THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE

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THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE

AN EXPOSURE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL FICTION STILL CURRENT

BY

DAVID ALEC WILSON

AUTHOR OF "MR. FROUDE AND CARLYLE"

WITH A PREFACE

BY

SIR JAMES CRICHTON-BROWNE, M.D.

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PREFACE

"A RIGHT faithful piece of investigation. This is my verdict after reading twice."

That is what Carlyle wrote to John Forster about his LIFE OF STRAFFORD in STATESMEN OF THE COMMONWEALTH; and that is what I would say about David Alec Wilson's exposition of THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE.

It is deplorable that any such exposition should be necessary to-day. I had hoped that the lie was killed in 1903, but, it seems, it was only scotched, and is still wriggling about, envenoming whom it may.

When preparing the NEMESIS OF FROUDE in collaboration with Mr. Alexander Carlyle in that year, I fully realised the mischief done by the cruel and damaging imputation which Froude, with craft and subtlety, had insinuated in his "Life" of Carlyle, and which he boldly and grossly proclaimed in his memoir, MY RELATIONS WITH CARLYLE, written in 1887, but withheld from publication for sixteen years. There is a natural shrinking from physical defect. There is a deep-

rooted and warrantable belief that certain physical defects carry with them a mental or moral twist. There is a popular conviction, not without physiological foundation, that the particular physical defect alleged by Froude to be in Carlyle is incompatible with intellectual stability and strength of character. Therefore Froude's imputation, intended to vindicate his flagrant misrepresentations of Carlyle's relations with his wife, which he foresaw would be exposed, went far beyond that. It reflected on Carlyle's work, and vastly reduced its value to mankind. Carlyle was the great admonisher of the nineteenth century. But words of warning and wisdom to be helpful must come from an unblemished source. A bankrupt prophet is of no account. True knowledge and understanding are shown forth not only in preaching but in living; and if Carlyle never lived up to the full measure of manhood, his preaching is discredited. "He jests at scars that never felt a wound." How could Carlyle deal fairly with the historical personages he passed under review, of some of whose controlling passions he had no intimate knowledge? His great mission as a writer was the unmasking of evil and wrongdoing. How could he, without hypocrisy, pursue that mission, if he had himself done a great and persistent wrong to the woman who had loved and trusted him?

When Carlyle died, he commanded the veneration of the civilised world. He was esteemed and honoured wherever the English language was spoken. A few years later his reputation was dimmed, sadly dimmed, by Froude's biography of him. In 1903 it was hideously besmirched by the appearance of Froude's brochure, MY RELATIONS WITH CARLYLE. People came to believe that Carlyle was as depicted in Froude's posthumous fragment, a man of transcendent ability, but selfish, overbearing, cruel, and contemptible, and warped by a constitutional incapacity.

While writing the NEMESIS OF FROUDE, as I have said, I realised all this, but I then felt that Froude's crowning and crushing calumny against Carlyle, that of constitutional incapacity, could not with a due regard to decency be adequately discussed and refuted in a work intended for general circulation. I felt that in the interests of truth, and for the reinstatement of Carlyle as a philosophic force and ethical guide, it must be answered and disproved; but I thought that that could be done indirectly. I calculated that the demonstration, given in the NEMESIS, of Froude's hopeless inaccuracy, of his romantic exaggerations and garbled statements, and of the falsity of other charges which he brought against Carlyle, would necessarily involve the collapse of this charge, differing

from the others only in its odiousness and inherent improbability. But I did not trust for the disposal of this charge merely to the laying bare of Froude's abounding unveracity. I determined to submit it, *in camera* as it were, to a thoroughly competent tribunal, specially qualified to weigh the evidence for and against it, and able, without impropriety, to sift that evidence in all its bearings, whose verdict should carry conviction to a discerning public even in the absence of the evidence on which it was founded. I therefore contributed to the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of June 27, 1903, an article on FROUDE AND CARLYLE, THE IMPUTATION MEDICALLY CONSIDERED, in which I critically examined the proofs of Froude's contention, if his loose hearsay can be called proofs, traced floating rumours to their tainted sources, and adduced cogent reasons for holding that Carlyle laboured under no physical defect, but was in all respects as other men are. My article must have reached the hands at any rate of more than twenty thousand medical men, and I am entitled to say that judgment was given in my favour. I received many letters from professional brethren expressing complete agreement with the conclusion at which I had arrived, and not one dissenting from it. The article, though it appeared in a strictly medical journal and was addressed to medical men,

was quoted by the lay press and made the subject of comment there, and there too it was generally acknowledged that I had made out my case.

I flattered myself that after this the obnoxious imputation was finally laid to rest, and that we should hear no more of it; but it appears I was mistaken. Slanders, and especially obscene slanders, are difficult to stamp out, and this one has been revived. Mr. Frank Harris affirms that Carlyle, when eighty-two years of age but with conversational powers admitting of no suspicion of senile drivel, incontinently avowed his own lifelong incapacity to a youth of twenty-one, a mere casual acquaintance, to whom he imparted a confidential disclosure, which he had never even distantly hinted at to any of his old and intimate friends, or in any of his voluminous and latterly most self-accusatory writings.

I leave Mr. David Alec Wilson to grapple generally with Mr. Harris's somewhat slippery recollections of Carlyle, which perhaps, at this distance of time, have become mixed with memories of readings and with imaginations or dreams. But I would specifically point out the obvious blunder about Darwin into which he has fallen. There was no real opportunity for Carlyle and Darwin to meet before the *Beagle* voyage, as Mr. Harris could have discovered if he had studied the

details of their lives; and when Darwin returned from that voyage in 1836, he was not a notoriety, but an obscure and private individual, the last person in the world to be lionised or called "Sir Oracle." He had done or published nothing to attract scientific, to say nothing of popular, attention. It was not until 1838, when he read Malthus on Population, that the idea occurred to him that, in the struggle for existence, favourable variations would tend to be preserved and unfavourable to be destroyed. It was only in 1844 that he wrote to his intimate friend, Sir Joseph Hooker; "At last gleams of light have come, and I am convinced that species are not immutable." The Darwinian theory, however, was not publicly mooted till 1858, and the ORIGIN OF SPECIES was published in 1859. In short, the ladies buzzing round Darwin like bees round a dish of sugar at the great party of Lady —— were so very much too soon that it is impossible that there ever were any such persons.

I refer to this myth about Darwin because it throws a sidelight upon the more serious and pernicious myth which Mr. Wilson has so neatly dissected. Even to imaginary conversations there are limits, which are clearly trespassed by the resuscitation of a defunct slander on a great and honoured name.

Apart from Mr. Frank Harris's new version of

it, I find the old Froude calumny cropping up in various directions, tincturing the compositions of most of those who write about Carlyle in these days. The story of the brilliant, loving, deeply injured wife with the gruff, emasculate and brutish husband at Cheyne Row threatens to take the place of Mdme. Villeneuve's famous fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast. Delicately veiled, the old calumny is the key to a fascinating but, as I believe, wholly misleading essay on CARLYLE AND HIS WIFE in SOME OLD LOVE STORIES, by T. P. O'Connor, a book recently republished. "Passion," says Mr. O'Connor, "that tremendous factor in the union of a man and woman was absent from the marriage of Carlyle and his wife. . . . Carlyle's infirmities, bodily and mental," he goes on, "made him an unfit companion for any woman. . . . Marriage had not brought to the wife (Mrs. Carlyle) the satisfaction of either soul, or heart, or body. It was without reverence or affection or the intimate physical communion which is to marriage not its assoiling but its sanctification. . . . One must avoid," he says again, "the coarse, almost brutish language in which women sometimes are compelled to demand separation from their husbands. Froude himself indicates as frankly as needs the real and fundamental reason of Mrs. Carlyle's unhappiness. 'There is not a hint in any way that he (Carlyle)

had contemplated as a remote possibility the usual consequences of marriage, a family—and children.'" This passage from Froude is untrue, but Mr. O'Connor, believing it, remarks, it "needs no comments—for its meaning is plain: and I pass on."

Mr. O'Connor seems to have been fairly obsessed by Froude's calumny. How else shall we account for the fact that this broad-minded and generous man of letters, who admits that, in the study of the human heart and human soul, Carlyle has told us more than almost any man of his time or of any other time, and who declares that nowhere "outside Shakespeare is there a portrait gallery so rich, so picturesque, so faithful, so full of photographic truth, lurid insight, morals and lessons, finely preached, as that which is to be found in his splendid pages," yet speaks of Carlyle in terms which would be almost harsh and indecorous if applied to a convicted felon? In the wild flare of Froude, Carlyle's features are in Mr. O'Connor's sight transformed into those of a gargoyle, and his proportions grow Satanic. Mr. O'Connor writes of Mrs. Carlyle's "destruction" by her husband, and tells us Carlyle "was selfish—brutally selfish . . . a depressed, silent, gloomy, exacting . . . man, . . . absorbed, repellent . . . visionary, . . . surly, unapproachable bear . . . Carlyle was a per-

fectly unlovable man to live with . . . selfish, tyrannical, bad-tempered, to a degree which scarcely any woman could have stood. . . ." He " was able to bend a woman to his will, . . . to his habits, with an unrelenting sternness that sometimes makes one almost loathe him. . . . It is somewhat hard," exclaims Mr. O'Connor, " to keep one's hands off him, as we reconstitute those scenes in the gaunt house at Craigenputtock," and one scene at Cheyne Row during her illness " makes one blush for one's manhood."

After reading this indictment, one asks with Malcolm in MACBETH, " If such a one be fit to govern, speak ? " and answers with Macduff, " Fit to govern ? No, not to live."

Undiluted Froude has been too much for even Mr. O'Connor, and when such a man has been misled it would be absurd to deny that more light is needed or to blame anyone for going astray. Too long has Carlyle been hideously misunderstood, because Froude's theory distorted all that was known. As soon as it is exploded, the letters and facts will tell their own plain story; and then the righteous indignation of Mr. O'Connor may be turned against the man who misled him.

I could quote from other writings, hot from the press, evidence that the Froude slander is again insidiously at work among us, and must again be

checked, if its blighting influence is to be avoided. Professor Calderwood of Edinburgh University told Mr. Wilson in 1896 that if Froude's story as to Carlyle's incapacity was false, it was a duty to say so, as the fiction had a bad effect on the best of the students ; and as Mr. Wilson predicts, even in America and Asia, where the writings of Carlyle are read in the Universities, the fiction is bound to have a defiling effect on adolescent minds, ever prone to dwell unduly on sexual topics. *I have myself seen the shrugging of shoulders and supercilious smiles amongst youths to whom I have extolled Carlyle, as the apostle of righteousness and clean living.*

It has therefore become the duty of those who reverence Carlyle and believe in the virtue of his message to mankind to attack the old slander once more ; and fortunately they can do so now in the open. They have no longer to follow it in its subterraneous burrowings, but can confront it in the light of day. It is not innuendo, suggestion or inference, with which they have now to contend, but direct statement. What Froude got from Miss Jewsbury, who got it no one knows where, Mr. Frank Harris got from Carlyle himself. That young man was, Heaven knows why ! made the repository of the tragic secret of Carlyle's life, and now he shamelessly divulges it to all and sundry.

It is not the friends of Carlyle who are responsible for the unsavoury proceeding which becomes requisite. They said nothing to provoke the taunt, and would fain have avoided any public utterance upon the subject. They only replied to it when compelled, and did so then with all possible reticence and reserve. They hoped the garbage was buried; but Mr. Frank Harris has brought it to the surface again in the most ostentatious way, and so it must be once for all well raked and aerated and purified by fire. And right well has David Alec Wilson done this. Mr. Harris's scarabean conglomeration is demolished. No unprejudiced person, I think, can read THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE without realising that it *is* the truth, and stands triumphant over a pack of lies. It is clear, moderate, and masterly in grasp, and while uncompromising in its conclusions, makes all possible allowance for extenuating circumstances, even indicating the ways in which Mr. Harris may have been led innocently astray in part of what he has said to the detriment of Carlyle.

It would be supererogation for me to answer Mr. Harris. He has been answered effectually, and I agree with everything that Mr. Wilson has said. But one or two supplementary observations may be permitted to me.

Mr. Wilson has shown parsimony, perhaps dis-

creet parsimony, in his use of the medical testimony advanced against Froude's allegation. Much more has been said on that subject from a medical point of view than he has reproduced; but what he has reproduced is sufficient. Like Mercutio's wound, "'twill serve."

The scene in Hyde Park at which the wonderful admission was made to Mr. Harris is, as described by him, inconceivable to those who knew Carlyle. A few additional touches would have made it a harmless caricature. Carlyle was never a gibbering imbecile, and always held his grief for his wife, even in its most poignant days, well under control. His visits to the grave at Haddington were always made alone. Besides, when he reverted to Scotch, he spoke good Dumfriesshire Scotch, not Cockney Scotch.

As regards what Mr. Wilson has written about the "bodily weakness" mentioned in the letter from Göttingen in 1878, I am in a position to confirm it. Mr. Harris has now the unparalleled effrontery to claim that by that phrase in that letter he meant Carlyle's incapacity, which, he says, Carlyle avowed to him during a walk in Hyde Park in the previous year. But the "bodily weakness" of the letter was of a kind, as the letter expressly says, to deprive us "of the hope of more from your pen," whereas the incapacity alleged, if it had ever

existed, had never interfered with the use of his pen in any way, as Mr. Harris very well knew. Surely Mr. Harris was not such a tactless blunderer as to recall, in a letter asking a favour, a humiliating confession of a constitutional defect with all its baleful consequences, that had slipped out in a moment of emotional perturbation. No ! No ! The " bodily weakness " alluded to by Mr. Harris was bodily weakness in the ordinary acceptation of the term ; and in 1877 that bodily weakness was sufficiently well marked. In the summer of that year he called at my house in Regent's Park with his niece, Miss Mary Aitken, and was so feeble that it was thought better that he should not make the effort of getting out of the landau. So while Miss Mary Aitken was within with my wife, I remained by the carriage and chatted with him. He was clear and kind ; but very frail and weary, and the partial paralysis of the right hand was painfully visible. *He was then quite unequal to a walk in Hyde Park.* In 1876 Froude said of him, " his life is fast ebbing away," and in 1878 he wrote of himself, " my strength is faded nearly quite away."

