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## President's Letter

Ecclefechan had a bit of a shock this year as the Society descended on the Arched House, and Dumfries-shire looks set for another shock in September when an international conference on the Carlyles is due to be held in the Crichton Campus of Glasgow University, in Dumfries – with which our society has close associations through one of our members who worked there for many years. This is encouraging news for there will be a good international audience, and there will be an opportunity to bring welcome publicity to Craigenputtoch as well as to the better-known Carlyle localities. As we approach a year which will be very much dominated by Burns, it's good to know that Carlyle continues to have a share of scholarly attention – and as every year, another volume of the *Collected Letters* appears, bringing the story well into the 1860s. The *Carlyle Letters Online* project, bringing over 30 volumes onto the internet, has been a conspicuous success, and its importance will grow steadily as people over the world access it, and we add to it from the volumes which are created in Edinburgh each year.

We have some new speakers this coming year, and a very varied programme: and some welcome returning familiar speakers. Our thanks, as always, to the University of Edinburgh, and to the many society members who in inconspicuous ways keep the society alive and growing. 2009 will see the appearance of Aileen Christianson's Thomas Green lecture as a separate publication, and we hope to keep the tradition alive with Tom Toremans in 2008.

As these papers go through the press comes the news of the death of Lady Elizabeth Hamilton, a few days short of her 92nd birthday. Lady Elizabeth was a good friend not only to our Society (in which she held office for many years) but to Haddington and to Jane Welsh, whose birthplace she opened to the public and especially arranged its garden with care and with historical taste, for the plants there would have been plants that Jane and her mother would have known. Haddington bears many signs of Lady Elizabeth's tireless efforts in restoration and in a lively musical tradition, and she will be much missed.

Ian Campbell  
President



## Who Killed Carlyle the Historian?: Or Decline and Fall of “Picturesque History.”

David R Sorensen  
Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia  
Lecture to the Carlyle Society  
8 March 2008

There may be more than a few of you in this audience who will be tempted to answer the question posed here with the simple reply, “CARLYLE DID!” If it is too late to redeem him as a historian, then perhaps I can persuade you that the blame for Carlyle’s declining reputation should be more widely shared. He was certainly culpable for refusing to re-visit his writings after publication. Had he done so, he could easily have corrected many of his more notorious factual errors. Carlyle was critical of the Utilitarian “Dryasdusts” of his age who confined their knowledge of the past exclusively to book-learning and statistics. For proof, he might point to the example of James Mill, whom he called “the British India *Philister*” (*Letters* 4:335). In *The History of British India* (1818) Mill had argued that first-hand observation was detrimental to the practice of history: “[A] man who is duly qualified may obtain more knowledge of India in one year in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India” (1:xxiii). Yet until he himself began to write *The French Revolution*, Carlyle was also largely unaware of the pitfalls that awaited those who eschewed “philosophy” in favor of re-creation. His most notable factual lapses in the book—for example, his reversal of the procession at the opening of the States-General from St. Louis Church to Notre Dame or his failure to register the correct mileage between Paris and Varennes—occurred when he retreated to his “closet,” immersed himself in his sources, and neglected the guidance of “his eyes and ears.”

Still, the issue of Carlyle’s standing deserves to be reconsidered, if only because his method and approach have come back into vogue in the twenty-first century. Carlylean techniques and perspectives abound in modern historiography, but few historians have acknowledged their indebtedness to the progenitor of “the picturesque school of historians” (Browning 340). This was the derisive term used by Oscar Browning in his famous attack against Carlyle, “The Flight of Louis XVI to Varennes,” published in by the Royal Historical Society in 1886. The context is significant because Browning was the first professional historian to contribute to this series of “Transactions,” and his aim was to establish the discipline as one worthy of the highest scholarly standards of objectivity and scientific precision. Browning’s intention was not simply to criticize Carlyle, but also to insist that he had “forfeited his claim to be a historian of the first rank” (320). Curiously, Browning succeeded in ways that he could not have anticipated, despite the fact that his own

probity was later called into question. Richard Davenport-Hines, his biographer in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, dryly comments that Browning “was a dangerously self-confident writer, who once prepared an article on Florentine art for a guidebook while sitting in a hotel lounge in Lucerne without consulting a single source.... His lectures, like his scholarship, were superficial, inaccurate, and diffuse.” According to A. C. Benson, Browning as a lecturer was “detested by dons, if not undergraduates, as a bore ‘all coated and scaled with egotism, and covered with prickles’” (8:250). Nonetheless, his demolition of Carlyle’s account of the flight was quickly accepted as authoritative. In his 1902 edition of the *French Revolution*, C. R. L. Fletcher summarized Browning’s accomplishment: “[H]e has shown with great humour how hopelessly all Carlyle’s account of the Flight is vitiated by his ignorance of the common facts of life and his ignorance of the distance” (2:102, n.1). To this day, no historian has ever challenged this verdict.

At the risk of covering myself in “prickles,” I will try to unravel some of the threads holding Browning’s thesis together. The centerpiece of his argument is, of course, that Carlyle grossly miscalculated both the duration and the length of the royal journey between Paris and Varennes. Browning deserves some credit for exposing this howler, but disappointingly, he never asked how Carlyle had discovered that the *berline* had travelled “Sixty-nine miles in Twenty-two incessant hours” (*FR, Works* 3:169). According to Browning, Carlyle would have known that the real distance was 150 miles “if he had read [John Wilson] Croker’s article in the *Quarterly Review*” (329) published in 1823. Browning read the essay in a later collection published in 1857, and he was apparently unaware that Croker had not mentioned this detail in the earlier version. Browning claims that Carlyle relied primarily on Choiseul and Bouillé’s memoirs, which “were both apologies” (331). Carlyle did consult these sources, but he also consulted the *Deux Amis*, Mercier, Weber, the *Biographie Universelle*, Madame Campan, and Montgaillard. There was little consistency among his French sources in relation to the time and length of the King and Queen’s journey: Choiseul stated 65 leagues in over 22 hours (25); Berville and Barrière in their 1822 edition of Weber, 56 leagues in 22 hours (2:317); Michaud jr. in his entry on Marie-Antoinette in the *Biographie Universelle*, 60 leagues in 24 hours (27:80); and Montgaillard, 60 leagues in 22 hours (2:353). It remains a mystery why Carlyle chose the figure of 69 miles—he apparently did not have any maps at his disposal, so he may have simply guessed. Another possibility is that he mistranslated a passage from Choiseul, in which the latter spoke of having brought the king and queen “sixty-five” leagues from Paris, to within “nine leagues” of Bouillé and his troops (25). Wherever he found the figure, the result was fatally compromised by his failure to remember that the French word “lieues” meant “leagues” rather than “miles.” He almost certainly knew this, since he mentions at one stage in his narrative that the Duke de Choiseul was waiting “in the Village of Pont-de-Sommevelle, some leagues beyond Châlons” (*FR, Works* 3:169).

