesus Christ.

Society for the diffusion of common honesty were the usefulest of all societies could it take effect.

No church or speaking entity whatever can do without formulas, but it must *believe* them first if it would be honest.

Do you know English Puseyism? Good Heavens! in the whole circle of history is there the parallel of that,—a true worship rising at this hour of the day for Bands and the Shovel-hat? Distraction surely, incipience of the "final deliration" enters upon the poor old English

* "Gigmania," "Gigmanity," &c., often used by Carlyle; an allusion to Thurtell's trial: "I always thought him a respectable man." "What do you mean by respectable"? "He kept a gig."

formulism that has called itself for some two centuries a Church. No likelier symptom of its being soon about to leave the world has come to light in my time.

Did you in the course of your historical enquiries, ever fall in with any phenomenon adequately comparable to Puseyism? The Church of England stood long upon her tithes and her decencies; but now she takes to shouting in the market place, "My tithes are nothing; my decencies are nothing; I am either miraculous celestial or else nothing." It is to me the fatalest symptom of speedy change she ever exhibited. What an alternative! Men will soon see whether you are miraculous celestial or not. Were a pair of breeches ever known to beget a son?

Nature abhors a vacuum—worthy old girl! She will not make a wretched, unsympathetic, scraggy Atheism and Egoism fruitful in her world, but answers to it, "Enough thou scraggy Atheism! go thy way, wilt thou?"

The sum and end of all the fluency and vehemence of the sermon and of all the fervour of the prayer was "Lord save us from Hell"! and I went away musing, sick at heart, saying to myself: My good fellows, why all this bother and noise? If it be God's will, why not go and be damned in quiet, and say never a word about it? And I, for one, would think far better of you.

Straus's *Leben Jesu* made a strong and wide impression, but its views were not unfamiliar to me. Various persons had reached similar conclusions but would never have dreamed of proclaiming them to the world. Straus married an actress who made him miserable, and he had to separate from her. A good many people thought it a proper punishment for his heresy.

We are in alliance with Louis Napoleon, a gentleman who has shewn only housebreaker qualities hitherto, and is required now to shew heroic ones, or go to the Devil.

We English find a Poet, as brave a man as has been made for a hundred years or so anywhere under the sun; and do we kindle bonfires, or thank the gods?

Not at all. We, taking due counsel of it, set the man to gauge ale-barrels in the Burgh of Dumfries; and pique ourselves on our "patronage of genius."

Carlyle said to Ernest Jones: Had the Chartist leaders been living in the days of Christ, he would have sent the unclean spirits into them instead of into the swine of the Gergesenes, and so we should have happily got rid of them.

When in 1870 an unfounded report was circulated that Carlyle was about to visit America, Carlyle wondered how it had got about. A visitor from Boston said "the Cable" had told him. "And who the devil told the Cable?" retorted Carlyle,—afterwards adding: Rumours are like dandelion seeds; and "the Cable" I daresay welcomes them all that have a guinea in their pocket.

At a dinner party in Berlin the talk was about Goethe's "want of religion;"—the regret was that so "great" and "godlike" a genius should not have devoted himself to the service of "Christian truth," &c., &c.—Carlyle sat grimly silent for some time and then in his slow, emphatic way said: Meine Herren, did you never hear the story of that man who vilified the sun because it would not light his cigar?

I understand almost all the Netherlands battle fields have already given up their bones to British husbandry; why not the old English next? Honour to thrift. If of the 5,000 wasted men, you can make a few usable turnips, why do it!

It is most indubitable there is good in all; and if you even see an Oliver Cromwell assassinated, it is certain you may get a cart-load of turnips from his carcass.