The advocates of Carlyle's incapacity, for there are advocates of it, show at what a loss they are for a plea when they bolster up their case by calling witnesses to prove that Carlyle and his wife occupied separate bedrooms. What if they did ?

I can point to couples who have occupied separate bedrooms all their married life, and have large families. Mr. Wilson has shown again, as Mr. Alexander Carlyle and I showed long ago, that it was only during one period of their married life that they slept apart, and that they did so not on account of matrimonial nullity but for reasons of health. In particular it diminished the inveterate insomnia from which both suffered.

The allusion to Jesus ascribed to Carlyle by Mr. Frank Harris must be painful and shocking to multitudes; and it is utterly incredible and even farcical. To say that "Jesus had no Falstaff in Him" is as grotesquely absurd as to say that Judas Iscariot had no Hamlet in him, or St. Paul no Launcelot Gobbo. No one save Mr. Harris has ever said that he heard Carlyle speak of Jesus thus. His public references to Him were invariably marked by reverent solemnity, and all the reports of his private talk show his sincerity, as for example this which Emerson recorded long ago. The scene was Craigenputtock. "We went out to walk over long hills, and looked at the Criffel . . . and down into Wordsworth's country. . . . He was honest and true, and cognisant of the subtle links that bind ages together, and saw how every event affects all the future. 'Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore kirk yonder: that brought you

and me together. Time has only a relative existence.' "

Carlyle was no Narses. He was neither an ascetic nor a sybarite, but a plain, honest Scotchman, upright in all his dealings, faithful in every relation of life, prickly on the surface like his native thistle, but soft and silken at the core; endowed with a brain sound and whole in every part, with no crippled convolution or amative deficiency—a brain that has discharged waves more subtle than those of Hertz, waves that have travelled round the world and will continue to do so for centuries to come, bearing messages of mighty import to the children of men.

Mr. David Alec Wilson has done a signal service to morality in writing THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE. I look forward to his life of the sage with sanguine expectations.

JAMES CRICHTON-BROWNE.

DUMFRIES, 1*st January*, 1913.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book is concerned exclusively with the intimate relations between Carlyle and his wife. The need for it can be told in a very few words.

I may or may not be mistaken in believing Thomas Carlyle to be the Confucius of the English-speaking races; but it is beyond dispute that he was one of the greatest and most interesting men in Europe in the nineteenth century, and nobody can deny that the discussion of sexual topics in a biography is detestable. It is equally plain, however, that if a great teacher of clean living, such as he was, is plausibly alleged to have been impotent, or in older phrase a born eunuch, and therefore a man who was not exposed to temptation like other men, the statement diminishes the value of his teaching if it is true, and therefore if it is false should be disproved.

The documents here printed show how such a statement was wrongly made about Carlyle, and how it has been refuted; and then how in 1911 Mr. Frank Harris came forward as a voluntary witness of ancient conversations, and was answered.

This book is meant to clear the way for all future biographers, and terminate debates that verge

upon obscenity. What leads me to write now is, of course, the fact that I have myself undertaken a biography; but it can hardly be finished in less than half a dozen years, and in that time much may happen. I may not live to finish it; and here at hand is this unwholesome hallucination, which can be rendered harmless by the sunlight, but which, if suffered to subside underground into the minds of men without being purified by the daylight, may pollute the deep-set, innermost springs of life.

It has cost me an effort to forgive Mr. Harris, the writer who has forced me to discuss such things. It is scavenger's work, which I have loathed to touch; but it had to be done. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy long ago forewarned me to be prepared for the contingency which has arisen. So it may have been inevitable. Every man naturally supposes that other men are like himself; and it is a trick we have inherited from our arboreal ancestors, as I learned by studying the apes, to love to look down and hate to look up. Besides, there are few things rarer than the apparition of a man of genius of any kind, to say nothing of a great spirit like Carlyle. Centuries may pass before we see another like him. It was inevitable that a great deal of evidence should be needed to make men realise that such a man had appeared; and those who have the happiness to be writing about such must always be prepared to reply to many unusual

questions. So now let it be plainly stated that Thomas Carlyle was neither an ascetic nor a eunuch of any kind. Physically, the difference between him and St. Augustine was merely the difference between Scotland and Africa; but morally he was on a different level, which perhaps should be explained.

Emerging from bestiality, mankind resembles a drunkard on horseback, leaning over at first on one side, and then in trying to straighten himself falling over on the other. Struggling after self-control, men everywhere begin by asceticism, finding it easier to abstain than to be temperate. The various stages of the moral evolution of humanity can always be seen in our contemporaries; and in the growth of every healthy man there is a season for asceticism. But those whose moral development is never arrested grow out of that; and how to do so harmoniously is one of the great lessons to be learned from the life of Thomas Carlyle. In short, he was not an ascetic but a moralist, who believed in and practised the family life. John Milton, who was worried by his wife, once echoed the medieval ascetic's wish that the Maker of the World had found another way of continuing the species; but Carlyle laughed at such stuff as heartily as Confucius, or Cromwell, or Martin Luther.

> "Who loves not wife, and wine and song,
> Remains a fool his whole life long."

How heartily Carlyle was of those who " accept the decrees of God," as the Muslims phrase it, may be read in his books, his letters, and all the authentic records of his deeds and words; and that he was physically like other men can be known for certain by anyone who reads this book and is able to weigh the evidence. There is no longer room for two opinions.

To journalists and men of letters I do now specially appeal. Here was one who lived up to the highest ideal of your calling, a hero of your trade. He spurned alike the follies of Philistines and fribbles, and remained, and insisted on being seen to remain to the end of a very long life, one of yourselves, a writer by trade; and yet for many years before his death he was recognised as a new moral force in Europe, a man of international importance. He made it possible for Englishmen and Germans to understand each other. The Muslims openly rejoice to this day at his vindication of Mohammed, and the Chinese and the Japanese are loud in their appreciation. He is the greatest of our historians, and the greatest of our peacemakers, as well as the greatest man of letters whom men now alive can boast that they have seen. Are you going to let the memory of such a man continue smeared by smutty fiction? I cannot believe it possible.

DAVID ALEC WILSON.

AYR, 1913.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CARLYLE

I

PRELIMINARY

In 1881 Thomas Carlyle died; and by 1886 his literary executor, Mr. Froude, had published four volumes of biography and five of letters and reminiscences, which were carefully edited to support the biography, all tuned to the selfsame key. The biography was artistically done. A single idea dominated it—mysterious, melancholy, monotonous, like the drone of a bagpipe. Carlyle was an oddity, half mad, and he ill-treated his wife—that was all the common reader read, particularly in the country; but the esoteric meaning, plainly written between the lines of many a page, whispered in society from the first, and alluded to in the leading newspapers, was that Carlyle was a eunuch, and that his wife's sorrow was the lack of sexual intercourse. This gave to the reiterated

protestations that nothing was hidden a grimly humorous effect, which was unintentional—the only kind of humour ever to be found in the writings of Mr. Froude.

In 1886 Mr. Alexander Carlyle and his wife, the nephew and niece of Carlyle, procured the publication of the "Early Letters," edited by Prof. Norton of Cambridge, Mass. In these volumes there was a demonstration as explicit as it could then be decently made that the fundamental proposition of Mr. Froude's writings about Carlyle was untrue. The best critics in England appear to have accepted the refutation, to the extent of intimating that, in the absence of any reply, the case of Mr. Froude would be lost by default. It was under such circumstances that in 1887 Mr. Froude wrote the pamphlet published in 1903, after his death, "My Relations with Carlyle."

In the interval between 1887 and 1903 much had happened. Many reminiscences and many volumes of letters had been published; and the romantic inventions in Mr. Froude's biography had been so plentifully riddled that a belief in its main thesis was becoming the peculiar privilege of a small and diminishing number.

The book "Mr. Froude and Carlyle," which was published in 1898, I had written at the instigation of Prof. Norton, as explained in a recent

book ("East and West"). It passed over the sexual question in silence, not because I supposed there was any truth in that part of Mr. Froude's story, but because it seemed best to say nothing about such things. "Froude dealt with it indirectly—let us do likewise," was Prof. Norton's exhortation to me in 1895. Mr. Alexander Carlyle was resolute to the same effect, and till 1903 it seemed likely that this method would succeed, and the filthy libel lapse into oblivion without having ever been explicitly mentioned.

Then in 1903 Mr. Froude's pamphlet was published by his children, who may have naturally failed to see that it vindicated their father's good faith at the expense of his judgment.

If, however, that was all they intended to do, then it may be said that they succeeded; for the debate about the sincerity of Mr. Froude is frivolous and verbal. It is true that many moralists besides Confucius have refused to call a man sincere unless he has avoided self-deception; but common people are less exacting, and a man is usually called sincere when he believes what he says, whether he has humbugged himself or not. In this, the commonest sense of the word, there is no doubt that Mr. Froude was sincere in his account of his relations with Carlyle, for otherwise he would never have left for publication a defence so

ludicrously inadequate. Perhaps a summary of it, omitting irrelevancies, and of the replies to it from Sir James Crichton-Browne and Alexander Carlyle, would be the best introduction to what follows.

II

MR. FROUDE'S "MY RELATIONS WITH CARLYLE"

HERE is the gist of what he has to say for himself, with his own words in quotation marks and a few needful notes in brackets.

"I was introduced to Carlyle soon after I left the University. I saw him . . . not often, for I lived far off. . . . He was very good to me. He helped me when he could. I became intimate to some extent with Mrs. Carlyle. . . . She liked me. . . . It was evident that she was suffering . . . she had no natural cheerfulness. . . . Rumour said that she and Carlyle quarrelled often, and I could easily believe it" . . . because she spoke sarcastically about him, though she "greatly admired him."

"In 1860 I removed to London to live. Such acquaintance as I had with the Carlyles I hoped to keep up, but . . . I did not wish that it should be closer than it was. . . .

"To my surprise, one evening in 1861, Carlyle called on me, expressed a wish to see more of me. . . . Nothing could be more flattering. I consented, and I was now continually in Cheyne Row." . . .

"Mrs. Carlyle was very much alone" . . . but "to those whom she liked she was charming—bewitching," and the thought of her "suffering through the negligence" of her husband "was exquisitely painful" to me. "Mrs. Carlyle's pale, drawn, suffering face haunted me in my dreams." . . .

"In 1862 her health finally broke down," and after then he was more attentive. She died suddenly in 1866, when driving in Hyde Park. He discovered how he had sinned towards her, and was overwhelmed by remorse. In 1871 he gave to me "a large parcel of papers. It contained a copy of the memoir which he had written of his wife, various other memoirs and fragments of biography, and a collection of his wife's letters." . . . I was to prepare them for publication. They were given to me then and there, so as to be my own property.

I showed them to John Forster, with his permission, and Mr. Forster told me in explanation "that Lady Ashburton had fallen deeply in love with Carlyle, that Carlyle had behaved nobly, and that Lord Ashburton had been greatly obliged to him." . . .

"Two years later (1873) . . . he . . . sent me in a box a collection of letters, diaries, memoirs, miscellanies of endless sorts, the accumulations

of a life," bidding me write his biography, and saying that these were the materials.

I undertook it to please him, and soon saw that Mr. Forster had been wrong. Carlyle had courted Lady Ashburton, not Lady Ashburton Carlyle. "What was the meaning of Forster's story? He died soon after, and I had no opportunity of asking him." Carlyle's infatuation had been one of the Cheyne Row secrets; but I could see there was another.

Geraldine Jewsbury was (a novelist of the day and) "Mrs. Carlyle's most intimate and most confidential friend." . . . "When she heard that Carlyle had selected me to write his biography, she came to me to say that she had something to tell me which I ought to know. I must have learnt that the state of things had been most unsatisfactory; the explanation of the whole of it was that 'Carlyle was one of those persons who ought never to have married.'" Mrs. Carlyle had been tormented by a longing for children, too.

"The nature of the relationship between the Carlyles I was not unprepared to hear. I had felt all along that there must be some mystery of the kind. . . . There were floating suspicions long before."

This discovery solved all the mysteries of

Carlyle's life in a most satisfactory manner. For example, there was his extraordinary language when she had spoken of leaving him. He had actually told her that " she was at liberty to go if she pleased." Miss Jewsbury had more and worse to tell of the same kind. " The London life was a protracted tragedy. When the intimacy with the Ashburton house became established, she had definitely made up her mind to go away, and even to marry another person. She told him afterwards on how narrow a chance it had turned. His answer hurt her worse than any other word she ever heard from him : ' Well, I do not know that I should have missed you ; I was very busy just then with Cromwell.' "

(It is surely ludicrous to imagine that talk like that is evidence that Carlyle was a eunuch ; but the levity of Mr. Froude and his fatal lack of a sense of humour are not more manifest than his honesty here. He questioned no relatives, and did not ask permission, which would have been readily given, to consult several doctors who were able to enlighten him. On his own showing, he was ready to swallow the story before it was told him, and did not pause to doubt a moment after he had once heard it.)

" Miss Jewsbury's information was given to me under too solemn circumstances, and was coupled

with too many singular details, to allow doubt to be possible."