Browning never paused to ask why so many of Carlyle's French authors, including Michaud, the editor of the *Biographie Universelle*, misjudged the distance between Paris and Varennes. One league, after all, equals 5.5 km or 3.4 miles. Therefore Bouillé and Choiseul assumed that the journey was 222 miles; Berville and Barrière, 191 miles; and Michaud and Montgaillard, 205 miles. Were maps French maps so inaccurate that distances could be out of measure by fifty to sixty miles? Browning simply ignored the whole matter. He was less concerned with the origins of Carlyle's error than with its impact on his narrative of the flight in particular, and his history of the Revolution in general. With a barely disguised sense of superiority he announces, "If criticism, applied to this episode of Carlyle's book, shows that almost every statement made by him is either false or exaggerated, we may infer that similar criticisms applied to the rest of his work will produce similar results, and that his book has no claim to be considered a serious history of the period to which it refers" (320). Carlyle's error provided Browning with the pretext to launch a more comprehensive indictment of the method and meaning of *The French Revolution*. According to Browning, Carlyle's chief flaw as a historian is that he sacrifices truth for the sake of dramatic verisimilitude: "This is the danger of the picturesque school of historians. They will be picturesque at any price" (340). Yet his account of his own motives was itself artfully misleading. In reality, what he objected to was Carlyle's sympathetic attitude to the Revolution.

In his essay Browning exaggerates Carlyle's misuse of detail in order to discredit his interpretation. It is a peculiar tactic, given that Browning implicitly blames Carlyle for ignoring evidence that was unavailable to him at the time he was writing his history, such as Tourzel's memoirs (1886), Klinkowström's biography of Fersen (1877), and Ancelon's and Bimbenet's respective studies of the flight, published in 1866 and 1868. When Carlyle makes observations that are derived from a close study of his sources, Browning either ridicules the sources or diminishes the observations by contrasting them with later "scholarly" testimony. Nonetheless, his aim is consistently *unhistorical* throughout the essay. A staunch Royalist, he regards the failure of the king and queen's flight as a tragedy—"I can recall no event more tragic to one who has studied it in all its details" (341)—and he will not permit Carlyle to contradict this version of the event. What he objects to is the open-endedness of Carlyle's narrative, which paradoxically entitles him to the "rank" that Browning denies him because it allows him "to grasp the direction in which truth would reveal itself in the future" (341). Ironically, Browning's dissection of Carlyle's methods discloses a basic truth about Carlyle the historian: that his narrative power springs not simply from his skill as a word-painter, but also from his deep intellectual and imaginative engagement with the form, content, and spirit of his sources. Browning rightly maintains that at times this engagement becomes a submersion, which threatens to swamp the narrative in a welter of chaos. But Carlyle amply rewards his readers by enabling them to experience history from the multiple vantage points of its participants.

At the core of his disagreement with Carlyle is Browning's conviction that King Louis XVI had a clear strategy for undermining the Revolution when he planned his escape to Varennes in the months prior to June 1791. Browning ridicules Carlyle for having "no glimmering of understanding what the King's design really was, and what course he intended to pursue" (322). Browning himself has no doubts about Louis XVI's motives: "The Emperor, the Queen's brother, was to send a force of 10,000 men to the neighbourhood of Luxembourg, which was at once to serve as a pretext for massing troops to protect the King's flight, and to be at the disposal of the King for any purpose he might desire. A civil war was not only inevitable, but it was to be pressed on" (322). This is a sound argument that has been resurrected recently by Munro Price in *The Road From Versailles* (2003); however, Price's meticulous reconstruction of the clandestine diplomacy between the King and Queen and their confidant baron de Breteuil leads him to revisions that tend to buttress Carlyle's rather than Browning's judgments. In Price's view, the "king and queen were neither as reactionary as French historians have traditionally thought, nor as liberal as some more recent writers have claimed" (366). Browning writes as if Carlyle were entirely ignorant of the royal family's predicament. On the contrary, Carlyle acknowledges that "[f]or above a year, ever since March 1790, it would seem, there has hovered a project of Flight before the royal mind; and ever and anon has been condensing itself into something like a purpose; but this or the other difficulty always vaporised it again. It seems so full of risks, perhaps of civil war itself; above all, it cannot be done without effort" (*FR, Works 3:154*). Carlyle conveys the inner anguish of the King as he contemplates the various alternatives, none of them without risk or danger, and all of them "vaporising" as a result of changing circumstance. Arguably, his "picturesque" rendition of the king's dilemma captures the reality of their circumstances in more convincing ways than Browning.

Whereas Browning emphasizes the moral and political legitimacy of the Royalist scheme to retain power and to thwart the Revolution, Carlyle stresses the air of unreality that envelops the lives of the king, the queen, and their advisors. His sources were replete with examples illustrating the obliviousness of the royal family to the perils they faced. Campan in her memoirs recounts the assiduous preparations Marie-Antoinette made for taking her luxurious dressing case in the *berline*, as well as her extensive wardrobe (2:140-41). The Queen is so concerned to keep her coiffeur Leonard that she arranges for him to accompany the duc de Choiseul as an aide. In *Nouveau Paris* Mercier describes the new *berline* that transports them as "the Chateau des Tuileries in miniature: it was a salon, bedroom, dressing-room, dining room, and kitchen; all it was missing was a chapel and an orchestra full of musicians." Mercier adds that when the royal family first saw this "weighty jalopy" (5:206) they began to laugh. Montgaillard, a former Royalist and Napoleonic adviser, denounces the escape plot in scathing terms: "It is difficult to imagine anything more badly planned.... The appearance of a huge carriage of extraordinary dimensions, followed by another vehicle carrying the royal governesses, was bound to awaken



suspicious at every stage of a journey along a route favored by émigrés.” The royal convoy, consisting of “nine travellers, two couriers, one in front, the other by the side of the main coach, with eleven horses, would not be able to proceed without being noticed by national guardsman in the first fervor of their service, and by civic authorities jealously savoring the exercise of their new authority” (2:352). Equally conspicuous were the three couriers who accompanied the royal party, dressed in yellow livery. Bouillé notes that this increased the suspicions of people because they identified the color with the detested émigré leader, the prince de Condé (169). The *Deux Amis* remark during the flight “the King got out at different rest-stops, and conversed with people whom he met, betraying a sense of security as well as confidence, and feeling free of doubt about the success of his escape” (6:133).

Browning dismisses these details and Carlyle’s handling of them with elaborate and frequently defensive explanations. Carlyle dryly observes, “her Majesty cannot go a step anywhither without her *Nécessaire*; dear *Nécessaire*, of inlaid ivory and rosewood; cunningly devised; which holds perfumes, toilette-implements, infinite small queenlike furnitures; necessary to terrestrial life.” An inveterate snob and a stickler for etiquette, Browning bristles at Carlyle’s lack of deference. Demanding a leap of credulity on the part of his readers, he links the Queen’s domestic arrangements to the King’s political program: “One of [his] plans was to restore ecclesiastical property to the clergy, and thus ... to cause a national bankruptcy and upset the party of the Revolution. All this would take a considerable time, and during it Louis and Marie Antoinette must appear as King and Queen. It was not, therefore, remarkable that preparations should be made for clothes and a dressing-case, or that the Queen’s diamonds and the King’s habit of ceremony would be carried to the frontier by Leonard, the Queen’s coiffeur” (322). Presumably the Queen could have found another wardrobe in Vienna, together with jewelery boxes and coiffeurs, but Browning is reluctant to introduce a note of uncertainty into his discussion. Citing the testimony of Madame de Tourzel in her memoirs, he derides Carlyle’s caricature of the *berline*: “Huge leathern vehicle;—huge Argosy, let us say, or Acapulco-ship; with its heavy stern-boat of Chaise-and-pair, with its three yellow Pilot-boats of mounted Bodyguard Couriers, rocking aimlessly round it and ahead of it, to bewilder, not to guide!” (*FR, Works 3:169*). Insists Browning, “There is no proof that there was anything remarkable about the carriage at all” (324), ignoring the point that Carlyle had found evidence of its magnificence in the narratives of Mercier and Montgaillard. Browning again accepts Tourzel’s claim that “Louis only left the carriage once during the journey, and that the children got out twice as the carriage was ascending hills” (329). His use of her memoirs is itself slightly deceptive, since Browning deliberately ignores Croker’s statement in his 1857 essay, borrowed from Bouillé’s memoirs and echoed by Montgaillard, that King was forced to delay the departure because of Madame de Tourzel’s “incongruous and absurd” (303) refusal to be separated from her royal charges. In Croker’s view her obstinacy not only caused delay, but prevented the King from using Captain d’Agoult, “a man of tried

courage, intelligence, and loyalty” (303) and a former major in the garde-du-corps, as an additional bodyguard.