LONDON: I cannot say that this huge blind monster of a city is without some sort of charm for me. It leaves one alone, to go his own road unmolested. Deep in your soul you take up your protest against it, defy it, and even despise it; but need not divide yourself from it for that. Worthy individuals are glad to hear your thought, if it have

any sincerity; they do not exasperate themselves or you about it; they have not even time for such a thing. Nay, in stupidity itself on a scale of this magnitude, there is an impressiveness, almost a sublimity; one thinks how, in the words of Schiller, "the very gods fight against it in vain;" how it lies on its unfathomable foundations there, inert yet peptic; nay, eupeptic; and is a *Fact* in the world, let theory object as it will. Brown-stout in quantities that would float a seventy-four, goes down the throats of men; and the roaring flood of life pours on;—and over which Philosophy and Theory are but a poor shriek of remonstrance, which oftenest were wiser, perhaps, to hold its peace.

You are an enthusiast; make *Arabian Nights* out of dull foggy London days; with your beautiful female imagination, shape burnished copper castles out of London fog. And you, the fair Alchemist, are you not all the richer and better that you know the essential gold, and will not have it called pewter or spelter, though in the shops it is only such? I honour such Alchemy.

Steam and iron are making all the planet into one village.

It is silent Sunday; the populace not yet admitted to their beer-shops, till the respectabilities conclude their rubric-mummeries,—a much more audacious feat than beer!

I observed some folk at the corner a little drunker than usual this [Christmas Day] morning. Then I remembered it was the birthday of their Redeemer.

'Tis an odd thing this about Queen Victoria. After having had a champion to say before the whole assembly of them, "O Queen, live for ever," a little insignificant fellow comes up, points a pistol at her, and says "Chimera! die this minute"! Poor little Queen! I have some loyalty about me, and have no wish to see her shot; but as for her having any right to hold the reins of Government if she could not manage them, all the cart loads of dirty parchment can't make that clear. There are thousands of men about her, made of the same flesh and blood, with the same eternities around them, and

they want to be well governed and fed. It is something to get it recognized that the ablest man should be the one to guide us, even if we may never see it carried out.

Oh this cry for liberty! liberty! which is just liberty to do the Devil's work, instead of binding him with ten thousand bands, just going the way of France and America and those sort of places; why it is all going down hill as fast as it can go and of no significance to me; I have done with it. I can take no interest in it at all, nor feel any sort of hope for the country. It is not the liberty to keep the ten commandments that they are crying out for—that used to be enough for the genuine man—but liberty to carry on their own prosperity, so they call it, and so there is no longer anything to be found; it is all shoddy. Go into any shop you will and ask for any article, and ye'll find it all one enormous lie. The country is going to perdition at a frightful pace. I give it about fifty years yet to accomplish its fall.

To the artisans of Glasgow the world is not one of blue skies and a green carpet, but a world of copperas fumes, low cellars, hard wages, striking and whisky.

IRELAND: The whole country figures in my mind as a ragged coat, not patchable any longer.

Great men are not born among fools. There was Robert Burns: I used often to hear from old people in Scotland of the good sense and wise conversation around that little fireside where Burns listened as a child; notably, there was a man named Murdoch, who remembered all that; and I have the like impression about the early life of most of the notable men and women I have heard or read of. When a great soul rises up, it is generally in a place where there has been much hidden worth and intelligence at work for a long time. The vein runs on, as it were, beneath the surface for a generation or so, then bursts into the light in some man of genius, and oftenest that seems to be the end of it.

Alas! there is almost no laughter going in the world at present. True laughter is as rare as any other truth,—the sham of it frequent and detestable, like all other shams. I know nothing wholesomer; but it is rarer even than Christmas—which comes but once a year—and does not always come once.

Laughter, if it come from the heart, is a heavenly thing.

DOCTRINE.

A prophet and teacher has no right to expect great kindness from his age, he is rather bound to do it great kindness.

Blessed be heaven, there is here and there a man born who loves truth as truth should be loved—with all his heart and all his soul.

My respect for *silence*, my distrust of *speech*, seem to grow upon me. There is a time for both, says Solomon; but we, in our poor generation, have forgotten one of the "times."

He that cannot keep himself quiet is of a morbid nature; and the thing he yields us will be like him in that, whatever else it be.

Speech is of time; silence is of eternity.