I afterwards learned that other people knew, and maybe Mrs. Carlyle's doctors found it out; but it was enough for me that Miss Jewsbury told me that Mrs. Carlyle had told it to her. So I wrote accordingly, and have been unjustly abused for telling the truth.

(The rest of the book is mainly about "property, property, property," and throws no more light upon the matter.)

III

"THE NEMESIS OF FROUDE"

"MY RELATIONS WITH CARLYLE," by Mr. Froude, came out in 1903, and received an immediate rejoinder in "THE NEMESIS OF FROUDE," by Sir James Crichton-Browne and Alexander Carlyle, to which no serious reply has ever been attempted. I put some supplementary notes in brackets.

"That Froude himself frequently begged to be admitted to the Cheyne Row household is certain," but it is superfluous to dwell upon that. What is more serious is a very grave misstatement about the materials for the biography. It is proved to be untrue that Carlyle gave him these in 1873. What was given him in 1873 was what he afterwards published as "The Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle." It was not Carlyle himself at all, but his niece Mary, afterwards Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, who in 1877 lent him all Carlyle's private papers, which Carlyle himself had given to her in 1875.

(It is pleasant to linger on a fact so beautifully characteristic of the great man. He was so little

solicitous about what was to be said about him that he gave all his private papers, excepting business papers, of course, to his niece, who had long kept house for him, to do what she liked with them.) She believed in the loyalty of Mr. Froude, and lent him everything; and when more papers came in, as one after another relatives or friends departed, she sent these also to him; but happily both she and her uncle himself when appealed to made it clear, and Mr. Froude admitted, that the papers were her property, and merely lent to Mr. Froude for a temporary purpose.

She discovered the mistake too late, when Mr. Froude included in the Reminiscences a memoir about Mrs. Carlyle, the publication of which had by Carlyle been forbidden. She then did all she could to retrieve the papers at once, but could not get them back till Mr. Froude had done with them, and finished the biography.

While much of "The Nemesis" is concerned with other details, the joint authors face the issue which this book is intended to settle. Was Carlyle a natural eunuch?

Mr. Froude staked everything upon Miss Jewsbury. Did she deserve to be believed? That was the question, and it is proved abundantly that she was a flighty, hysterical person, liable to hallucinations about sexual matters.

(None can do more than guess about the motives of another, conscious or unconscious; but a guess is sometimes useful; and so it is suggested that Miss Jewsbury being addicted to making love to married men, being, in short, what the Asiatic women call a would-be husband-thief, the indisputable fact that Carlyle remained indifferent to her for year after year, and insisted on her remaining merely the friend of his wife, might alone suffice to convince her that he must be a eunuch. She would think so the more readily if she knew that some men said so, and when she had laid that flattering unction to her soul, some of Mrs. Carlyle's sarcasms, innocent of any such meaning, might easily grow without any intention of falsehood into the tragic story which she hastened to distil into the ears of Mr. Froude. Sir James and Mr. A. Carlyle are guiltless of this suggestion, which is based on the evidence they produce. I take the responsibility for it, and will now quote their words.)

"Mrs. Carlyle, he (Mr. Froude) tells us, spoke and wrote of Geraldine Jewsbury as her Consuelo; but if she did so, she must have used the appellation in an ironical sense, for their correspondence proves that she never took any bit of advice Miss Jewsbury offered, snubbed her peremptorily whenever she ventured to express an opinion, and looked upon

her more as an exasperator than as a comforter." There was "close intimacy," but "not of the sort Mr. Froude would have us believe, and which he indicates by the incorrect statement that Miss Jewsbury 'was about Mrs. Carlyle's own age': the truth being that there were eleven years between them—Mrs. Carlyle having been born in 1801, and Miss Jewsbury in 1812. . . . There was always an element of patronage and protection in Mrs. Carlyle's attitude towards her. Mrs. Carlyle was flattered by the worship she offered, and was grateful for the many delicate attentions she bestowed; but from first to last she treated her as a weak and wayward being, destitute of discretion and good sense, and it is surely a significant fact that Froude deliberately suppressed every letter of Mrs. Carlyle's in which her candid opinion of her friend is set forth.

"In the 'Letters and Memorials' that Froude selected and edited there is nothing reflecting unfavourably on Miss Jewsbury, whereas in the 'New Letters and Memorials' may be found abundant proofs of the light esteem in which Mrs. Carlyle held her." (Here be it noted that what Mrs. Carlyle wrote is excellent evidence of her feelings, whether or not we think that she was exaggerating, as it is very likely that she was. We have her actual words; and whether she was

right or wrong, she was sincere. Learning her feelings in this way from her words, it is easy for any candid person to see that Miss Jewsbury was not likely to be trusted with any secrets about her husband. The quotation goes on :—)

"She described her as a fussy, romantic, hysterical woman, a considerable fool, with her head packed full of nonsense, and nicknamed her 'Miss Gooseberry.' 'It is her besetting sin,' she said, 'and her trade of novelist has aggravated it—the desire of feeling and producing violent emotions.' Miss Jewsbury's intrigues and love affairs are often contemptuously alluded to by Mrs. Carlyle. 'Geraldine,' she wrote, 'has one besetting weakness. She is never happy unless she has a *grande passion* on hand, and as unmarried men take fright at her impulsive and demonstrative ways, her *grandes passions* for these thirty years have been all expended on married men.' In another place she (Mrs. Carlyle) mentions that she (Miss Jewsbury) was 'openly making the craziest love to a man' who was engaged to be married, and in another that she was 'in a frenzy over a letter from her declared lover, an Egyptian,' who had one wife already, and in still another that she had herself allowed that she had 'absolutely no sense of decency.' . . . Miss Jewsbury's feelings towards

Mrs. Carlyle herself . . . were highly extravagant, and in some degree perverted. The manifestation by Mrs. Carlyle of some preference or supposed preference for another woman led on one occasion to a wild outburst of what Miss Jewsbury herself called 'tiger jealousy,'" and made Mrs. Carlyle write, 'I am not at all sure she is not going mad.'

(The next quotation in this context may be introduced by the remark that we are reading the opinion of a specialist in mental diseases.) "Of delicate, nervous, highly-strung constitution, Miss Jewsbury became a morbid, unstable, excitable woman, constantly complaining of headaches and other ailments, and suffering from mental depression."

Upon the narrow issue whether Miss Jewsbury was likely to report Mrs. Carlyle's talk correctly there is happily evidence of a conclusive kind. "In order to show that Carlyle placed some confidence in Miss Jewsbury, we are told by Froude that he 'had requested Miss Geraldine Jewsbury . . . to tell him any biographical anecdotes which she could remember to have heard from Mrs. Carlyle's lips,' and that after reading these he wrote, 'Few or none of these narratives are correct in details, but there is a certain mythical truth in all or most of them.'" It appears

indisputable that it was Lady Lothian and not Carlyle who set Miss Jewsbury on writing, and that on sight of what was written by her he wrote to Miss Jewsbury :—

" Dear Geraldine,

" Few or none of these narratives are correct in all the details ; some of them, in almost all the details are incorrect. I have not read carefully beyond a certain point which is marked on the margin. Your *recognition* of the *character* is generally true and faithful ; little of *portraiture* in it that satisfies me. On the whole all tends to the *mythical*." . . . So that in short he begs her to take Lady Lothian's " word of honour " to show it to nobody else, and consign it to him to be suppressed.

(Seeing Miss Jewsbury failed to be accurate in reporting Mrs. Carlyle's common talk, she was likely to go still farther astray in reporting talk on sexual matters, about which she was peculiarly prone to mistake. At the same time, inasmuch as Mr. Froude was notoriously inaccurate in making quotations, Miss Jewsbury is entitled to the benefit of a certain doubt in respect of verbal remarks he attributes to her. She may not have said exactly what he said. He may have misreported her. There is even a curious inconsistency

in what he has written about the Ashburton business and Miss Jewsbury's talk to him.)

. . . "Writing in Cuba in 1887 he seems to have forgotten what he wrote in London in 1883, for then he unequivocally stated, in his note to the Journal (of Mrs. Carlyle), that he did not understand it and submitted it to Miss Geraldine Jewsbury, who supplied him with the version of the Ashburton affair, which he now adopts and sets forth as his own."

If the earlier statement were correct, the blunder about Lady Ashburton would be an additional reason, if one were needed, to discredit Miss Jewsbury's judgment, if not her veracity. What she could tell was of course no more than Mrs. Carlyle told her; and to clear the memory both of the Carlyles and of Lady Ashburton, Sir James Crichton-Browne and Mr. A. Carlyle are completely justified in making a mournful disclosure. Mrs. Carlyle's jealousy was physiological. As a relief from pain she had contracted the habit of dosing herself with morphia to excess. "It may be laid down as axiomatic in medical psychology, that when a highly neurotic and childless woman, at a critical period of life, takes to morphia, morbid jealousy will develop itself. Mrs. Carlyle was highly neurotic and childless, and at a critical period of life she became addicted to morphia

and other drugs, and ultimately developed morbid jealousy of her husband. . . . She suffered from neurasthenia and climacteric melancholia. . . . The piteous outcries of the Journal . . . were really but the empty ejaculations of her disordered feelings. Only the husband who has gone through the ordeal of living for years with a wife emotionally deranged, but intellectually clear, as Mrs. Carlyle was, can realise what Carlyle must have endured. . . . His sympathetic gentleness and forbearance are beyond all praise. . . .

"The Ashburton affair was truly, as Froude remarks, the cause of much heart-burning and misery at Cheyne Row, but it was so only because Mrs. Carlyle's diseased fancies fastened upon it, as they would have fastened upon something else, had Carlyle broken with the Ashburtons altogether. Froude has wholly misunderstood it, has published abroad the midnight mutterings of a sick woman, and has based on them discreditable reflections on her long-suffering husband. That Carlyle took the correct view of his wife's condition is clear." . . .

No blame attaches to the afflicted woman. She was able to recognise the cause of the mischief, and faced the cure, and abandoned the morphia. But the coincidence of it with her jealousy being

established, no other explanation of her jealousy is needed.

The evidence that Lady Ashburton did not in the vulgar sense fall in love with Carlyle is overwhelming. Her husband survived her, and after, if not before, her death, read Carlyle's letters to her, and remained as long as he lived the intimate friend of Carlyle. He married again, and the second Lady Ashburton, as his widow, re-read the old letters of Carlyle to her husband's first wife, and said they "were friendly, intimate letters, expressive of admiration, but in no way transgressing proper bounds." Among a cloud of direct eye-witnesses, the first Lord Houghton is quoted, testifying after both Lady Ashburton and Carlyle were dead that "the constant friendship that existed between Lady Ashburton and Carlyle" was "on her part one of filial respect and duteous admiration. The frequent presence of the great moralist of itself gave to the life of Bath House and The Grange a reality that made the most ordinary worldly component parts of it more human and worthy than elsewhere."

The lady's letters to Carlyle survive to bear out the other evidence; (and, in short, we not only see the truth of the matter, but may be persuaded to forgive the fiction by reflecting that but for it we might not have learned to see so well the

beautiful aspects of fine human beings, so ludicrously maligned.)

Why, then, did John Forster make the statement Mr. Froude alleged? It is certain, and Mr. Froude admits, that it was untrue, and it is incredible that he made it. He lived two or three years after Froude on his own showing discovered it was wrong. Why did Froude not ask him to explain it?

(There is obvious to all who have critically studied Mr. Froude's writings an easy escape from the apparent dilemma that either Mr. Froude lied or John Forster. If Forster said, as he properly might have said, as much as is in Lord Houghton's words just quoted, then Mr. Froude a while afterwards, without intending to mislead, but merely twisting in his usual way what he loosely remembered to make it fit his story, would be quite capable of telling that Forster said that Lady Ashburton fell in love with Carlyle.)

As for the yarn that Carlyle grimly told his wife that if she had left him altogether he would not have missed her, the truth seems to be "that Froude has applied to Carlyle and his wife a story which Carlyle used to tell, and at which his wife laughed merrily. It was the story of a North of England farmer, whose wife, with whom he had had a tiff, left him and went back to her parents,

but soon tired of the separation and returned home. Meeting her husband, she addressed him thus: 'I'se back again, thou sees!' to which her husband replied, 'Back again? I never kenned thou was away!' That Mrs. Carlyle, whatever she may have said in her tempestuous moods, ever seriously harboured the idea of leaving her husband, no one who has conned her letters will believe."

The evidence from the letters need not be summarised here. It is enough to note that many good critics think it alone sufficient, and that there is not a word in all the documents to support the obscene romance now being demolished.

Two maiden ladies alive in Dumfries were able to testify "that twice whilst at Craigenputtock (in 1831) Mrs. Carlyle consulted their mother, the late Mrs. Aitken, about her maternal hopes, which, alas! came to nought; and the late Mrs. Alexander Carlyle . . . was much touched to find in a drawer at Cheyne Row a little bundle of baby clothes made by Mrs. Carlyle's own hands." (As evidence that her husband was not a eunuch, this would be hard to beat.) It recalls the reference to her "child's chair" in the Reminiscences.

"It can be demonstrated beyond dispute that what Froude called remorse was simply poignant grief," the grief of the right sort of man, thinking of his own faults only.

(Here it may be permissible to intercalate in corroboration that upon several occasions in 1896 the late David Masson assured me that after the death of Mrs. Carlyle, Carlyle often spoke to him freely about her, but never at all in a tone of remorse. When walking with Masson in his later years, Carlyle occasionally said, "Ay me," softly to himself. If speech followed it generally appeared that he had been sighing over some departed friend. At times he was lively and capable of a most hearty laugh; but it seemed true that his prevailing mood had subsided into gloom and depression. When I inquired whether he seemed soured or disappointed by the results of his life's work, Masson answered, "I think not." In the following year (1897) Sir Charles Gavan Duffy said the same to me with emphasis, scouting as delirious the suggestion that Carlyle's bitter sorrow for his wife had anything in common with vulgar remorse.