The further Browning goes in trying to discredit Carlyle, the more evident it becomes that he misconceives Carlyle’s protean abilities to grasp the manysidedness of historical experience. In particular Browning is determined to counter the impression that the presence of foreign troops and military escorts on the northwest route to Varennes had created an atmosphere of panic and conspiracy among ordinary people. Characteristically, Carlyle gauges the mood by probing the psychology of “Patriotism,” and lends a voice to a populist phenomenon almost completely discounted by Browning in his synopsis of the flight. Carlyle adopts the wrathful and suspicious outlook of those who watch the movement of these mysterious troops in their neighborhoods: “This clatter of cavalry, and marching and lounging of troops, what means it? To escort a Treasure? Why escort, when no Patriot will steal from the Nation; or where is your Treasure?—There has been such marching and countermarching: for it is another fatality, that certain of these Military Escorts came out so early as yesterday; the Nineteenth not the Twentieth of the month being the day first appointed; which her Majesty, for some necessity or other, saw good to alter” (*FR, Works 3:171*). This is less “picturesque history” than the revelation of another dimension of the past, one that lies beneath the surfaces of conventional exploration and one that Carlyle extracts from the raw material of his primary sources. Browning repeatedly attempts to devalue the evidence on which Carlyle finds his re-creation. Carlyle is faulted for misspelling “Pont-de-Sommevelle” (*FR, Works 3:169*) despite the fact that the majority of his sources spell it the way he does; he is blamed for referring to it as a village rather than a post-house, though none of his sources offers this distinction; he is rebuked for stating that Goguelat arrived an hour ahead of Choiseul at Pont-de-Sommevelle, though Choiseul himself offers contradictory accounts of this incident (49, 81).

Browning’s most serious charge is that Carlyle exaggerates the animosity of the inhabitants of Ste. Ménehould towards Goguelat and the forty hussars that arrived there on 20 June: “He seems to think that the marching and countermarching so exasperated the people of that town that they drove the soldiers out with 300 muskets, taken from the town hall” (332). Yet as Munro Price later shows, this is precisely what happened: “[The forty hussars] had spent a difficult twenty-four hours. They had met up with the forty dragoons stationed at Sainte-Ménéhould, the next town on the route, the previous evening, but the sudden appearance of two detachments of cavalry had aroused local suspicions. The municipality issued 400 muskets to the townsfolk and called out fifty of the National Guard; the following morning, it even seemed they might oppose Choiseul’s departure for Pont-de-Sommevesle by force. In the event, the detachment managed to depart without a confrontation, but left behind a thoroughly aroused population” (178). Browning insists that “[w]hen they left Ste. Ménehould next morning for Pont Sommevesle they were howled at by the mob, but nothing more” (332). He blames Carlyle for his careless reading of

Sieur Gache's narrative, included in the appendix of Choiseul's narrative. Price's own research suggests that Carlyle caught the essential tenor of his sources and conveyed the mood of the moment with striking accuracy. Unlike Browning, Carlyle possesses a clear sense of the simultaneity of events, and the fear and hysteria that this "marching and countermarching" causes: "At Pont-de-Sommeville, these Forty foreign Hussars of Goguelat and Duke Choiseul are becoming an unspeakable mystery to all men. They lounged long enough, already, at Sainte-Menehould; lounged and loitered till our National Volunteers there, all risen into hot wrath of doubt, 'demanded three hundred fusils of their Townhall,' and got them. At which same moment too, as it chanced, our Captain Dandoins was just coming in, from Clermont with his troop, at the other end of the Village" (*FR, Works 3:171*).

Contrary to what Browning asserts, Carlyle's treatment of Sieur Gache's narrative reveals his luminous ability to translate the essence of his source both literally and figuratively. Gache writes, "At noon ... the bomb exploded; the villagers marched to the hôtel-de-ville; they proclaimed to the municipal authorities that the marching of troops confirmed the idea of some hidden plot (quelque trame cachée). ... The authorities in turn pledged to deliver at once three hundred muskets that the department had already ordered.... These muskets were delivered immediately, under the eyes of the watching dragoons" (Choiseul, 128). The strength of the people's resentment is contained in Carlyle's alliterative repetitions—"they lounged for long enough ... lounged and loitered"—while the impact of their protests is reinforced by Carlyle's abrupt arrangement, "demanded three hundred fusils ... and got them." Browning's objections here are largely irrelevant. If Carlyle's chronology seems inaccurate—and as it turns out, it is not—it is only because he seeks to distil a feeling of the tumult that engulfs the town and its inhabitants. Browning's contention that "[t]here is no reason to suppose that the Lauzun hussars were specially unpopular with the people" (333) is contradicted by both his own and Carlyle's evidence. Here as elsewhere, Browning's inaccuracy is the result of his own incapacity to extend his mind beyond the narrow confines of political partisanship, and to conceive circumstances from the chaotic and contradictory vantage points of those who experienced them first-hand.

Tested against the Browning's definition of historians in the "first-rank," Carlyle succeeds where Browning himself fails. In Browning's words, Carlyle "grasp[s] the direction in which truth would reveal itself in the future." Modern English and French historiography of the Revolution tends to vindicate Carlyle's unique achievement in *The French Revolution*. It is instructive to compare Carlyle's version of the flight to Varennes with recent studies by Antonia Fraser, Munro Price, Timothy Tackett, and Mona Ozouf. Regrettably Carlyle is not mentioned in any of their studies, yet it is not difficult to see his imprint both in their techniques and conclusions. In her biography of Marie-Antoinette, Antonia Fraser throws light on the characters of both the king and queen that largely confirms Carlyle's vision of them as being disconnected from their times. Browning acknowledges that his portrayal of the king at Varennes "is not inaccurat[e] ... but there is no word of blame for Choiseul and Damas, who did

not act without asking for orders” (340). Again, Browning pretends that no further debate is necessary. But like Carlyle, Fraser attributes the primary responsibility for the debacle at Varennes to the king: “There was as yet no authority for the arrest. Therefore it was still perfectly possible at this point for the various bodies of troops in the neighbourhood to have simply forced through the liberty of the royal family, either by the threat of superior weapons, or by the use of them. Choiseul and Goguelat suggested. No order was given to do so. Whose failure was this? Louis XVI must take part of the blame. Fearing as ever the effects of violence on those around him, including his own family, he declined the sword that the Duc de Choiseul offered, telling him to put it away. Louis XVI clung to his paternalistic role, the only one he understood” (406). Carlyle forefronts this “[p]hlegmatic” languor by envisaging its opposite. For a moment, his audience has another king before them, one endowed with resolution and purpose: “Has the King not the power, which all beggars have, of travelling unmolested on his own Highway?... Not the King shall ye stop here under this your miserabler Archway.... To me, Bodyguards: Postilions, *en avant!*” (*FR, Works 3:180-81*). It did not happen because Louis XVI, like the ancien regime that he symbolized, had lost the will and the capacity to govern wisely and well. His passivity was their passivity, and together they were doomed.