Let a man know rightly how to hold his peace.

A stammering man is never a worthless one.

I grow daily to honour facts more and more, and theory less and less. A fact, it seems to me, is a great thing: a sentence printed if not by God, then at least by the Devil:—neither Jeremy Bentham nor Lytton Bulwer had a hand in *that*.

Is the fall of a stone certain and the fruit of an un wisdom doubtful?

Nature is true and not a lie. No lie you can speak or act but it will come, after longer or shorter circulation, like a Bill drawn on Nature's Reality, and be presented there for payment—with the answer "No effects."

Rascaldom has no strong-box.

I will have all things condense themselves, take shape and body, if they are to have my sympathy. I have a body myself; in the brown leaf, sport of the Autumn winds, I find what mocks all prophecyings, even Hebrew ones,—Royal Societies, and Scientific Associations, eating venison at Glasgow, not once reckoned in.

The actual well seen *is* the ideal. The *actual* what really is and exists: the past, the present, the future no less, do all lie there.

Our thoughts, good or bad, are not in our command, but everyone of us has at all hours duties to *do*, and these he can do negligently, like a slave, or faithfully like a true servant. "*Do* the duty that is nearest thee"—that first and that well; all the rest will disclose themselves with increasing clearness, and make their successive demand.

Not what I *have* but what I *do* is my kingdom.

The folly of that impossible precept *know thyself* till it be translated into this partially possible one, *know what thou canst work at*.

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness.

We are to bethink us that the epic verily is, not *arms and the man*, but *tools and the man*—an infinitely wider kind of epic.

There is nothing in this world that will keep the Devil out of one but hard labour. Of my devils at least I may say: this kind goeth *not* out by fasting and prayer.

The blessedness of life is not in living but in working well.

Labour so far as it is true and sanctionable by the Supreme Worker and World Founder, may claim brotherhood with Labour. The great work and the little are alike definable as an extricating of the True from its imprisonment among the False; a victorious evoking of Order and Fact from Disorder and semblance of Fact.

Idleness alone is without hope: work earnestly at anything, you will by degrees learn to work at almost all things. There is endless hope in work, were it even work at making money.

To learn obeying is the fundamental art of governing.

He that cannot be servant of many, will never be master, true guide and deliverer of many;—that is the meaning of true Mastership.

It is the noblest; not the sham-noblest; it is God-Almighty's noble, not the court-tailor's noble, nor the able-editor's noble, that must, in some approximate degree, be raised to the supreme place.

Whoso cannot obey cannot be free, still less bear rule.

They will all have to learn that man does need government, and that an able-bodied starving beggar is and remains (whatever Exeter Hall may say of it) a *slave* destitute of a *master*.

Blacklead these two million idle beggars and sell them in Brazil as niggers,—perhaps Parliament, on sweet constraint, will allow you to advance them to be niggers.

Of all "rights of man" the right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser, to be, gently or forcibly, held in the true course by him, is the indisputablest.

Freedom is the one purport, wisely aimed at, or unwisely, of all man's struggles, toilings and sufferings on this earth.

In 1755 Merthyr Tydvil was a mountain hamlet of five or six houses, stagnant and silent as it had been ever since Tydvil, the king's or laird's daughter was martyred here, say 1300 years before. About that time a certain Mr. Bacon, a cunning Yorkshireman, passing that way, discovered that there was iron in the ground—iron and coal. He took a 99 years' lease in consequence, and—in brief, there are now about 50,000 grimy mortals, black and clammy with soot and sweat, screwing out a livelihood for themselves in that spot of the Taff Valley. Such a set of unguided, hard-worked, fierce, and miserable looking sons of Adam I never saw before. Ah me! it is like a vision of hell, and will never leave me, that of these poor creatures broiling, all in sweat and dirt, amid their furnaces, pits and rolling mills. For here is absolutely no aristocracy or guiding class; nothing but one or two huge iron-masters (1850.)