(The despondency which many observers noticed in the sage may be explained by his physical condition. The indigestion which afflicted his early years continued to the end. David Masson told me that once when some people were discussing hell, he heard Carlyle saying to them, "If the devil had my stomach to chew with, I could not wish him worse, poor fellow!"

(Indigestion has the same result as the lack of food, and blue pills taken by a man ill-nourished could not fail to cause depression. Mr. Alexander Carlyle told me in 1903 that Carlyle took blue pills occasionally till the last year of his life. "His death," said his nephew, who had been residing with him, and was quoting what the doctors said, "was not due to any disease, but to a complete failure of digestion. He was unable to take any food for the last three weeks of his life; and he lived for three weeks after Dr. Maclagan who was attending him prophesied that he would die in one.")

Before passing to other medical details which must be inflicted on readers willing to have a doctor's trouble but without the fees, a few lines may be quoted of a different quality.

"With plaintive air Froude asks what motive he could have had" for misstatement? "It is possible that some of the motives which actuated Froude . . . were . . . unknown to himself; but on the surface, motives, not wanting in strength, are discernible. Froude is not entitled to say, 'I had no secret injuries to resent.'" Carlyle had censured his writings (as, for example, his Cæsar, saying "it tells me nothing of Cæsar"); and reprimanded "a fondness for indecent exposure." In the letters Froude read "far from compli-

mentary references" to himself, and his own pamphlet about his relations with Carlyle shows "a sense of injury as to the manner in which Carlyle had disposed of his papers." . . .

"His mind was poisoned against Carlyle by the conception he had formed of his treatment of his wife, and, do what he might, amidst all the nectar and ambrosia, the subtle and deadly venom would, from time to time, trickle out. In Froude's somewhat rank imagination conceptions grew apace. Once formed they were expanded from within, and never subjected to the pressure of facts from without. And so his malign conception of Carlyle gathered strength as he went on, and is seen in full force in his posthumous paper. . . . He wished to limn truly the portrait in his mind's eye, yet that portrait was blotched and discoloured . . . and he was not ignorant that startling effects and controversial matter are attractive in literature."

IV

MEDICAL EVIDENCE

In "The Nemesis of Froude" readers are referred to an article by Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., etc., in the "British Medical Journal" of 27th June, 1903. In it some interesting details are added. Incredible as it may appear, Mr. Froude did not "think fit to test Miss Jewsbury's statement in any way, although he regarded it not as a mere bit of idle talk, but as of vital importance, and made it the keynote of his whole biography. Carlyle was alive; many medical men who had attended Mrs. Carlyle were accessible"; (one of them was Dr. John Carlyle, her brother-in-law, and I have been credibly informed that he was most anxious to enlighten Froude, and when he found Froude omitting to consult him, wished to nip his enterprise in the bud; and nobody can doubt that Froude had only to ask permission from Carlyle himself to get leave to question any doctor who had anything to tell;) "judicious friends of hers, like Mrs. Russell, of Thornhill, who had been in far more confidential relations

with her than Miss Jewsbury, might have been appealed to; but no step did Froude take to apply the touchstone which lay ready at hand. He received Miss Jewsbury's disclosure with avidity. . . . He had had 'anonymous letters' on the subject, he tells us." . . .

(Now anonymous letters may furnish useful clues in countries where a bureaucracy is enthroned and burkes complaints, one scoundrel winking at another, as I have read and seen abundantly in Burma; but even under such circumstances the anonymous report is at best a clue, and never evidence. In England an anonymous communication that a man who had been married about forty years was a eunuch is so likely to be a smutty invention that it is not needful to discuss it, and men of sense would never mention it.)

The nearest approach to direct evidence by medical men is this: "Miss Jewsbury sowed, Froude watered, and the calumny has seeded apace—at any rate in the metropolis, in that fertile soil for piquant and lewd chatter about prominent persons which a high civilisation never fails to afford. I have heard it stated in London society many times, with and without facetious accompaniments, that Carlyle was impotent, and that that was the clue to his life-history, and

I have invariably asked for authority for or proof of the statement, and the answers I have received have all resolved themselves into these four: (1) It is so reported. (2) Froude said so. (3) Sir Richard Quain said so. (4) The house-surgeon at St. George's Hospital who examined Mrs. Carlyle's body declared that she was *virgo intacta*.

"As to report I need say no more. Detached from a definite and approachable point of origin, it is as the idle wind, which it would be the height of folly to regard. As to Froude, I need merely remark that the fact that he said anything is the best possible reason for disbelieving it."

(Besides, Froude did not offer himself as a witness. He was an historian professing to relate facts ascertained from others.)

"As to Sir Richard Quain, I need scarcely remind my professional brethren that the ascription of the rumour to him is a palpable lie. Sir Richard (then Dr.) Quain was professionally consulted by Mrs. Carlyle, treated her for a number of years, and gave her death certificate; and was not, as Chairman of the General Medical Council, likely to commit an act infamous in a professional respect, by divulging a secret confided to him by a patient in his professional capacity. No one who

knew him will believe that he did so, and that he did not do so I have the strongest reason to maintain, for on one occasion on which I dined with him at the table of Woolner the sculptor, when our host propounded the theory as to Carlyle's impotence, Sir Richard laughed it to scorn as a bad joke. I am informed that when Sir Richard was attending Mrs. Carlyle, sometime in the 'sixties, he had on one visit, after leaving Mrs. Carlyle's bedroom, an interview in the drawing-room with Mrs. Venturi (the Hon. Mrs. Stansfeld's sister), who was acting as Mrs. Carlyle's friend and taking his directions, and he added to these: 'You may tell Mr. Carlyle that he may resume marital relations with his wife.' To which Mrs. Venturi replied: 'I would rather you would tell him yourself.'"

(I know not how Sir James was informed of what was said to Mrs. Venturi, but I have myself heard it from a gentleman unwilling to be named, who said to me that Mrs. Venturi told it to his wife, from whom he heard it. He added that Mrs. Venturi said Dr. Quain replied that he did not dare to speak to Carlyle himself about it, and she rejoined: "Then how can you expect me to do it, being a woman?" She was an English lady of superior intellect and character, and on very intimate terms with the Carlyles. The story

is quite a likely one, and may safely be believed on her word alone.)

To resume quotation from the medical article: "Froude's final anathema on Carlyle has been delayed so long that much of the evidence that might have been called to prove it unjust has gone beyond our reach. Dr. T. J. Maclagan, who attended Carlyle for two years, and during his last illness, and was supporting his head when he died, has . . . just passed away. He must have had special opportunities of obtaining information, and I have heard him denounce this rumour as to Carlyle's impotency as a foul falsehood." . . .

"Mrs. Carlyle died suddenly in her brougham on April 21st, 1866, at about four o'clock in the afternoon. Her death was discovered at a point in Hyde Park just opposite the Achilles statue, and her body was immediately conveyed to St. George's Hospital, two hundred yards distant. Within two hours the hospital was visited by Miss Jewsbury and Froude, who thus describes what he saw. 'There on a bed in a small room, we found Mrs. Carlyle beautifully dressed, dressed as she always was in quietly perfect taste. Nothing had been touched. Her bonnet had not been taken off. It was as if she had sat on the bed after leaving the brougham, and had fallen back upon it asleep.'

The recollection of the Secretary of the hospital is that Mrs. Carlyle's body was laid on a bed, not, as Froude states, in a small room, but in one of the wards, where it was screened off; but let that pass. . . . There was no coroner's inquest, no necropsy, and the body was removed to Cheyne Row the same evening."

Sir James points to the absurdity of supposing that the corpse could have been examined as alleged, and mentions the medical fact that the question of virginity could not have been decided by an examination, even if there had been one by the best experts. Then he proceeds: "But I am in a position to state in the most positive terms that no examination of the body of Mrs. Carlyle took place. Dr. Ridge-Jones, who was Resident Medical Officer at St. George's Hospital on April 21st, 1866, writes to me as follows: 'I remember distinctly attending the late Mrs. Carlyle when brought to St. George's Hospital in her brougham from Hyde Park in 1866. She was dead when I saw her, and *no examination was made or thought of.* . . . No one would have dared to make an examination of the body of any kind without my sanction. Therefore you may take it from me *as a fact* that no examination was made. The late Mr. Froude called at the hospital very soon after Mrs. C. was brought in, and I had a long talk with

him. There was no coroner's inquest, and I do not remember to have given the certificate of death.' "

(It is pleasant and perhaps permissible to add some unexpected corroboration of Dr. Ridge-Jones. On several days, ending September 25th, 1896, I had long interviews with Mrs. Broadfoot, at her house, Yorkvilla, Thornhill, Dumfries-shire. She was a person of strong, natural intellect, and a capital observer. Her connection with Carlyle and his wife dated from childhood; and she was a maid in their house from July, 1865, till August, 1866, when she left to marry Mr. Broadfoot. My notes of her talk cover more than forty pages. From letters she showed me I saw she had been treated in the old-fashioned way as both a friend and a servant. She told me how on the day of Mrs. Carlyle's death she had dressed her, and pinned her voluminous underclothing before she went out for a drive, and she it was who received the corpse in the evening and prepared it for burial. She assured me, and repeated her assurance later: "Mrs. Carlyle's body was brought home that night, and it had not been examined in any way—dress and underclothing were just as when she left the house."

(It is not in my notes, but I clearly recollect remarking that doctors were clever in replacing

things, whereupon she vehemently declared that nobody could have replaced the garments as she had put them in a way to escape her notice, and that Mrs. Carlyle, being frail, was wearing a great deal more than usual.)

"There were those who had seen Carlyle bathing," we read. (In Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century and later men bathed at a modest distance from the village, and stark naked, even as the Greeks wrestled. In watering-places such as Carlyle frequented, I have seen as late as the 'seventies more than half of the men bathing naked, and the rest nearly so. Any physical oddity about Carlyle, who was an assiduous bather, would not have escaped notice.)

"During the later years of his life he suffered from an inguinal hernia, and the person who many times adjusted his truss is still alive, and is ready to testify that he was in all respects normally formed." . . .

In a letter written in the last year of her life Mrs. Carlyle attributed her childlessness to her own weak health. She "was an only child, born prematurely, and during her life her family became extinct, so that when Carlyle came to make his will there was no Welsh left to whom he could bequeath Craigenputtock."

(More evidence of a direct kind is mentioned

in the open letter to Mr. Harris, Chapter VI here following. Only an accident prevented it being all in "The Nemesis of Froude"; and even without it, so overwhelming is the case made out by Sir James Crichton-Browne and Mr. Alexander Carlyle, that I confidently hoped till 1911 that it would never be needful for any ordinary biographer to deal with such a topic at all. But it was fated otherwise. So now let Mr. Harris have a hearing.)

V

MR. HARRIS TELLS TALES

(In February, 1911, there appeared in the "English Review" an article, "Talks with Carlyle," by Frank Harris, from which, by the courteous permission of the editor, these extracts are now made. The brackets indicate my notes intercalated. The rest is quotation.)

The servant-girl at his house told me that Mr. Carlyle had gone for his usual walk on Chelsea Embankment, so I went off to find him. . . .

(The description of Carlyle which follows, and most of the opening talk about Goethe and Heine might have been paraphrased from descriptions and dialogues published in London long ago. This coincidence would be a corroboration of the writer only if he had not read the previously published reports. Whether Mr. Harris, a London journalist and author and editor, had read them, none but himself can tell. When the conversation turned upon Jesus Christ, then indeed he gives us something original. It is unpleasant reading,

and it is printed only out of deference to some earnestly religious persons who desire me to explain its absurdity.)

I

How Mr. Harris stood up for Jesus

"Do you think Shakespeare greater than Jesus?" I asked.

"Indeed I do," was the emphatic reply. . . . "I prefer Shakespeare; he was larger, richer."

"Perhaps," I replied, "but Jesus went deeper."

"I dón't admit it," he persisted. "All the Jewish morality was tribal, narrow; 'an eye for an eye,' stupid, pedantic formula; and the Christian—'turn the other cheek'—mere absurdity. I see no greatness in any of it."

"'He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone,'" I replied, "is great enough and modern to boot," but he would not let me continue; he had got the great argument clear at last.

"Man, He had no humour," he cried, shaking his head; "Jesus had no Falstaff in Him; I wad na gie up the ragged company for all the disciples," and again the deep-set eyes danced.

I tried to put forward some other reasons,

but he would not listen; he repeated obstinately, "He had no Falstaff in Him, no Falstaff." . . . And he chuckled. The subject was closed. . . .

II

A Dream of a Drawing-room

"Perhaps you didn't know Darwin?" (So Mr. Harris says that he inquired of Carlyle.)

"Indeed, and I knew him well," he replied, taking me up shortly, "knew him when he was quite young—long before his 'Beagle' voyage—knew him and his brother. I always thought the brother the abler of the two—quicker and of wider range, but both were solid, healthy men, not greatly gifted, but honest and careful and hardworking. . . . I remember when he came back after the 'Beagle' cruise. I met him at Lady ——, a great party, and all the ladies buzzed about him like bees round a dish of sugar. When he had had enough of it—perhaps more than was good for him—I called him.

"'Come here, Charles,'" I cried, 'and explain to me this new theory of yours that all the world's talking about.'