Browning criticizes Carlyle heavily for over-emphasizing the extent to which the detachments along the route to Varennes sabotaged the royal flight, but Price’s commentary at numerous points validates Carlyle: “All [the troops’] presence achieved was to stir up the local inhabitants and alert them that something unusual was going on. The two upsets that did most damage, Choiseul’s premature departure from Pont-de-Sommevesle and the alarm at Sainte-Ménéhould, resulted directly from this. The king and queen would have had a better chance of safety if they had abandoned the idea of an escort altogether, and trusted entirely to swiftness and secrecy” (185). Browning is adamant that Carlyle was wrong to attribute the presence of troops to Louis XVI, but as Price discloses, there is a strong likelihood that the king, at the very least, was partly responsible for initiating the policy. Price argues that the “blame for these military failures lay not with the soldiers but with the dispositions that caused them to spend the day dispersed among alarmed and volatile townsfolk” (186). Indirectly, he explains why Carlyle devoted so much attention to these “dispositions” and marshaled evidence from his sources to evoke the volatility and the alarm of the ordinary residents. Their prescience, together with the royal party’s obtuseness, were pivotal elements in the failure of the plot. Like Carlyle, Price highlights the royal party’s slightly leisurely attitude to the flight, once they had reached the outskirts of Paris: “Unfortunately, this new-found and exhilarating sense of security caused the royal party to abandon precautions they had previously thought essential. Louis in particular made no effort to hide himself. At the post-house at Fromentières, he got out of the carriage and spent some time chatting to the local peasants about the harvest. One can sympathize with him; this was only the second journey he had ever made outside Paris and Versailles” (173).

Locked in a time-warp, the royal family failed to realize that they no longer reigned alone over the territory of revolutionary France.

In his authoritative and detailed study of the flight, *When the King Took Flight* (2003), Timothy Tackett follows Carlyle in shaping his story around the confrontation between the ancien régime and the new republic. He too comments on the incongruous appearance of the royal party as it rumbles towards its destiny: “They were hardly an inconspicuous ensemble. The yellow cabriolet, the large black berline with its yellow frame, and the three bodyguards in bright yellow coats ... attracted the attention of countrymen and townspeople wherever they passed.” In both narrow detail and broad contour, Tackett’s representation gibes with Carlyle’s. Adopting a similarly open-ended approach, he argues that Varennes was shaped by two dominant factors. The first was “was the personality and behaviour of the central figure of the whole adventure, Louis XVI himself. The king’s chronic indecision and unreliability had profoundly affected the origins and course of the entire Revolution” (86). But in a manner similar to Carlyle, Tackett will not allow the episode to be recast exclusively from the Royalist angle. The second major cause of the failed flight “was precisely the sweeping transformation in French attitudes and psychology engendered by the Revolution. A new sense of self-confidence, of self-reliance, of identity with the nation as a whole and not merely with the local community—the transformation that we observed in the small town of Varennes—had penetrated much of the French population. It was developments such as these that help explain the extraordinary initiatives taken by small-town officials in Sainte-Menehould and Varennes to halt the king. Although the individual actions of Drouet and Sauce should not be underestimated, those actions would scarcely have been possible without the support of the town councils and indeed of the whole citizenry” (86). Carlyle’s preoccupation with the “picturesque” was intricately linked to this second factor, which he fathomed to an unprecedented degree. He was the first English historian to breathe life into the Revolutionary movement, and to invest it with a richly human dimension that no one before him had appreciated or grasped.

Of these recent histories of the flight, none discloses a Carlylean “confluence” as abundantly as Mona Ozouf’s persuasive and idiosyncratic *Varennes* (2005). Like Carlyle, Ozouf treats the past as a reality that comprises a multiplicity of viewpoints and experiences. To study it is to walk in a hall of mirrors, each one of which refracts a partial glimpse of an elusive whole. With a refreshing lack of schematic organization, Ozouf questions basic assumptions about the flight. For example, she unwittingly redeems Carlyle’s satiric description of the famous berline by “nuancing” previous assessments of it: “In the words of Madame de Tourzel, there was nothing extraordinary about the large *berline*. The municipality of Saint-Menehould itself, with little tenderness for its passengers, saw nothing remarkable. Captain Andoin confirmed, ‘The large carriage was something of a mediocre sensation.’ And Charles Damas noticed ... little that was ‘magnificent’ about its appearance. From these perspectives, all of this is reasonable. But what about the

perspectives of villagers and peasants? For them, as for Sauce, who described it, it was undoubtedly a ‘magnificent’ vehicle that travelled through Varennes” (132). The ostentatiousness of the *berline* is what Carlyle calls a “Fact,” emerging as it does from a welter of conflicting reportage. Ozouf similarly endorses Carlyle’s ironic treatment of the queen’s preparations for the flight: “Is it possible to travel without comfort? Marie-Antoinette could never imagine going without her nécessaire, even at the risk of delaying the flight... And whose idea was it to bring couriers dressed in the yellow livery of Condé? ... The weight of these luxuries, the encumbrance of these observances, the trinkets of custom—one might conclude that the logic of the Ancien Régime played its part in this failed escape.” Ozouf too comments on the decision of the king to allow Madame Tourzel to accompany the royal children, in deference to the rules of etiquette. With Carlylean trenchancy she asserts, “In the world of artifice regulations, everything is designed to discourage exceptionalism and to paralyze innovation” (133).

Ozouf powerfully reminds her readers that “the spontaneous emotion of the multitude played a decisive role in this affair” (140). Borrowing details from Choiseul’s narrative, Carlyle had dramatized the complaints of the peasants assembled at Pont-de-Sommevesle: “The hungry Peasants, however, know too well what Treasure it is: Military seizure for rents, feudalities; which no Bailiff could make us pay! This they know;—and set to jingling their Parish-bell by way of tocsin; with rapid effect! Choiseul and Goguelat, if the whole country is not to take fire, must needs, be there Berline, be there no Berline, saddle and ride” (*FR, Works 3:171*). For Browning, this merely constitutes another instance of Carlyle being “picturesque” for the sake of “picturesqueness.” But Ozouf, with a far deeper feel for the vertiginous influences that shape events, realizes that such details convey invaluable impressions of the popular mood: “It is important to reflect upon what happened at Pont-de-Sommevesle. The peasants, since the night of August 4, imagined that they would no longer have to pay feudal rents. Suddenly they see Boudet’s hussars menacing them with demands for immediate execution of debts. Choiseul, who offers this anecdote—for his own purposes, of course—does not invent the fermentation in the countryside, which is ready to catch fire at the slightest imposition. The march of troops, the ‘trame cachée,’ the petition to mayors for arms, the sounding of the tocsin—these were the signs of a imminent conflagration” (141). These are not facts that can be “known” in any exact way, yet for Ozouf, as for Carlyle, they constitute the most important raw material of historical study. Browning’s maxim is “Never be certain unless you know” (341). Ozouf, following Carlyle, understands that historical knowledge is always slippery, hydra-headed, and contingent, and that it can never be predicated on such simplistic prescriptions. It is a mark of how profoundly Browning misunderstood Carlyle the historian that he could say in 1866, “We now know almost every detail of the flight and the capture of the King” (341). These recent studies of the flight to Varennes suggest the very contrary. They also vividly demonstrate the Phoenix-like regenerative qualities of Carlyle’s *The French Revolution*.