Fraternity, liberty, &c., I want to explain, is not the remedy at all; but true *government* by the wise, true, and noble-minded, of the foolish, perverse and dark, with or *against* their consent; which I discern to be the eternal law of the world, and a rugged and severe but most blessed law, terribly forgotten in the universal twaddle, insincerity, and cowardly sloth of these latter times.

That Judas Iscariot should come and slap Jesus Christ on the shoulder in a familiar manner; that all heavenliest nobleness should be flung out into the muddy streets, there to jostle elbows with all thickest-skinned denizens of chaos, and get itself at every turn trampled into the gutters and annihilated:—alas, the reverse of all this was, is, and ever will be, the most strenuous effort and most solemn heart-purpose of every good citizen in every country of the world,—and will re-appear conspicuously as such when once this malodorous melancholy “Uncle Tommery”* is got all well put by.

* *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had lately been published.

Pity, yes :—but pity for the scoundrel species? For those who will not have pity on themselves, and will force the Universe and the laws of Nature to have no “pity” on them! Meseems I could discover fitter objects for pity!

Sect-founders withal are a class I do not like. No truly great man, from Jesus Christ downwards, as I often say, ever founded a Sect—I mean wilfully intended founding one.

To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; but all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on *himself*.

Give a thing time; if it can succeed it is a right thing.

Pain and poverty are not wholesome; but praise and flattery along with them are poison: God deliver us from that; it carries madness in the very breath of it.

A man must learn to digest praise too, and not be poisoned with it: some of it *is* wholesome to the system under certain circumstances; the most of it a healthy system will learn by and by to throw into the slop-basin, harmlessly, without any trial to digest it.

For a hundred that can bear adversity, there is hardly one that can bear prosperity.

Good fortune is far worse than bad.

It is hard to say out of what one might *not* learn by keeping ones eyes well open.

Women are born worshippers; in their good little hearts lies the most craving relish for greatness; it is even said, each chooses her husband on the hypothesis of his being a great man—in his way. The good creatures, yet the foolish

Thy daily life is girt with Wonder, and based on Wonder and thy very blankets and breeches are miracles.

Halting between two opinions and calling it tolerance.

Tolerance and a rose-water world is the evil symptom of the time we are living in : it was just like it before the French Revolution, when universal brotherhood, tolerance and twaddle were preached in all the market places ; so they had to go through their revolution with one hundred and fifty a day butchered—the gutters thick with blood, and the skins tanned into leather : and so it will be here unless a righteous intolerance of the Devil should awake in time.

The tolerance of others is but doubt and indifference. Touch the thing they do believe and value, their own self-conceit ; they are rattlesnakes then.

With respect to that poor heresy of might being the symbol of right “to a certain great and venerable author,” I shall have to tell Lecky one day that quite the converse or reverse is the great and venerable author’s real opinion—namely, that right is the eternal symbol of might ; as I hope he, one day descending miles and leagues beyond his present philosophy will, with amazement and real gratification discover ; and that, in fact, he probably never met with a son of Adam more contemptuous of might except where it rests on the above origin.

Talking with Carlyle about bribes, Roebuck said : “Really if you so remove temptation, you will take away opportunity for virtue.” To which Carlyle replied : Then we must acknowledge as a great encourager of virtue, one who certainly has not got much credit for it yet,—namely, the Devil.

I say thy soul is lamed, and the God and all Godlike in it marred : lamed, paralytic, tending towards baleful eternal death, whether thou know it or not ;—nay, hadst thou never known it, that surely had been worst of all.

Before we censure a man for seeming what he is *not*, we should be sure that we know what he *is*.

Our sorrow is the inverted image of our nobleness.

No man at bottom means injustice; it is always for some obscure, distorted image of a right that he contends. Injustice pays itself with frightful compound-interest.

The whole world seems against you; but it is not so: other men who knock against you are simply thinking of themselves, not of you at all.

You will rarely find anybody designedly doing you ill.

Man is by birth somewhat of an owl.

Frankness is best met by frankness; the practice presupposes the approval.