"He came at once, and sat down with me, and talked most modestly and sensibly about it all. I saw in him then qualities I had hardly

done justice to before, a patient clear-mindedness, fairness, too, and, above all, an allegiance to facts, just as facts, which was most pathetic to me; it was so instinctive, determined, even desperate, a sort of belief in its way, an English belief, that the facts must lead you right if you only followed them honestly, a poor, groping, blind faith—all that seems possible to us in these days of flatulent unbelief and priggish unconcern for everything except swill and straw," and the eyes gleamed wrathfully under the bushy grey brows.

"That must have been wonderful," I resumed, after a pause, "to have heard Darwin explain Darwinism."

"He did it very well," Carlyle went on, "an ordered lucidity in him which showed me I had under-rated him, misseen him, as we poor purblind mortals are apt to missee each other, even with the best will in the world to see fairly," and he sighed again deeply.

"But the theory must have interested you," I said, striking the match again, or trying to.

"Ay," he said, as if plunged in thought and then waking up. "The theory, man! the theory is as old as the everlasting hills." . . .

"Did you tell Darwin what you thought of his new scientific creed?" I asked, after a pause.

"I did," he said, with a quick change of mood,

smiling suddenly with the gay sunshiny irresistible smile that illumined his whole face, quivering on the lips, dancing in the eyes, wrinkling the nose.

"After Darwin had talked to me for some time, a little crowd had gathered about us, open-mouthed, listening to Sir Oracle, and when he had finished, I said:

"'All that's very interesting, Darwin, no doubt: how we men were evolved from apes and all that, and perhaps true,' and I looked about me, 'I see no reason to doubt it, none: but what I want to know is how we're to prevent this present generation from devolving into apes? That seems to me the important matter—to prevent them devolving into apes.'"

And the old man laughed—a great belly-shaking laugh that shook him into a cough, and there we stood laughing, laughing in harmony at length with the sun which shone bravely overhead, while the silken wavelets danced with joy and the air was young and quick.

III

"*The Puritan's Limitations*"

(Reality is funnier than fiction. If any playwright had brought upon the stage a London editor or author, and made him tell seriously

this wonderful yarn about Thomas Carlyle making a scene in Hyde Park, and then spluttering obscene confessions to a callow companion, a young man and casual acquaintance, there is not a critic in England but would have scoffed at him for overstepping the modesty of Nature. It would have seemed too unlikely even for a farce. Yet here it all is as it appeared in the "English Review" in February, 1911.)

On all the main issues then of modern politics, the great Puritan was in the right, his insight has been justified by the event: he was at once the best guiding and governing force ever seen in England. We must now try to realise his limitations and shortcomings. Strange to say he was typical of Puritanism also in this; his blind side was the blind side of the whole movement, and supplies the reason why the movement failed to satisfy modern needs and why it is that to-day Puritanism is universally discredited.

Carlyle had hardly any sense of sex or stirring of passion. He was even more devoid of bodily desire than Swift or Ruskin. This lack brought him to misery and his life to wreck. Mr. Craig points out that he never shared his wife's natural longing for children; he could not even understand it. He had not enough sensuality to comprehend his wife's ordinary needs and so he treated her

atrociously without realising his own blindness till it was too late even for atonement.

A passage in his "Heroes and Hero-Worship" first put me on the track. Speaking of Dante he admitted that the great Florentine was "gey ill to live with" and nevertheless, defended him. Men like Dante, he says, of keen passionate sensibilities, and conscious of the importance of their mission must always be difficult to live with. It was as if Carlyle had been justifying his own conduct.

One day we were walking together in Hyde Park: as we neared Hyde Park corner it began to rain: naturally, I quickened my pace a little. Suddenly, to my utter astonishment, Carlyle stopped, and taking off his soft hat stood there in the rain with his grey head bowed. For a moment I was lost in wonder: then I remembered his picture of old Dr. Johnson standing bareheaded before his father's shop in Lichfield half in piety, half in remorse. I guessed that Carlyle was thinking of his wife, and then it flashed across me that it was here in Hyde Park she had died in her carriage while he was in Edinburgh. When he put on his hat and walked on, the tears were running down his face.

I can't remember how the talk began and my notes do not help me much. At the time

I put down simply: "Johnson's penance and piety; remorse and repentance not good, harmful; Carlyle's excessive. Bit by bit he told the incredible story."

In brief the story was that he admired his wife beyond all other women, loved her and her alone all his life; but had never consummated the marriage or lived with her as a wife.

"The body part seemed so little to me," he pleaded: "I had no idea it could mean much to her. I should have thought it degrading her to imagine that. *Ay di me, ay di me.* . . . Quarter of a century passed before I found out how wrong I was, how mistaken, how criminally blind. . . . It was the doctor told me and then it was too late for anything but repentance. My poor love! She had never told me anything; never even hinted anything; was too proud, and I, blind, blind. . . . When I blamed myself to her I saw the doctor was right; she had suffered and I—ah God, how blind we mortals can be; how blind! . . .

"It was as if I had been operated for cataract and sight had been given me suddenly. I saw the meaning of a hundred things which had passed me unexplained; I loved her so that I realised even wishes unconfessed to herself, realised that she would have been happier married to Irving

and that she had felt this. Speaking once of his pretended gift of tongues, she said 'he would have had no such gift had I married him.' I understood at length, that she had wanted him. Physically he was splendid, and she had felt his attraction. . . . I loved her so, I could have given her to him and I did nothing but injure her and maim her life, the darling! who did everything for me and was everything to me for forty years. . . .

"And the worst of it all is, there is no other life in which to atone to her—my puir girlie! It's done, and God Himself cannot undo it. My girl, my puir girl! . . . Man, man, it's awful, awful to hurt your dearest blindly, awful!" And the tears rained down the haggard old face and the eyes stared out in utter misery.

I comforted him as best I could, told him that in his remorse he exaggerated the wrong and the injury, that after all, he had been by far the best husband Mrs. Carlyle could have had, that faithlessness went with passion, that she might have suffered more with any other man and that she could never have known with any other such perfect companionship of spirit, such intimacy of soul, but he shook his head; he had always loved the truth and now against himself he would not blink it. "Ma puir girlie!" was his

cry, and "blind, blind!" his ceaseless self-reproach. He had put all his pride in his insight, and it was his insight that had failed him.

Years later I told the fact at a dinner at the Garrick Club, and a man I did not then know, confirmed it across the table: told me he was the doctor in question and afterwards in private gave me the other side of the story from what Mrs. Carlyle had told him. It was Sir Richard Quain, I believe. Some time or other I shall probably tell what he told me that night.

Carlyle's confession to me broke down all barriers between us. Whenever we met afterwards he treated me with infinite consideration and kindness. But all that is another story, and not to be told here.

What concerns us now is the fact that this bodily disability of Carlyle explains most of his shortcomings as literary critic and writer. . . .

VI

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. HARRIS

I WAS in Burma when Mr. Harris's article appeared, and had to send for it. By the time it came my books were packed, as I was preparing to return to England. My Carlyle papers had been in the safe keeping of the Librarian of Glasgow University since 1907, and were not immediately accessible. So I could not sift Mr. Harris's writing at once; and though on sight of it I saw he had allowed his pen to run away with him, I remembered what I had noticed when attending the Law Courts long ago in London, and an able Irish barrister of my acquaintance had confirmed to me, that an Irishman has an oriental preference for the direct way of quoting and for an amplification of surrounding circumstances. That makes him occasionally require from his memory more than any memory can carry. So he is a little readier than an Englishman who has learned to write to add fictitious details to a true story. It seemed plain that the article was not entirely invented; and therefore I decided to try to sift something credible out of it, and even hoped the

writer had been "Carlylean" enough to keep notes which he might let me see. It also seemed plainly needful to remonstrate, and maybe induce him to correct the most obvious and dangerous of his blunders.

The only date he gave in February was on the eleventh page of his article, where a paragraph begins: "When I knew Carlyle in 1878–9 I tried again and again to get him on this subject . . . why he had never stood for Parliament." . . . This seemed to imply that other talks had other dates. As soon as he admitted, on the production of an old letter of his by Mr. Alexander Carlyle, that he first became acquainted with Carlyle in 1877, then indeed it became easy for any student of Carlyle's life to see that in this instance the erroneous details were likely to bear the same proportion to the original fact as Falstaff's intolerable deal of sack to his one halfpennyworth of bread. But in the meantime the following letter had been sent to him as soon as I read his article :—

TOUNGOO, BURMA,

FRANK HARRIS, ESQ. 29-7-11.

DEAR SIR,

Your article in the "English Review" of February last, and the fact that I have been collecting materials for a "Life" of Carlyle

for nearly twenty years, and am on the point of retiring from professional life to proceed with it, may seem to you to justify this letter. It is to explain to you, and beg you to correct, a dreadful mistake which you unconsciously made in listening to Carlyle's talk.

It is surely needless to say I have confidence in your perfect good faith, and in the substantial accuracy of your report, which I may yet quote in a way that will please you. Otherwise this letter would not be written.

The truth is simple, and I will begin by telling it. Carlyle and his wife loved, married, and lived together, exactly as other married people do, for many years, till she came to the time of life when physical changes begin in women which terminate the possibility of motherhood. Mrs. Carlyle, who had been always delicate and 'highly strung,' was then, like many another woman at that time of life, in danger of death, or of what she dreaded more, insanity. She made her husband promise she would never be sent away from him even if insane; but though she long continued hovering on the verge, she was never at any time in need of a keeper, thanks to his infinite patience with her, though often enough she had to have a nurse.

This dreadful affliction commenced some time before Mrs. Welsh, her mother, died; and Mrs.

Welsh, who was a doctor's widow, suggested to Mrs. Carlyle that she would best get over the dangerous years in front of her by persuading her husband to abstain from intimacy and let her sleep apart. He consented, and the women had their way.

Both Dr. Quain and Carlyle himself in speaking to you were thinking of the long period that followed between then and her death. There is abundant evidence to prove this; but consider your own report: "Quarter of a century passed . . ." You say Carlyle was impotent, and that their marriage was "never consummated," and you understood him to be speaking of their whole life together when he said "quarter of a century." But they were married in 1826, and Mrs. Carlyle died in 1866. The context makes it certain that whatever vague word Carlyle used would properly be above and not under the exact figure. From the epoch I have indicated till her death was over twenty years, and so would fit his words as you report them.

You may reply you may have been mistaken on this point. But my trade has been little but sifting evidence for very many years; and so I hope you will pardon the remark that you were much more likely to be mistaken about other words than about a phrase like this. There is no part of your valuable report which is not

more likely to be a mistake than this "quarter of a century," which is fatal to your theory of impotence.

It may be as well to explain what Dr. Quain advised, and why. It is a commonplace among specialists on mental diseases that nothing is worse for a patient in danger than the feeling, 'I am peculiar.' Many of the best contrivances to steady the brain are based on this fact, and do good by making the patient feel himself or herself to be like other people. There is no doubt that that was the sole and sufficient reason why Dr. Quain thought that Mrs. Carlyle ought to resume living with her husband, like other married ladies. She shrank from the mention of the subject; and so the honest doctor, who confessed he "did not dare to speak to Carlyle himself" about it, tried to approach him through common friends, whose subsequent statements are a part of the evidence which I have found conclusive.

It seems to have been Quain's opinion that Mrs. Carlyle's sufferings were increased by Carlyle's yielding to the whim of her mother and herself; but all the evidence points to the conclusion that Carlyle was never told of this till it was too late. He was full of remorse for needing to be told it, and thought he had neglected her a little when he was busy; but his remorse has been exaggerated,

and quite misunderstood. (P.S.—1912. I have never seen any evidence that he ever was told it, except the statements of Mr. Harris.—D. A. W.)

In the book "Mr. Froude and Carlyle" (1898) my argument was that Mr. Froude's narrative was unsupported by evidence and incredible. I knew that he had meant the fashionable gossip of the town to supply the gaps and suppose Carlyle to be impotent. But in 1898 I wrote so that nobody who had not already heard it would learn it from me. I shared to the full the determination of Carlyle's relatives and friends to clear his memory, and also their reluctance to mention matters which ought not to emerge in verbiage. (I enclose a note whereby you can get a copy of that book, if you want to see it.)

Mr. Alexander Carlyle continued to persevere piously in publishing volume after volume of authentic documents, Mr. C. E. Norton, Sir James Crichton-Browne and others helping him. Gradually but effectually the work was being done and the fiction fading away. Then the representatives of Mr. Froude were foolish enough to publish the obscene libel which he had left in writing, and you now repeat it. Of course, it had long been current in London, and it had apparently imposed upon you so completely that, in listening to

Carlyle's own talk on this very subject, you imagined he was endorsing it. I will not repeat to you the evidence already published in refutation of it; because I presume you have seen all that and remain unconvinced. So here is something new.

In 1897, *some years before the existence of Mr. Froude's memorandum was known, Sir Charles Gavan Duffy told me he was sure there was something of the sort in existence, "being held back till witnesses like myself are dead," and he explained what he would have put into his "Conversations with Carlyle," if Froude had been explicit before that work was published. Many years before Carlyle died (I cannot here and now give the date exactly), Gavan Duffy heard the story told about Carlyle as a kind of finish to talk about another man. This was in the purlieus of Parliament. A few days afterwards he was taking a walk with Carlyle in the London parks, and told it all to him, with the freedom of a favourite disciple and an old friend, and heard in reply the simple and commonplace story which I have told you now. I received permission to retell it, and very soon afterwards I placed it at the disposal of one of our leading editors, but silence seemed the best. It seemed to me a curious coincidence that Mr. Froude's new revelations were published shortly after the death of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy.*

I had discovered the truth before he told me. In 1884 a friend unlikely to be mistaken had hinted to me how Froude was explaining to polite society his printed innuendoes. A memorandum completely vindicating him was then expected to be published soon after the completion of his biography. Till 1890 I had no misgivings. It seemed incredible that Froude would have built so huge a romance upon so small and simple a fact without making sure of it.