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## Carlyle and the Caribbean

Sheila McIntosh

William Morris once famously said when asked which writers had inspired the socialist movement of the 1880s that both Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin had been two of the main influences, “But,” he added, “somebody should have been beside Carlyle and punched his head every five minutes.” Nowhere are punches more appropriate than when Carlyle is talking about race.

The paper falls roughly into 4 parts: firstly an examination of Carlyle’s “Discourse on the Negro Question”; secondly an examination of the relationship between Carlyle’s ideas on race and Empire and the ideas of other Victorian thinkers; thirdly a brief overview of those Caribbean countries about which Carlyle wrote and finally a look at the Governor Eyre controversy.

Carlyle never visited the Caribbean and so all of his opinions were based on hearsay and other people’s reports. These opinions caused outrage among contemporary liberals and today most writers on colonial and post-colonial literature write at length about Carlyle’s views, with attitudes ranging from the contemptuous to the indulgent. At one end of the spectrum Carlyle is seen as a precursor of Hitler, at the other his “Discourse” is seen as an aberration that should be excluded from any assessment of his work as a whole or it is seen as a complicated tease, a desire to shock the Exeter Hall liberals. However between these extremes much contemporary discussion of the history of colonial and post-colonial ideas gives Carlyle an important place within the context of his time.

The language of Carlyle’s “Discourse” is heavily sarcastic, unequivocal, dramatic and racist. Carlyle took it as read that black races are inferior to white; it was a self-evident truth. He wrote that to say that God has made the whites and the blacks equal “would be saying a palpable falsity, big with hideous ruin for all concerned” (*Works* 29: 371), that although in numbers the black population of the West Indies equals that of the West Riding of Yorkshire “in worth (in quantity of intellect, faculty, docility, energy, and human valour and value) perhaps one of the streets of Seven Dials” (*Works* 29:350). Seven Dials was one of the poorest areas of London, notorious for prostitution, drunkenness, murder and all kinds of wickedness. Carlyle wrote that he did not hate the “Negro.” He finds him a

pretty kind of man. With a pennyworth of oil, you can make a handsome glossy thing of Quashee. . . . A swift, supple fellow: a merry hearted, grinning, dancing, singing affectionate kind of creature . . . The black African, alone of wild men, can live among men civilised.  
(*Works* 29: 358).

Carlyle’s argument on the need for a more stringent system in organising labour is moralist and imperialist. Blacks had to accept their inferior position in relation to whites:

You are not slaves now nor do I wish, if it can be avoided, to see you slaves again: but decidedly you will have to be servants to those that are born wiser than you, that are born lords of you; servants to the whites, if they are (as what mortal can doubt?) born wiser than you (*Works* 29:379).

He argued that there were other worse forms of slavery than that that existed in the West Indies, that one of the problems since emancipation in the Caribbean was that blacks were slaves to idleness. If there was no other route to liberation from this kind of bondage then some form of forced labour was a necessity. The superior white man had a moral duty to make sure that the black man worked at his allotted task otherwise he quickly descended to the level of a pumpkin eating non human. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth century world of the Caribbean in what Robin Blackburn calls the “implacable commercial frenzy” (Blackburn 41) there had developed a kind of slavery the ferocity, the scale and the focus of which had given rise to the system where slaves were economic property and a means of commercial exploitation (Blackburn 7). This was a world in which the honourable bondsman that Carlyle had in mind could not possibly exist. The slavery of the Middle Ages and the Ancient World was, as Blackburn says, of a different species; if not actually benevolent, it was more varied, less commercial; it was not largely confined to one ethnic group nor was it as widespread. These previous forms of slavery had been more adaptable to social conditions frequently seen as a way of including the excluded and educating the barbarian. It is possibly here in this older kind of bondage that Carlyle looked for a precedent.

Fundamental to Carlyle’s beliefs was the idea that work is the only salvation for whites and for blacks:

A poor Negro overworked on the Cuban sugar-grounds, he is sad to look upon; yet he inspires me with sacred pity, and a kind of human respect is not denied him; . . . But with what feelings can I look upon an over-fed White Flunky, if I know his ways? Disloyal, unheroic, this one; inhuman in his character, and his work, . . . Pity is not for him (*Works* 29:364).

He foresaw the West Indies becoming a Black Ireland. Carlyle had been to Ireland and had seen for himself the poverty and starvation there. The Irish were “free” but what use was freedom to them when they were starving. He wrote:

Our own white or sallow Ireland, sluttishly starving from age to age on its act-of-parliament “freedom,” was hitherto the flower of mismanagement among the nations: but what will this be to a Negro Ireland, with pumpkins themselves fallen scarce like potatoes! Imagination cannot fathom such an object; the belly of Chaos never the like. The human mind in its wide wanderings has dreamt yet of such a “freedom” as that will be (*Works* 29: 353).

And so not even the Irish could make a worse mess of freedom than the blacks of the West Indies would.

Carlyle’s imperialist argument, that the coloniser should derive benefit from the colonised, goes hand in hand with his moral argument. He like many of his contemporaries did not see the colonies as separate countries whose inhabitants

might have their own idea of nationhood. In *Past and Present* published in 1843 he saw the colonies as providing both an outlet for Britain's surplus labour and safe markets for Britain's goods; he argued for an Emigration Service to build bridges to "new Western lands" so that the "honest willing Workman" could settle "there to organise with more elbow room some labour for himself". He wrote:

Our little isle is grown too narrow for us; . . . England's sure markets will be among new Colonies of Englishmen in all quarters of the Globe. . . . Our friends of China, who guiltily refused to trade . . . had we not to argue with them in cannon shot at last, and convince them that they ought to trade! . . . but the Sons of England, speakers of the English language . . . , will in all times have the ineradicable predisposition to trade with England (*Works* 10:266-7).

He saw no reason why London should not continue to be the a *All-Saxon-home*" where "in select samples" people from all the far flung colonies could "season."(*Works* 29: 267-8)

In the "Discourse" he denied the right of the Black population to use the land for their own benefit. After all white Europeans had made it possible to grow pumpkins (in Carlyle's eyes the preferred food of the blacks) in what had been a place of "reeking waste and putrefaction:"

The Islands are good withal for pepper, for sugar, for sago, arrow root, for coffee, perhaps for cinnamon and precious spices; things far nobler than pumpkins: and leading towards Commerces, Arts, Politics and Social Developments, which alone are the noble product, where men (and not pigs with pumpkins) are the parties concerned (*Works* 29:373).

And:

Fair towards Britain it will be, that Quashee give work for privilege to grow pumpkin (*Works* 29:377-8).

By 1849 when the "Discourse" was published, many white planters were experiencing hardship. The end of the apprenticeship scheme set up for a period of twelve years to help the planters after abolition in 1833 reduced the labour force. The plantations would be forever associated with oppression and slavery in the minds of blacks. The labour force was further reduced by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society's scheme to help ex slaves settle into small subsistence farms and so escape the plantation owners' attempts to prolong their dependency. The gradual repeal of the tariff protecting sugar in the British colonies added to the sugar growers' problems. The British West Indies could not compete with the Brazilian and Cuban sugar growers who were still using slave labour. And so Carlyle was right, abolition had caused enormous unforeseen problems and upheavals for Europeans in the West Indies. The dismantling of one economic structure and replacing it with another that worked in the interests of all of the widely diverging groups was not possible given the social relationships that had developed during centuries of slavery.