The merit of originality is not novelty; it is sincerity.

I have observed this truth, even in our confused world, that whatever real human worth a man does put into his grand enterprize, just about the same quantity of real human victory (irrecognisable often to blockheads, but very real for all that) does he in the end get out of it.

Pantheism, Pottheism, Mydoxy, Thydoxy, are nothing at all to me; a weariness the whole jargon, which I avoid speaking of, decline listening to. Live, for God's sake, with what Faith thou couldst get; leave off *speaking* about Faith!

A man lives by believing something; not by debating and arguing about many things.

The fearful unbelief is unbelief in yourself.

Do you know why the age of Miracles is past? Because you are become an enchanted human ass (I grieve to say it); and merely bray parliamentary eloquence; rejoice in chewed gorse, scrip coupons, or the like; and have no discernible "Religion" except a degraded species of Phallus-worship, whose liturgy is in the Circulating Libraries!

TOBACCO.

One of the divinest benefits that has ever come to the human race.

Nobody comes whose talk is half so good to me as silence. I fly out of the way of everybody, and would much rather smoke a pipe of wholesome tobacco than talk to anyone in London just now. Nay! their talk is often rather an offence to me, and I murmur to myself,—Why open one's lips for such a purpose.

Tobacco Smoke is the one element in which, by our European manners, men can sit silent together without embarrassment, and where no man is bound to speak one word more than he has actually and veritably got to say. Nay rather every man is admonished and enjoined by the laws of honour, and even of personal ease, to stop short of that point; at all events to hold his peace and take to his pipe again the instant he has spoken his meaning, if he chance to have any. The results of which salutary practice, if introduced into Constitutional Parliaments, might evidently be incalculable. The essence of what little intellect and insight there is in that room: we shall or can get nothing more out of any Parliament; and Sedatives gently-soothing, gently clarifying tobacco smoke (if the room were well ventilated, open atop, and the air kept good), with the obligation to a *minimum* of speech, surely gives human intellect and insight the best chance they can have.

THE TOBACCO PARLIAMENT OF PRUSSIA:—Friedrich Wilhelm has not the least shadow of a Constitutional Parliament, nor even a Privy Council, as we understand it; his Ministers being in general mere clerks to register and execute what he had otherwise resolved upon: but he

had his *Tabako-Collegium*, Tobacco-College, Smoking Congress, *Tabagie*, which has made so much noise in the world, and which, in a rough natural way, affords him the uses of a Parliament, on most cheap terms, and without the formidable inconveniences attached to that kind of institution. A Parliament reduced to its simplest expression, and, instead of Parliamentary eloquence, provided with Dutch clay pipes and tobacco: so we may define this celebrated *Tabagie* of Friedrich Wilhelm's.

Tobacco—introduced by the Swedish soldiers in the Thirty-Years War, say some; or even by the English soldiers in the Bohemian or Palatinate beginning of said war, say others;—Tobacco once shown them, was enthusiastically adopted by the German populations, long in want of such an article; it has done important multifarious functions in that country ever since, for truly, in politics, morality and all departments of their practical and speculative affairs, we may trace its influences, good and bad, up to this day. Influences generally bad; pacificatory but bad, engaging you in idle cloudy dreams;—still worse promoting composure among the palpably chaotic and discomposed; soothing all things into lazy peace; that all things may be left to themselves very much, and to the laws of gravity and decomposition. Whereby German affairs are come to be greatly overgrown with funguses in our time; and give symptoms of dry and wet rot, wherever handled.

The Government lay a tax of some hundreds per cent. upon the poor man's pipe while the rich man's wine pays scarcely one-tenth of this impost; but it is a comfort to think that (as I have been told) the amount of Tobacco smuggled is about as great as that which pays the duty.

The Smuggler is the Lord Almighty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, saying to him, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

When placing himself under Dr. Franks at Cannes, Carlyle said: "I'll do anything, Doctor, ye tell me, but ye maunna stop my pipe."

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