In 1890 I was " put upon inquiry " in a curious way. Having some weeks to spare, I went for a holiday to Ecclefechan, and there listened to the talk of a man who cherished piously an old family feud against the " Carlyle Clan," and gloated over all that Froude had done to depreciate " Old Tom." Froude had only one fault as a biographer—he had hidden too much. Why should not everybody know that this old atheist was a poor clodhopper till the end, a wife-beater and a sot ? It was with an air of infinite sorrow, and perhaps because others were listening who might have corrected him, that he had to admit he had never seen Carlyle drunk. But if he did not drink, why did he write such strong language ? The fact was that he had married a lady, and did not know how to treat her. If this detractor had ever heard the faintest whisper

of the London story, he would have vouched for it with gusto. His head was full of all the smut of Annandale for half a century, but he had missed the pleasure of a titbit like that. I wonder if he went to his grave without knowing it? One almost hopes so. He did not hear it from me; and unintentionally he let me see that, whether the story was false or true, it probably started in London.

When I decided to undertake a new "Life" of Carlyle, it appeared indispensable to know what the whole truth of the matter was. A Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh* told me plainly that if Froude's story was false, it was a duty to say so, as the fiction had a bad effect on the best of the students. Medical evidence of a direct kind had never been alleged, which surprised me. The best evidence for Froude was that some of Carlyle's brothers and sisters had "upheld" him. Had they been aware of what London was saying and Froude had implied? By 1895, when I had leisure for full inquiries, all of them in Scotland were dead. I saw most of their children, and did not discover one who knew any more about the alleged impotence than the gossipmonger of Ecclefechan.

One sister only then survived, the youngest,

* Prof. Calderwood, 1896.

Mrs. Hanning; and she was living in Ontario, Canada, with Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, her son-in-law and daughter. My curiosity about Carlyle was like that of the Chinese about Confucius. So when the Leslies warmly invited my wife and me, off we went, and spent with them the pleasantest days I ever spent on a visit. Mrs. Hanning showed me every letter she had. I read them all, making notes, and read many aloud to her. From time to time she made remarks or added details, which showed that the past was present to her mind.

Whenever Mrs. Hanning learned what I specially wished to be told, she set me to read aloud all sorts of passages in Froude's books. She explained that the thing had never occurred to her before, and that her expression of confidence in Froude meant that her brother's selection of Froude was final for her, and she was determined that the man he selected must be completely trusted. Meanwhile she listened with close attention to what she made me read from his writings. She had clearly determined to see for herself first of all what the man meant. I did not argue at all. I read whatever was wanted, and answered the questions asked. It was plain she was thinking violently; but her daughter reassured me, saying, "She is the better of it, it is doing her good." But except to ask a

question or say what to read, never a word she spoke till at last one evening, when her daughter and I were both sitting silent beside her, waiting for her to speak. Then she suddenly sat more upright than usual on her chair, and looked at me earnestly and said, slowly and deliberately, "It is not true." After a pause, seeing Mrs. Leslie looking at me as if to ask whether I wanted more, I said, "That is all I needed to know." Then we spoke of other and more pleasant things.

There is an allusion to this visit in the second-last chapter of "East and West," which Messrs. Methuen and Co. are publishing for me this summer. They will send you a copy if you give them your address. Having to cross the Atlantic to see Mrs. Hanning, I took the opportunity to go to Boston to talk with Prof. C. E. Norton of Cambridge (near Boston, Mass.). He assured me that there was nothing in the unpublished correspondence to support Froude's theory, and much to contradict it.

Not once, but repeatedly, the late David Masson of Edinburgh has told me he also learned the truth from Carlyle's own lips. Unlike Duffy, he had not directly broached the subject, but once when it accidentally emerged, he had listened intently, and though he said he could not with confidence repeat Carlyle's exact words, he "received the same impression" as Duffy. "There was no

room whatever for thinking anything else," he once said. "You must not think that Froude invented it," he said one day. "It was a very old story in London."

The true explanation of the obscene romance has always seemed to me to be very simple. Fashionable society is like every other crowd of common people; and experience, almost as old as the hills, has shown that idleness and plenty do often make men worse instead of better. How could such creatures comprehend a man like him? He was a leader among free-thinkers, a great historian, and a man of genius. Some of the best of the worldly men of his day recognised that in knowledge and wisdom he was as far above the ablest of them as they were above illiterate louts or boys. And yet he was a Puritan, an old-fashioned Puritan, as intolerant of vicious living as Confucius or Oliver Cromwell! In the Ecclefechan tap-rooms and in the London drawing-rooms alike, men could not understand this. The association of righteousness and Christian creeds was inveterate in Scotland, beginning, as it did, at the Reformation. In England there still survived, outside the Quaker and Puritan circles, the medieval tradition of wholesale lechery or worse, which winked at even the sins of the saints, if only they performed their parts with superficial

decency. It was taken for granted that other men were free to live in the mud. Neither Scotland nor England could comprehend a sage who preached and practised righteousness and clean living, except for pay in the pulpit. The simple reason why Scotland invented no smut about the Carlyles was that their living apart did not begin till they had ceased to live in Scotland. They had been some years in London then, loose and easy London; and there, as soon as it was known that Carlyle and his wife were habitually sleeping apart, the obscene romance was not so much a conscious invention of anybody as a necessity of fashionable thought. [See P.S. page 102].

Now that it is known that Gavan Duffy had told Carlyle what "Society" was saying, the numerous allusions in Frederick the Great to fashionable smut acquire a piquant double meaning, which needed no explaining in London, when the book appeared. Perhaps you know the name of the distinguished author who went about then whining over the dreadful "coarseness" of Carlyle, visibly feeling almost as if he had been personally kicked. Look at Book XVI, Chapter X, for one unmistakable hit at him and his like. It is the conclusion of a summary of smutty fiction about Frederick, emanating from a "Demon Newswriter":—

" ' Lamentable, yes,' comments Diogenes, ' and especially so, that the idle public has a hankering for such things ! But are there no obscene details at all, then ? grumbles the disappointed idle public to itself, something of reproach in its tone. A public idle-minded ; much depraved in every way. Thus, too, you will observe of dogs : two dogs, at meeting, run, first of all, to the shameful parts of the constitution ; institute a strict examination, more or less satisfactory, in that department. That once settled, their interest in ulterior matters seems pretty much to die away, and they are ready to part again, as from a problem done.' Enough, oh, enough ! "

Writing of that kind hushed the smut more or less effectually, as long as Carlyle lived. Then it was felt that a dead lion could be safely mangled by dirty dogs, and the story was revived. The only thing now left in doubt is the exact degree of Froude's delinquency.

At the risk of disappointing some who have helped me well, I will tell the truth—I think it more likely than not that Froude was perfectly sincere. The practice of self-deception to which we all are prone must have been strengthened in him when he was under Newman's influence, and writing " lives " of the saints which

told "all that is known, and more." Then there were differences in country and culture which were all the more misleading because they seemed quite small. Their net result was to leave much in the lives of Carlyle and his wife a needless enigma to his biographer. Worst of all, perhaps, in this connection, was Froude's undeniable love for smut. It is credibly reported to me that he had to endure rebukes about this, in respect of writings he submitted for Carlyle's criticism before publication. It seems to me that it would then be the most natural thing in the world for him to console himself with the comforting thought that "the old fellow had always been a eunuch." It must have been extremely disagreeable to suspect himself of being unusually prurient.

Last, but not by any means least of all, there is the fact that he was a man of letters by trade. The day is probably near at hand when sérious work in literature shall not be expected to yield any pay in the shape of profits on the books; but nobody thought so thirty years ago; and Froude had to measure the time he gave to the work as a lawyer does with a brief or a doctor with a case; that is to say, he did not need to count the hours, but he had to remember to distribute his time so as to secure his pay. So Froude wrote about Carlyle in the usual pro-

fessional way. He looked into the masses of papers lent to him as far as he could spare the time; but time was limited, for every month's delay was damaging his market, and the papers were voluminous. It is therefore not surprising to discover, upon applying a mental microscope to his performances, that what he really did was merely to seek out readable passages to illustrate what he fancied he already knew sufficiently.

In short, I do not now ask anyone to blame Mr. Froude, but only not to believe him, particularly on this topic, where he visibly went astray. Surely that is not too much to ask? I can understand what a wrench it must be to you and others to abandon a belief in the "impotence" which made Carlyle so easily intelligible; and I confess to you frankly, in advance of the "life" I may not be spared to complete, that I have no fine new theory at all. Anecdotes and dialogues which can be believed shall be the substance of that work, if ever it is finished; and I have had almost as many helpers as the editor of an encyclopædia, though the finished work must be shorter than many a romance. But as for "keys" and "secrets," I do not believe in them. Men are mysteries to each other, mysteries to themselves. The common man on the street is often an insoluble puzzle; and still more the spiritual

heroes. Carlyle seems to me like Buddha, Confucius, Shakespeare, Tolstoi, and one or two others on record, a man whom we can with profit observe and study, but never "explain."

I am so hopeful that you for one will be convinced of the mistake that I will venture a few queries, which you may be kind enough to answer privately. Who was the lady you mention on page 425? How many talks had you with Carlyle? What were the dates? Who introduced you? Did you write and ask an interview? More than a dozen years ago there was an article in the "Saturday Review," describing a call upon Carlyle, and his conversation. Both Masson and I liked it much. Masson told me he thought it safe to believe every word of it. The editor of the paper was asked, but did not name his contributor. Did you write that? Your style recalls it. Whether you answer these queries or not, whether you are convinced or not, I congratulate you upon Boswellean notes, superlative in their way. You made fine use of your opportunity to listen to a man whose smallest words and actions are likely to interest his fellows for millenniums to come.

It is for the sake of the public and yourself that I would rejoice to see you join in the correction now being made. Biographers of Carlyle

shall succeed biographers for many generations; and as any man of sense can see the truth already from the evidence now published, it will not be long before even the simple Simons of literature will cease to doubt the facts of Carlyle's commonplace domestic life, and fix their eyes on what is more unusual, his clean, heroic, and disinterested life of successful labour. I conclude with an ancient apologue, not specially meant for you, of course, but a warning to those numerous unfortunates who find matter of offence in the teaching of Carlyle, and for that reason are rejoicing in the delusion that he can be permanently discredited by obscene inventions. When a great spirit is concerned, the truth is sure to prevail. Men may fling what they like at the sky, it always returns to the ground.

Snowy white the swan sailed by;
  Crows indignant at the view
Came in crowds across the sky;
  Mud upon the swan they threw.
Laughed the crows: "From tail to crown,
  "Caw, caw, caw, with mud you're smeared!"
Till the silent swan sank down.
  Snowy white he reappeared;
Saying, "You can see the slime,
  "Which on me you've lately thrown,
"Now is serving to begrime
  "No one's feathers but your own."

DAVID ALEC WILSON.

VII

THE SEQUEL

THE open letter just read was sent in duplicate to Mr. Harrison, the editor of the "English Review," who on 28-8-1911 wrote: "One copy I am gladly forwarding to Mr. Frank Harris, and I have no doubt that you will hear from him in due course." . . .

Meanwhile the attention of Mr. Alexander Carlyle had been drawn to the matter, and he had discovered a letter dated Göttingen, 12-12-1878, from Frank Harris to Thomas Carlyle. It mentioned that "some two years ago" the writer had called and in a letter solicited an interview, which Carlyle had granted. It quoted the advice given, told how he had acted upon it, and begged Carlyle to assist him in revising a novel he was writing by letting him know what made it so bad, and how to make it better. With all the emphasis of youth, he spoke of "the liquor," meaning his brain apparently, as "still fermenting, throwing off many bubbles."

After expatiating upon his own need of more

advice, the writer uses words which I am bound to quote :—

"I await your answer, I turn to you, because I know no other man to whom I can bow, whose judgment I value. Knowing by your silence of late years, and by what you yourself told me about your bodily weakness, that we can look for no more from your pen, I would not trouble you—Sir, if I knew of any other help ; but so it must be."

Mr. Alexander Carlyle furnished the editor of the "English Review" with a complete copy of this letter ; and in the November number of the Review a portion of it was printed, along with a certain amount of commentary by Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Harris, from which the important facts which emerge are that Mr. Harris admits the letter was his, and that his first interview with Carlyle was in Carlyle's house early in 1877. He also claims that the reference to "bodily weakness" is an explicit reference to Carlyle's confession of impotence.

The absurdity of such a claim can most easily be demonstrated, for such as need a demonstration of what seems plain, by a quotation from an article which appeared in the "Saturday Review" of 30-11-1895, Vol. 80, pp. 722–4. The editor

was this same Mr. Frank Harris, and the article purported to have been written at his instigation. It is signed J. C. C., John Churton Collins, then on the staff of the "Saturday Review." A letter of his recently discovered by Mr. Alexander Carlyle and the article together fix the date as about the end of 1873 or beginning of 1874. When the article appeared, David Masson praised it to me as completely credible; and I wrote to the editor of the "Saturday Review" to ask the name of the writer and leave to quote the article. I am indebted to the courtesy of the present editor for leave to quote it at full length in the biography. Meanwhile a few words near the end may suffice. The writer mentions he rose to go, and then . . . "he shook hands with me, and holding my hand looked into my face very kindly, and said, 'Well, what can I say to you at parting?' What I should like to have said was, 'Say to me that I may come and see you again.' But somehow I had not the courage to say it, though in hesitation I paused. 'Well,' he struck in, 'perge, perge' (polite Latin for good-bye), and accompanied me to the door; and with the courtesy which was one of his most striking characteristics, *was evidently intending to see me downstairs to the street door, though it was plainly an effort to him, as his stiff and rather tottering gait*

showed. So I begged him not to do so. 'Can you find your way to the door?' he said. 'Well, perge,' and as I went downstairs I heard him again mutter, in a weary, half-indifferent, half-kindly way, 'perge, perge.' And so ended my interview with Thomas Carlyle."