If Carlyle's outspoken racism was not the norm even in his own time and if many of his admirers were disturbed by it, it was nevertheless a product of the age, of the deeply embedded belief in racial superiority and of the belief in Empire. This is not

the same as saying that Carlyle and others were not responsible for their attitudes and opinions or that they were all alike. Even amongst those who believed in empire, there was a broad spectrum of attitudes to race and imperialism. There were colonialists who believed that a slave economy was essential to the prosperity of the colonies and made no secret of their belief in the inferiority of black races to white, some went as far as to say that the black races were a different species from the white races, much closer to the animals in the chain of being. There were some who believed that slavery was degrading and dehumanising to both the slave owner and the slave but at the same time also believed either that black races were essentially inferior and would forever remain so or that blacks could achieve equality with whites only after they had been civilised by education in white European culture and values. Thomas Babington Macaulay was a committed abolitionist. However in a minute put before the Supreme Council in India supporting those who believed that the higher elements of knowledge should be taught in English he wrote that amongst Orientalists:

I have never found one who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. . . . It is I believe no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England (Macaulay 349)

Macaulay did not read Sanskrit but such arrogance towards non-Europeans was endemic in the nineteenth century.

Even with the abolition of the mechanism of slavery the colonies were still a long way from liberty and equality, the principles of which, in terms of Europe's own population, had been an integral part of the political discourse since the French Revolution. The greatest and the best known of the exponents of these principles among Carlyle's contemporaries was J. S. Mill. Part of the cause of the cooling relationship between Mill and Carlyle was because of the different attitudes the two men adopted towards race and slavery. Mill believed the ownership of one human being by another to be inhuman and that autonomous people should be self-governing. Yet the gulf between Carlyle and Mill is not that wide. Nicholas Capaldi in his biography of Mill writes that for Mill the need for self-government in the colonies was "especially obvious in those colonies settled and populated predominantly by Europeans" (Capaldi 244). In *On Liberty* (1859) Mill states:

There are conditions of society . . . in which a vigorous despotism is in itself the best mode of government for training the people in what is specifically wanting to render them capable of a higher civilization. . . . Such is the ideal rule of a rule of free people over a barbarous or semi-barbarous one (Mill 19:567).

However said Mill:

We need not expect to see that ideal realized; but, unless some approach to it is, the rulers are guilty of a dereliction of the highest moral trust (Mill 19:568).

This is reminiscent of Carlyle's admonitions to the British aristocracy regarding

its responsibility towards the lower orders and Carlyle's conviction that there are those who are capable of ruling and those who are not; "except by Mastership and Servantship, there is no conceivable deliverance from Tyranny and Slavery" (*Works* 29:362)). Mill like Carlyle assumed that higher civilisation was the product of European culture. However Mill had some inkling of the inherent problem in reconciling the concept of liberty with inequality when in the same paragraph he summed up the dilemma of those who believed in benevolent imperialism. He wrote that the coloniser's danger "is of despising the natives: that of the natives is, of disbelieving that anything strangers can do can be intended for their good." Colonisers have to be restrained because "they have the feelings inspired by absolute power without its sense of responsibility" (Mill 19:564) Of course if one group, the wealthier more powerful, is considered to be highly civilised and the other, the poorer less powerful, barbaric then this gives the excuse for the imposition of all kinds of restraints; Carlyle who thought concepts of liberty and equality equally vacuous would say including, where necessary, slavery.

Mill was for a large part of his life employed in India House as a custodian of the interests of empire. Although he believed that Britain gained no financial reward from the colonies and would be materially better off without them, that the economic arguments for empire i.e. the provision of protected markets for coloniser and colonised were spurious, he also believed that not only was it a duty to look after and, where possible, educate backward barbarous people but also that the empire lent status to the colonising country and like Carlyle, he believed that the colonies provided an outlet for the surplus population of the home countries. Like Carlyle he also saw the colonies not as countries but as:

outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates belonging to a larger community . . . the place where England finds it convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee and a few other tropical commodities (Mill 3:693).

This is a simplified version of Mill's philosophy and Mill frequently changed his mind. As Eugene August points out (xiii) Mill's refutation of Carlyle is closely and rationally argued, demolishing Carlyle's philosophy of work and dismissing as "vulgar error" his views on natural hierarchy. However while acknowledging that it had not always been so, after all Egyptians, a black race, influenced the Greeks, a white race (August 47), Mill still believed that blacks were culturally inferior to whites and the point still holds that firstly there are elements in the ideas of John Stuart Mill, one of the most liberal thinkers of the age, that are not a million miles from the ideas of Thomas Carlyle and secondly that notions of inequality and liberty, liberty and empire are incompatible.

Carlyle had, as I have said, never been to the Caribbean. However many of his friends and acquaintances had interests there. The Sterling family inherited through their mother slave estates in St. Vincent and in 1831 John Sterling went to live there. He was a close friend of both Carlyle and Mill but closer to Mill. Carlyle describes an encounter with Sterling one day at Mill's office in India House in 1835 during which he noted:

That Sterling's notions on the Slavery Question had not advanced into the stage of mine. In answer to the question whether "an engagement for life," on just terms, between parties who are fixed in the character of master and servant, as the whites and the Negroes are, is not really better than one from day to day,-- he said with a kindly jeer. "I would have the Negroes themselves consulted as to that!" -- and would not in the least believe that the Negroes were by no means final or perfect judges of it (*Works* 11:106).

However Carlyle also quotes a letter from John Sterling written in 1831 while he was living in St. Vincent:

The Slaves here are cunning deceitful and idle; without any real aptitude for ferocious crimes, and with very little scruple at committing others. . . . They are, as a body, decidedly unfit for freedom (*Works* 11:78).

Sterling campaigned for the education of slaves and was in spite of inconsistencies on the whole on the side of the liberals. Carlyle's irritation was understandable; not only was he more consistent than the liberals but also more pragmatic:

I never thought the 'rights of Negroes' worth much discussing, nor the rights of men in any form; the grand point, as I once said, is the rights of men, -- what portion of their 'rights' they have a chance of getting sorted out in this confused world (*Works* 29: 372-3).

If there is a group of inferior human beings, uncultured and barbaric who are incapable of governing themselves, and even many liberals believed that this was the case, why not benevolent slavery or at least some form of coerced labour? According to Carlyle's reasoning, this way the sugar plantations would continue to be worked, the colonies would be productive and the slaves would be looked after, unlike in Haiti which Carlyle holds up as an awful warning.

Haiti's rebellion and subsequent independence in 1803 had increased the whites' and free coloureds' fear of their slaves over the whole region. Social and racial relations between the wealthy whites, the poor whites, wealthy coloureds and the largely black ex slaves were volatile. The French Revolution's ideology of democracy added a further dimension. In *The French Revolution* Carlyle wrote of St. Domingo (it became Haiti after independence) "blazing skyward; blazing in literal fire, and in far worse metaphorical; beaconing the nightly main." (*Works* 3:11-12). In dramatic style he describes the mixture of forces operating and the resulting conflagration:

In Black Saint-Domingo . . . was burning . . . sugar-boileries, plantations, furniture, cattle and men: sky high; the Plain of Cap Francais one huge whirl of smoke and flame!