After this time (1873–4) Carlyle became weaker and weaker. So it is needless to expose further the inherent absurdity of Mr. Harris's claim that the reference to Carlyle's "bodily weakness" in the reverential letter written to him by Mr. Harris in 1878 is corroboration of the yarn which Mr. Harris spins in 1911. Think of it. Carlyle made a scene in Hyde Park, passing where his wife had died, taking off his hat in the rain, and standing with head bowed, and then walking away with "tears" "running down his face," confided to the modest young man at his side that he had never consummated the marriage with his wife!

This wonderful story the young man tells us in 1911, and triumphantly points for corroboration to the letter he wrote in *1878*, mentioning that in 1877 the old man (then over eighty) had spoken of "bodily weakness."

O Frank Harris, Frank Harris! How little you know yourself! If any such secret had ever been told to you in reality, you would have

proclaimed it long ago. It is difficult to believe you are serious when you talk of the reference to "bodily weakness" as invalidating the argument against you! Such bosh is worthy of your latest hero, Falstaff! Indeed, the "inimitable, incomparable Jack" you praise so much was never equal to a more glorious absurdity than that, or another you perpetrate in your reply to Mr. Alexander Carlyle: "When the dust has cleared away one must recognise, I think, that the essential truth of the matter is with Froude and myself."

"Froude and myself," says he! Mr. Froude was a biographer and historian, injudicious and mistaken; but he did not allege that the man of whom he was writing made any confession to him of impotence. He honestly explained that he knew nothing but what vague rumour and anonymous letters and Miss Jewsbury told him. It is with Geraldine Jewsbury and no other that Frank Harris must now go linked; and in fairness to the lady who is dead let us pause to add that her fault was less than his.

On 10-11-1911 I wrote to the editor of the "English Review" for leave to quote the February article, which was immediately given; and I enclosed a letter to Mr. Harris, which was kindly addressed to him. The November controversy had taken a nauseous turn; and Mr.

Harris had accused Mr. Alexander Carlyle of "much worse than" foul hitting. "He is not content with outraging truth, he is also careful to suggest the lie, and he adorns falsehood with the arts of the hypocrite," because Mr. Carlyle, who had not felt at liberty to quote the whole of the letter, had not quoted the paragraph which we have seen, containing the words "bodily weakness."

To minimise adjectives and adverbs, I begged permission from Mr. Harris to print at full length a copy of his letter, which Mr. Carlyle had sent me. My letter being returned through the Post Office, I sent another registered to his London address, repeating my request, but also adding a remonstrance, which readers shall presently see. I was anxious to avoid any public utterance, if by any other means a delusion could be stopped which was tainting as with leprosy the teaching of Carlyle in adolescent minds.

My letter being again returned by the Post Office, I once more fell back upon the courtesy of the "English Review" editor, and this time my request reached Mr. Harris, from whom on 12-12-1911 I received a politely worded letter, which explained my difficulty in reaching him by his change of residence, and vetoed altogether the publication of his letter of 1878. He referred

to the letter in Chapter VI, but did not answer it. He sent me a copy of his book "The Man Shakespeare." His letter is not quoted at length because I have not his permission.

I read his book at once, and saw in the author a man who plainly meant to be straightforward, but who was full of an unholy simplicity, like that of certain lady novelists, a dangerous man for boys to listen to, but harmless enough to fashionable London. As men go, he is probably a superior person, above the intention to deceive. He may not believe it immediately; but when the dust has settled, and it will settle soon, I hope he will be willing to believe that I am really sorry to hurt his feelings, and wish no evil to him or to anyone in Vanity Fair.

Here is the next letter I sent him :—

DEAR SIR, 13-12-1911.

I received yesterday your courteous letter of 9th December, and your book, "The Man Shakespeare," for which I thank you. The two letters returned contained a request to allow your letter of 1878 to be reprinted in full, and a remonstrance in these terms: "Permit me to beg you to glance over the medical evidence published by Sir James Crichton-Browne in the 'British Medical Journal' of 27-6-1903, and in

the book 'THE NEMESIS OF FROUDE.' Until your article appeared I hoped that what Sir James had written, combined with the documents published by Prof. Norton and Mr. Alexander Carlyle, had left no room for any reasonable difference of opinion. It is for your own sake, as well as to diminish discussion of sexual topics, that I beg you, if now satisfied that you were mistaken, to say so like a man. Nobody need think the worse of you. I have frankly let you see that I shared the same mistake for years."

This was dated 2nd December, and is now quoted for your information; but no reply is now expected. Your letter of 9th December shows that you persist in maintaining that you have succeeded in making Carlyle's virility again a matter of controversy.

Nothing would please me better than to let the matter rest and the dust settle, as you desire, and to accept your kind invitation to make your acquaintance later. But there is a duty to the dead as well as to the living. There is also a duty to millions of contemporaries and successors. Already in Asia and America the writings of Carlyle are read in universities; and adolescent minds are ever prone to dwell unduly upon sexual topics. Dirt has wings; and even as the dust of Krakatoa was soon reddening the sunsets of

Europe, so what you have written about "The Puritan's Limitations" may presently be defiling the young in America and Japan as well as England. Surely, if such a delusion can be extirpated, all decent people would like to see it done, and the sooner the better. So it seems to me needful to put together and publish some documents; but the effect will not be, as you say, to reopen the controversy. The effect will be to end it.

All that will remain in controversy will be your good faith; and upon that issue I will take your side. A perusal of the book you kindly sent has enabled me to do so with some confidence. I will deal with you as tenderly as possible; and in the minds of judicious persons perhaps succeed in rendering you the same service which Froude's son and daughter rendered him—to vindicate your good faith at the expense of your judgment.

I do sincerely acquit you of having any improper motive whatsoever; and I hope you will soon forget what you can only remember with regret that you blundered so sadly about a man whom we agree to honour so much as Thomas Carlyle.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID ALEC WILSON.

FRANK HARRIS, ESQ.

This letter received a courteous reply, withdrawing the veto upon the publication of his early letter, but reaffirming in effect the dreadful blunder which was the principal item of his TALKS WITH CARLYLE, and saying I could *not* "end the controversy." Maybe not. It is for the public to decide whether to believe Mr. Harris. My duty is to tell why he should not be believed. From this there is no escape, and fate decrees that I must join issue with him to clear up this misunderstanding. But happily we can do it without hating each other, and join issue as frankly and honourably as ever was done in any tournament in the Middle Ages.

Now let the reader willing to take the trouble of a juror, consider the following letter, and ask himself whether the young man who wrote it in 1878 was likely to have had with the man he was addressing such talks as we have been reading in Chapter V, and whether the mention of bodily weakness has any necessary reference to sexual matters.

MR. FRANK HARRIS to THOMAS CARLYLE.

NICOLAUS BERGER WEG 1c. GÖTTINGEN,
12*th December*, 1878.

HONORED SIR,

Some two years ago, I was bold enough to call upon you and in a letter solicit an inter-

view, which request you were kind enough to grant me. Your advice to me then was, not to proclaim opinions, offensive to the majority of men, rashly and defiantly; but rather in silence and study to wait till my nonage was past. You hinted also that the best sign of maturity was moderation. Acting upon your good counsel I came to Germany, where I have now been about a year. For a long time the choice of a life's calling embarrassed me. After many doubtings and much incertitude I have determined to do my work with my pen; as a volunteer in the ranks to fight for what seems to me the best cause. Having enough to live on in a very modest way, which contents me, I need not be a mercenary soldier. I think that this my resolution does not spring from idle vanity, but has gradually grown, as I have of late become more and more convinced, that in this way and none other I can best do my work.

When in January 1877 I called upon you I asked you many questions concerning the writer's-art. Yet the faults of bombast and weakness which I then dimly felt, I, now deploring, yet find not easy to correct. Sometimes, almost despairing I have thought that perchance they were radical shortcomings inherent in my blood. The Celtic vanity with its characteristic love of

loud words (you may remember that I am an Irishman), the besetting sin of self-enunciation, I have struggled by calm reflection and thoughts of higher duties, to overcome, as yet with all but too imperfect success. Still, I work on at Philology and History, and in my spare hours, sketch plans and embody thoughts, which when finished strike me with an overwhelming sense of my own impotence; then and there I confide them to the fire. For the last three years one work—a Novel—has been continually in my thoughts. Sensible however of my deficiencies, I have hesitated to tell the story which presses for utterance, and at last, tormented yet enthusiastic, I turn for advice to the Man, who, for some years filling my mental horizon, has done me more good than any other preacher living or dead. These—Sir—are no words of eulogy and I can write them to you, without any faintest sense of incongruity, knowing that you will read them as they are meant. To you, I turn, and in order to make your work as light as possible, I have stripped the flesh from the bones—turned the creatures of my brain into abstractions, and ask you for your opinion. In the Enclosed "Skeleton of a Novel" I could not avoid mentioning you, and I have done this freely as if not destined for your eye. Knowing you to be throned above

all unrealities, I send you this sketch, seeing some of its faults in a glaring clearness, not because I think it the best I can do, but because its faults are so naked in their deformity, that perchance you will be able to tell me what inner fatuity they spring from, and how best to correct them. Yet I would not send it you for the faults' sake alone, but because I believe your tolerant sympathy will feel with me, at least, in my aim; and if as I think there be something worthy in the object, your experience and insight weighing and recognising it, will aid me to do the work, while showing me at once the pitfalls and the highway. You will at once see, nor would I even if able to, disguise, that no *Man* wrote this sketch. The liquour [*sic*] is still fermenting, throwing off many bubbles and is in a state of much greater commotion, than a good liquid could be, yet you will be able to tell me, how to help the fermentation so as to bring it to a more speedy termination and you will be able to predict—what, if cleared and settled, the worth of the draught will be. Is there, do you think, the possibility that a strong generous wine which maketh glad the heart, can come out of the muddy liquid? If your answer is favourable you will comfort me, which help I need; if unfavourable I must still work for this is appointed to me.

I await your answer, I turn to you, because I know no other man to whom I can bow, whose judgment I value. Knowing by your silence of late years, and by what you yourself told me about your bodily weakness, that we can look for no more from your pen, I would not trouble you—Sir, if I knew of any other help; but so it must be.

I think you will do this for me, for when we parted you clasped the hand of the stranger in sympathy and brotherhood and bade him Good Speed—The tears that then sprang into my eyes assure me that you also felt—no longer were you to me a voice, an abstraction, but a living Man in this brotherhood of woe and duty—So—I write to you—for what you have already done for me—words are too light for my gratitude—I cannot thank you—yet there is reward enough for such an one as you—in that you know that you have done me more good than any other man—that if anything I can ever say or do helps and cheers my fellow-man—in no small measure—this is due to you.

With Love therefore and Reverence too deep for words,

I subscribe myself

FRANK HARRIS.

13th—P.S.—I have thought that perhaps you

may not be able to read the whole, in fact I feel angry with myself at daring to ask you anything at all—But if you will glance over from page 18 to 24 you will find the gist of the whole.

Hoping your Health is good.

I remain,

Yours gratefully,

F. HARRIS.

I have read a good deal of Mr. Harris's writing, but nothing that made me think so well of him as this letter. There is a beautiful thought in one of Schiller's plays which perhaps he may forgive me for quoting: "Tell him when he is a man to remember the dreams of his youth."

P.S.—Writing to Mr. Frank Harris, one could take more for granted than usual. Readers puzzled by pages 81 and 82, may refer to the "Fortnightly Review" for January, 1913, page 84. The real asceticism of the ancients quickly subsided into bourgeoise selfishness. St. Augustine himself tells how he paid off a mistress, and took on another, like any French or English young gentleman; and he was one of the best of the saints, and the most honest of them all.

VIII

CONCLUSION

Some addition to the open letter (Chapter VI) is now possible, writing in Scotland with note-books at hand.

On 20th March, 1897, the late David Masson told me that the rumour about Carlyle's impotence had been circulated by a man he thought he could name. "The individual was dead, however, and it was better not to tell." Masson had known Carlyle since 1844, and "in familiar moments had heard talk from Carlyle which utterly negatived the truth of the obscene hypothesis, and fully convinced him that physically Carlyle was like other men."

On 29th April, 1897, at Nice, I heard from Sir Charles Gavan Duffy what is in the open letter. He told me how he had been disgusted by a witty, obscene epigram circulating in the House of Commons about a lawsuit in which a lady was then divorcing her husband for impotence. The actual epigram is in my notes, but either to quote it or to give the dates would stir up mud about

other persons. When Duffy, who seemed to me to have been what I once heard him call another, a "Catholic Puritan," was expectorating his nausea in the smoking-room, the impotence of his own hero, Carlyle, was flung in his face. He probably gave the lie on the spot to the man who spoke of it; but all I can say he told me is that walking with Carlyle, within a week thereafter, he repeated to him the "talk of the town," and discovered what to think of it; and that is the key to some of the Ciceronian invectives against human dogs in "Frederick."

On 4th November, 1902, David Masson again referred to the matter, saying he could confirm Duffy, but more vaguely, and saying that he had never asked any questions.

On another point he and Gavan Duffy and Prof. Norton and Mr. Alexander Carlyle seemed to agree—there was not the smallest indication anywhere discoverable that Carlyle had ever been told what Dr. Quain had said about resuming cohabitation, nor was there any reason to suspect that Mrs. Carlyle had ever wished to change the mode of life which was begun for her sake. The only direct witness of remorse on that account is Mr. Frank Harris, whose tale might fit a tipsy old man of gushing habits, but is ludicrous when told of Thomas Carlyle.

It was no sudden impulse which made me write to Mr. Harris upon a perusal of his article. That has been a common method of mine in sifting reports about Carlyle; for in considering what to believe, the first thing one thinks of is the character of the reporter, and whether he means what he has written to be fact or fiction. Imaginary conversations are as familiar in law and literature as in society journalism.

For example, two or three years ago I read in a book by Mr. E. V. Lucas what purported to be a talk with Carlyle; and instead of wasting time re-reading it, and groping to dubious conclusions, I wrote to Mr. Lucas, who almost by return of post let me know that he had faked the dialogue, as, of course, he was perfectly entitled to do in a romance; and I cordially sympathised with the exultation he naturally expressed over having faked it well enough to take me in, to the extent of putting me on inquiry.

When the speedy reply which Mr. Harrison expected failed to come from Mr. Harris, I reconsidered what he had written; and soon saw reason to anticipate from him some such merry answer as came from Mr. Lucas. It may quicken the return of peace between him and Mr. Alexander Carlyle to disclose the way I had found, before

the old letter had been heard of, to test his central anecdote about Carlyle's confession.

He is probably not aware of it, but there are people who say that when Carlyle took off his hat in Hyde Park in passing the spot where his wife died, he did it in a quiet, unostentatious way, which passers-by would hardly heed, and only a person near at hand could notice at all. Mr. Froude's dramatic story needs corroboration, because it is out of keeping with the usual character of Carlyle, who was more English than the English in the habitual self-control of his bearing. When speaking and roused by anything of interest, it is true that he did not mumble in the common, monotonous manner; for then he let his voice rise and fall, and he never minced his words, but either spoke the truth without any compromise, or else was silent. That was the habit which made superficial observers sometimes think him loud. But in going about he would be the unlikeliest man in England to make a scene.

Here is an extract from Carlyle's private journal of 1868, the second year after his wife's death. It appears in Froude's "Thomas Carlyle's Life in London," Vol. II, page 367: "The place" (in Hyde Park where Mrs. Carlyle died) "which no stranger knows of, is already quite changed, drinking fountain, etc. I was there yesterday, but Froude

was in company. I could only linger one little instant." . . . (Quoted from the original journal.)

It is impossible to read this and not suspect that Mr. Froude exaggerated, and that the reality may have been as quiet and commonplace as other people say. What, then, are we to think of Mr. Harris? Is he exaggerating what he recollects out of Froude, or is he a reliable and independent witness, corroborating Froude? When the other facts about the health and habits of Carlyle are considered, the conclusion has to be that Mr. Harris might be a truthful witness only if he was speaking of some time soon after the death in 1866, that is 1867 or 1868 or thereabout. I did not think of *Who's Who* till after the open letter had been sent away; but when I had ascertained from it that Mr. Harris was born in 1856, so that the earliest possible date for the scene in Hyde Park he tells was 1875 or so, all doubt was ended. The only possible theory that could help his story into plausibility was that of senile dementia of some kind, as Carlyle was eighty in 1876; but there is abundant evidence that his only weakness was physical.

Everything else points to the same conclusion, that the scene Mr. Harris described is his distorted recollection of what Mr. Froude had written. Both the language and the behaviour which he

attributes to Carlyle are utterly unlike those of Carlyle as reported by many credible witnesses, to say nothing of the whole story which he says Carlyle told him being inconsistent with the truth as told by Carlyle to others, and plentifully proved independently.

So it is not Thomas Carlyle, but Frank Harris personating him, whom we see making a melodramatic scene in Hyde Park, taking off his hat in the rain, and standing with bowed head till people had noticed him, and then walking on after replacing his hat, with the tears running down his face, and making obscene confessions to a stranger sixty years his junior.

The imputation of unprofessional conduct on the part of Sir Richard Quain is worth mention only as a sign of an unbridled pen. What Sir James Crichton-Browne has told already about Sir Richard Quain sufficiently clears his memory. The only question remaining is, why Mr. Harris should write such stuff ?

I acquit him of faking it. That is possible, of course, but very unlikely. The imitation of Carlyle is too badly done to be faked by a man of Mr. Harris's literary ability. His book, " The Man Shakespeare," enables me to lay emphasis with some confidence on the possibility of his good faith. He has a medieval habit of taking facts

direct from fancy, with a *naïveté* unique in recent experience. He has lately put forward a new and original account of the life of Shakespeare, and shall himself explain his revival of an antique way of making discoveries.

"Many held that my view of Shakespeare was purely arbitrary; others said I had used a concordance. . . . The truth is much simpler: I read Shakespeare's plays in boyhood, chiefly for the stories; every few years later I was fain to re-read them; for as I grew I always found new beauties in them which I had formerly missed, and again and again I was lured back by tantalising hints and suggestions of a certain unity underlying the diversity of characters. These suggestions gradually became more definite *till at length, out of the myriad voices in the plays, I began to hear more and more insistent the accents of one voice, and out of the crowd of faces began to distinguish more and more clearly the features of the writer; for all the world like some lovelorn girl, who, gazing with her soul in her eyes, finds in the witch's cauldron the face of the beloved.*

"I have tried in this book to trace the way I followed, step by step; for I found it effective to rough in the chief features of the man first, and afterwards, taking the plays in succession, to show how Shakespeare painted himself at full

length not once, but twenty times, at as many different periods of his life. . . .

"As soon as this astonishing drama discovered itself to me in its tragic completeness I jumped to the conclusion that it must have been set forth long ago in detail by Shakespeare's commentators, and so, for the first time, I turned to their works."...

This is not a joke of any kind, but an unconscious self-revelation. The writer seems to see no difference between a guess and a fact; and in the 415 pages of the book, it would be easy to find almost 415 statements of fact which are really the wildest of guesses.

Opening the book at random, we read, page 368: "Shakespeare takes trouble to tell us in 'The Comedy of Errors' that his wife was spitefully jealous, and a bitter scold. She must have injured him, poisoned his life with her jealous nagging, or Shakespeare would have forgiven her." What is the evidence to prove there is any reference at all to Shakespeare's wife in that play? None. The play is an adaptation from the Latin, and part of it was not written by Shakespeare. In short, Mr. Harris does not distinguish subjective thoughts from objective events when he is thinking about Shakespeare; and if to even a slight extent he has allowed himself the same freedom of imagination about Carlyle, then it would be easy

for him to humbug himself into believing all that he has written in these "Talks," although there were not a word of truth in any of them.

There certainly is not a word of truth in his bit of blasphemy, describing how he stood up for Jesus against Carlyle preferring Falstaff. It was quoted here in deference to the wishes of religious persons, anxious to see its absurdity exposed, and the exposure need not take long. The deliberate, ordinary talk of Carlyle was invariably plain English, and not Scots; and he never entertained such sentiments about Jesus or about Falstaff. He admired Shakespeare's humour in presenting such a character; but he never admired Falstaff; and to mention such a man in the same breath with Christ would have been dangerous in his hearing. Turn again to the article by "J. C. C." in the "Saturday Review," already quoted. In this description of an interview in 1873–4, we learn that at first Carlyle seemed listless: "After the German theatre I see from my notes that we got on to Strauss. And now he became animated. 'That man,' he thundered out, 'has called Jesus Christ *a world-historical humbug*, mark you,' and he rolled it out in his strong Scotch accent, 'a wor-r-r-ld historical hum-'—this in a high, shrill key—'bug,' coming down on the word with a crash."

"That is Carlyle all over," said Masson to me, and there is plenty of evidence to prove it. It is palpably preposterous for Mr. Harris to ask us to believe that this frail old man, thus flashing into unpremeditated fury against Strauss for insulting Christ, was three years later talking to Mr. Harris, aged twenty-one, like a leery old boy about town, and saying he preferred Falstaff. It would fill a volume to tell all the facts that make the tale incredible. One already mentioned here is that Carlyle in old age was in a chronic state of physical depression, suffering from indigestion and blue pills.

Was it a joke? There is a glorious absurdity in the description Mr. Harris has given of himself, a devotee of Shakespeare then, as he has elsewhere explained, "standing up for Jesus" on the Chelsea embankment, against the chuckling old sinner who praised Falstaff rather. Neither Bernard Shaw nor Sheridan ever did anything funnier than that; but the best of this joke is that it was not intended. In stolid earnestness, apparently, Mr. Frank Harris personates Carlyle. The words are an indifferent mimicry of the words of Carlyle; the sentiments are undiluted Harris; as may be seen at once from some passages in his book on Shakespeare about the same hero (Falstaff).

" It is Shakespeare's humour which differentiates him not only from Coleridge and Keats, but also from the world poets, Goethe, Dante, and Homer. It is this unique endowment which brings him into vital touch with reality. . . . Even in his masterpiece of humour, the incomparable Falstaff, he betrays himself more than once. . . . All hail to thee, inimitable, incomparable Jack! Never before or since has poet been blessed with such a teacher, as rich and laughterful, as mendacious and corrupting as life itself. . . . Listening *with my heart in my ears*, I catch a living voice, a round, fat voice with tags of 'pr'ythee,' 'wag,' and 'marry,' and behind the inimitable dramatic counterfeit I see a big man with a white head and round belly who loved wine and women and jovial nights. . . . It is his humour which makes Shakespeare the greatest of dramatists, the most complete of men " (pp. 144, 158).

The long narrative by Carlyle, according to Frank Harris, of his early friendship with Darwin, and their pleasant reunion in a drawing-room where Darwin was being glorified, is interesting only as a wonderful sample of the methods of Mr. Harris. It is a dream from beginning to end; for Carlyle and Charles Darwin became acquainted only in 1875.

It is pleasant to make a fairly obvious remark.

If Mr. Harris had not begun by deceiving himself, if he had deliberately set out to deceive other people, he would probably have looked up the "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," and so avoided some ludicrous blunders, and the "Autobiography" alone (Vol. I, pp. 77, 78) should have let him see that no such meeting as he made Carlyle describe could have taken place.

It is always possible, though very unlikely, that he may now in desperation be inspired to say, "I admit the story must be a lie, but I told the tale as it was told to me by Carlyle, and so it is he who must be the liar." If Mr. Harris takes that line, I leave him to his fate. It is not likely that many will be found who prefer to believe Mr. Harris rather than Thomas Carlyle.

In the "Fortnightly Review" for January, 1890, there is a pleasant passage in an article by John Tyndall, which has been reprinted in volume form unaltered. It is corroborated by a passage in the "New Letters of Thomas Carlyle," Vol. II, page 314, which also gives the date, 1875. It is so worded by Tyndall that other evidence on this occasion seems superfluous :—

"Here a personal recollection comes into view which, as it throws a pleasant light on the relations of Carlyle and Darwin, may be worth recording. Like many other noble ladies, Lady Derby was

a warm friend of Carlyle; and once, during an entire summer, Keston Lodge was placed by Lord Derby at Carlyle's disposal. From the seat of our common friend, Sir John Lubbock, where we had been staying, the much-mourned William Spottiswoode and myself once walked over to the Lodge to see Carlyle. He was absent; but as we returned we met him and his niece, the present Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, driving home in a pony carriage. I had often expressed to him the wish that he and Darwin might meet; for it could not be doubted that the nobly candid character of the great naturalist would make its due impression. The wish was fulfilled. He met us with the exclamation: 'Well, I have been to see Darwin.' He paused, and I expressed my delight. 'Yes,' he added, 'I have been to see him and a more charming man I never met in my life.'"

To pursue the subject farther would be wasteful and ridiculous excess. As an admirer of Falstaff, whose two men in buckram grew in the telling to eleven, Mr. Harris is unlikely to waste his time excusing himself. He would probably like to give a pleasant finish to an unpleasant business. Therein I do agree, and therefore conclude with a song, which he, or any other, has leave to sing anywhere, to any tune, without payment:

THE SONG OF THE FICTIONEERS

I

That all men misstate, old King David could see ;
So fictioneers flourish, of every degree.
Some lie and feel shame, as good liars should do ;
And others feel shame when they say what is true.

II

The most of us falter and fumble along ;
Intending to tell right, we often go wrong.
We miss the fit words, which confusion soon brings ;
Or, having the words, we mistake about things.

III

And some have miraculous stories to tell ;
They dream what they say, and they dream very well.
And sometimes it more than miraculous seems,—
Whatever's convenient appears in their dreams.

Nothing would please me better than to hear that Mr. Harris was enjoying this song, and treating the whole matter as a joke, for that would minimise his natural annoyance at finding himself so much mistaken, and serve as a kind of anæsthetic, a thing as needful in controversy as in surgery. If I have given him any needless pain in this book, I am sorry for it. Nothing was farther from my design. But, nevertheless, reverence for Thomas Carlyle and for laws of decency as old as humanity which were offended by what had been written of him, constrain me to say in conclusion that nothing could be less my intention than any joke.

I impute no mendacity to Mr. Harris. I would not do so even if I believed him mendacious, because I might be wrong, as no man knows the heart of another. But in this instance Mr. Harris's books and his letters to myself allow me the pleasure of saying that I do *not* think him mendacious. It seems more likely than not that he may have written in perfect good faith and been honestly mistaken. All the same, it is as certain as anything can be that Thomas Carlyle was physically like other men. His weakness was that he suffered for half a century from dyspepsia, and died of it. In all other respects he was healthy and tough beyond the average. In character and intelligence he was more. His books are visibly the performance of one of the greatest intellects ever known, and Goethe's declaration on seeing his early essays has been abundantly justified, he was a "new moral force" in Europe. How completely he practised what he preached has been told by many biographers, and shall yet be told by many more; but never again, it may be hoped, need anyone either speak or hint of nastiness when discussing Thomas Carlyle.

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