. . . Your pale-white Creoles have their grievances: -- and your yellow Quarteroons? And your dark yellow Mulattoes? And your slaves soot-black? . . . So now in the Autumn of 1791, looking from the sky windows of Cap Francais, thick clouds of smoke girdle our horizon, smoke in the day, in the night fire: preceded by fugitive shrieking white women, by Terror and rumour. Black demonised squadrons are massacring and harrying with nameless cruelty. They fight and fire from behind thickets and coverts, for the Black man loves the Bush; they rush to the attack, thousands strong, with

brandished cutlasses . . . it is Black without remedy; and remains, as African Haiti, a monition to the world (*Works* 3:221).

Later he was to warn in the “Discourse” that if whites cannot use “the beneficent whip:”

[L]et him look across to Haiti, and trace a far sterner prophecy! Let him, by his ugliness, idleness, rebellion, banish all white Men from the West Indies, and make it all one Haiti, -- with little or no sugar growing, black Peter exterminating black Paul, and where a little garden of Hesperides might be, nothing but a tropical dog-kennel and pestiferous jungle (*Works* 29:376)

Mill in his rebuttal of the “Discourse” in a letter to *Fraser’s Magazine* 1850 asked what Carlyle could possibly know of Haiti? All he writes is based on hearsay and, he asked, are there not other places equally badly governed? (August 45) This was true. However, Carlyle was right too in that there had been war and unrest in Haiti over a number of years after independence. The revolutionary leaders had tried to maintain sugar production on the plantations, but for ex-slaves the plantations were reminders of their bondage and eventually subsistence production was substituted for sugar plantation. This according to C. L. R. James in his book *The Black Jacobins* led to economic decay and contributed to political disorder (James 307.) In a letter to Lydia Emerson in February 1841 Carlyle wrote of Harriet Martineau’s book *The Hour and the Man*, a novel based on Toussaint L’Ouverture, ex-slave and one of the Haitian revolutions leaders:

how she has made such a beautiful black Washington . . . of a rough-handed, hard-headed, semi-articulate gabbling Negro; and of the horriblemest phases that “Sansculottism” can exhibit, of a Black Sansculottism, a musical Opera or Oratorio in pink stockings (*CL* 13:42).

There is a note in the World Classics’ version of *The French Revolution* that vindicates Carlyle’s opinion of the Haitian rebellion on the grounds that the violence and disorder after May 1791 largely justified Carlyle’s cynicism (480). However bearing in mind the violence inherent in the slave trade and imperialism it is difficult to agree with this. The carnage of the middle passage (25% mortality rate in the nineteenth century and more in preceding centuries), the disordered lives of the black population who were treated as commodities and whose attachment to people and places was by force of circumstances tenuous, is well documented. The mortality rate on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean was notoriously high. Average life expectancy of slaves in the Caribbean after importation was 7 to 10 years (Blackburn 20), many of the slaves being literally worked to death.

The history of Haiti and the things that went wrong after the revolution is complex; another story that would need much greater exploration than there is room for here. There was inevitably violence but it was on both sides. In 1805, 2 years after Toussaint’s death, whites were massacred on the orders of General Dessalines but there had been worse atrocities committed by General Rochambeau against the mulattoes in 1803 and blacks before that. James’s book is an excellent antidote to

Carlyle's view of the history of the Haitian revolution. James is black and a Marxist yet in a very Carlylean way he explores a period of Haitian history by focusing mainly on one man, Toussaint, ironically a Carlylean hero. He is taciturn and charismatic, the archetypal man of action, certainly not democratic but autocratic a believer in the virtue of hard work. James writes:

'Work is necessary,' [Toussaint] proclaimed, 'it is a virtue, it is for the general good of the state.' His regulations were harsh. The labourers were sent to work twenty four hours after he assumed control of any district, and he authorized the military commandants of the parishes to take measures necessary for keeping them on the plantations (James 126).

Above all James's hero (and he quotes plenty of primary sources to support this) was a moderate man who took no reprisals, who gave whites positions of authority because he needed them even though he distrusted them. It is very telling that this scholarly and famously anti-imperialist book sank into oblivion for more than 20 years after its publication in 1938.

Another of Carlyle's acquaintances with links with the Caribbean was A. J. Ker, Chief Justice of Dominica from 1856. Ker was Tennyson's brother-in-law, a strange, defensive man for whom Carlyle did not have whole-hearted respect. However it seems Carlyle did respect Ker's observations on Dominica, which Ker called "the splendid but fearfully turbulent island" (*CL* 31:192) and later "the most villainous community in the entire British Dominions." He told Carlyle that the Mulattoes wanted to drive the British out (*CL* 35:63). Carlyle used Ker's opinions as evidence in a letter to John Carlyle in 1859 of the incompetence of the mainly non-white governing Assembly. Dominica was the first British colony in the Caribbean to vote in a governing body the majority of which was non-white. Carlyle also told his brother that the island was, "not worth a farthing to her majesty".

If Dominica's present was "fearfully turbulent" its past was more so. It had been fought over by the French and English for nearly 200 years and had been a haven for privateers. There were many factors that contributed to what Carlyle, through Ker, clearly saw as the anarchy and the poverty of the island. After annexation by the British in 1783 attempts to settle the island had been unsuccessful. Land was sold to speculators lured by the promise of profits from sugar; many of them never set foot on the island. The government found itself in the position of encouraging French landowners to stay, which the majority did, and yet these were some of the very people that settlement was designed to protect the island from. They were granted access to land but there were constraints. They had to take the oath of allegiance and pay a yearly rent to the British crown; they could not dispose of property without the permission of the governor. Much more importantly, the French, many of who would have been free blacks or "coloureds" were denied the franchise. Later this was to create a numerically and economically powerful opposition that became a major headache for a succession of governors (Baker 62-4). Furthermore this group was Dominican not European. Although the wealthier members looked to Europe for fashion and culture they were not speculators, some of them owned large estates



but many of them were small holders who had cultivated coffee, cotton and cacao. These were the Creoles, many of French extraction, people for whom Dominica was essentially home. In 1859 Anthony Trollope, quoting a guidebook to the West Indies, remarked on the difference between the French and British colonists; the French consider the West Indies to be their country while:

In our colonies it is different. They are considered more as temporary lodging-places, to be deserted as soon as the occupiers have made money enough by molasses and sugar to return home (Trollope 159).

Trollope saw that many of the French occupied islands were more affluent than those occupied by the British, Dominica being an exception; it had a large proportion of French occupants but was ruled by the British.

British hopes of profit from Dominica had resulted in widespread establishment of sugar slave plantations managed by overseers who used whatever methods it took to maximise profits for absentee landlords. One Jamaican overseer, and there is no reason to believe that he was exceptional in the Caribbean, stated that he had made his employer:

20, 30 or 40 more hogsheads per year than any of my predecessors ever did; though I have killed 30 or 40 Negroes per year or more, yet the product has been more than adequate to the loss (quoted Baker 88).

Because of the topography of Dominica, the conversion of the island from multi crop to mono crop agriculture was not easy. Even at its most profitable the Dominican sugar industry was not as profitable as the sugar industry elsewhere. There were also confrontations between the British and the French inhabitants, broadly between sugar planters who were more dependent on slavery and multi-crop cultivators and there were settlements of escaped slaves who carried out frequent attacks on the plantations and their owners. By the time of emancipation what had been created in Dominica was what Baker calls:

a society of nakedly and brutally exploited slaves, whose interests were diametrically opposed to that of their masters . . . and a social category of French white and free-coloured political opposition, whose members were disenfranchised and whose interests would later generate a strong spirit of Dominican independence (Baker 66).

And so Carlyle and Ker were right; Dominica was “fearfully turbulent” and “not worth a farthing to her majesty.” According to documents in the National Archive, Dominica’s revenue for 1858 was £13,500 of which £7000 was owed to the British Government as repayment and interest on a hurricane relief loan from 1845. Trollope visiting Dominica in 1859 wrote that in Roseau “Everything seems to speak of desolation, apathy, and ruin” (Trollope 161). The freed slaves aversion to working the plantations meant that many of the plantations remained uncultivated and some were sold off in small lots. Dominica’s economy became increasingly peasant-based subsistence farming.

Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* evokes the atmosphere of post slavery Dominican society and the complexity of its social relationships dislocated by a

history of brutality, racial division and political and economic opportunism, all of which contributed to what Ker and Carlyle perceived as anarchy. Although the book was written more than 100 years after emancipation Rhys would have experienced many of the social tensions that Ker saw. Antoinette, the heroine of Rhys's novel and the mad first wife of Mr Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was, like Rhys, a white Creole. Her feelings for her homeland are intense and brooding. Abolition had disrupted her world; she and her mother became misfits in the only world they knew. Mason, Antoinette's stepfather, came to the colony to make money and feels none of the dislocation felt by his wife and stepdaughter. He understands nothing about the island except how to exploit it for his own financial gain. Rochester as a younger son also came to exploit the colony and to make his fortune by marrying Antoinette, a colonial heiress. He too knows nothing about the local people and remains uninvolved. All that matters is that, by virtue of his wife's fortune, he will no longer have to be a disgrace to his father and his brother back in England. The colony has provided for him, as it should. Its people are "the other" an otherness his wife eventually shares. When Antoinette shows great affection for her old servant he asks "Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?" Antoinette in turn asks "Why not?" He replies, "I wouldn't hug and kiss them. . . I couldn't." (Rhys 55) But he has sex with a black servant girl about which he feels no remorse. Rhys shows us another dimension of the complex Caribbean world. It is from a Creole perspective, also white, but a long way from the perspective of Carlyle and Ker who saw the colonies as an outpost of Britain with unruly blacks whose job it was to work for the Empire.

Towards the end of 1865 when Carlyle was 70 a dramatic event occurred in the Caribbean, which, in spite of his age and a world-weary attitude to all things political, stirred Carlyle to action. The events were to result in the Governor Eyre controversy. An incident took place outside the courthouse in Morant Bay Jamaica. Some say it began with a boy being fined for assaulting a woman and being ordered to pay costs as well as a fine. A black onlooker Geoghegan shouted out in the courtroom telling the boy not to pay the costs. When the constables tried to arrest Geoghegan the onlookers rescued him (Semmel 46). Others say that it was started by an unpopular decision over the ownership of land, a much more incendiary subject at the time.

The causes of the riots as in all such cases were complex, a mixture of history and current circumstances, often misunderstood and often misreported in the interests of one group or another. Jamaican society like that of the rest of the Caribbean was still haunted by the ghost of slavery. The sugar industry was in decline, unable to compete with other areas still using slave labour and, since 1846, no longer protected by tariffs. Absentee landlords owned the majority of the estates and the majority of the land. Overseers and local agents had to reduce costs and they did it partly by reducing the wages of the black day labourers. At the same time it was government policy to restrict the access of black small farmers to land in order to ensure an adequate labour force on the plantations. Some absentee landowners left their lands

locked up and uncultivated which caused resentment in those ex slaves who were trying to buy their own land and there were disputes over ownership of land. Land that had been farmed by peasant farmers for generations could suddenly be taken back into ownership by the large estates. Even where there had been sales of land to black farmers the sale often went unrecorded by dishonest overseers and this land also could be repossessed. However, according to Lord Olivier's book on Eyre (166-7) land monopoly although it played a part in the general discontent that led up to the riots, was not a festering sore that had caused the rebellion nor did the white population of 13,000 feel threatened by the 350,000 black majority (figs. from Catherine Hall 255). In fact Olivier indicated that Carlyle was more to blame for ruining Jamaica's planting community because of his influence not only on the Governor of Jamaica, Edward John Eyre but also on the political classes in Britain (Olivier 142-165). Olivier's attack on Eyre puts the blame for the riots and their violent aftermath on Eyre's ignorance, incompetence and brutality. Olivier was a Fabian, born in 1859, six years before the Eyre controversy. He held office in Jamaica from 1900 to 1913, appointed governor 1907. He was a popular governor and developed a great deal of affection and respect for the Jamaican people. While in office he oversaw several practical improvements on the island including the development of an efficient sanitation system. He was also a passionate "protagonist of the free peasantry" (C.Hall *Civilising Subjects* 123). It was no doubt his affection for Jamaica that led to his partisan assessment of Eyre's character and Jamaican society before and during Eyre's time in office. However he knew the island and its inhabitants certainly better than Carlyle or the majority of the British public did. He pointed out the impracticality of many of Carlyle's prescriptions for the economic health of the Caribbean. The sugar industry was failing not because of the laziness or greediness of the black population; rates of pay on the estates were ridiculously low and the diminishing estates could not provide enough employment for the whole of the labouring population (Olivier 37).

Perhaps the situation was not as explosive as some of Eyre's supporters suggested but nevertheless Jamaica had its share of social unrest and political tension. How much the situation was exacerbated by the personalities of Eyre and other protagonists is debatable. Eyre proclaimed martial law; he sent in troops and the riot developed into a rebellion that lasted a month. It was brutally suppressed. News of the floggings, shootings and massacring of the rioters, their supposed leaders or anyone in the vicinity on Eyre's authority very quickly reverberated around Britain. Final figures stated that more than 400 blacks and "coloureds" were killed, 600 men and women were flogged, and over 1000 homes were burnt (figs. Hall 255). To make matters worse Paul Bogle, a black Baptist minister and political activist and George William Gordon, son of a white slave owner and a black slave, also a Baptist minister, a wealthy, intelligent, popular reformer, and an elected member of the House of Assembly were tried and hanged. There had been animosity between Eyre and Gordon for some time and it highly likely that Gordon's execution was political.

At the time of his arrest Gordon was not in the area under martial law but Eyre had him transported so that he could be tried as a rebel. When first reports of the rebellion reached Britain Eyre was congratulated in the belief that he had averted a crisis that could have been as grave as the “Indian Mutiny” of 1857. However as more details emerged the legality of the declaration of martial law and the executions, particularly that of Gordon, began to be questioned. People in Britain took sides and what began as a small disturbance became a defining moment in the history of empire. Justin MacCarthy, a contemporary journalist wrote:

Had the fearful vengeance taken on the wretched island been absolutely necessary to its future tranquillity, it still would have been a chapter in history to read with a shudder. (quoted Semmel 13).

The controversy divided friends and family. John Stanley, the younger son and least liberal of the mainly liberal and eccentric Stanleys of Alderley, close friends of the Carlyles, wrote to Carlyle December 1866 that as a soldier he had felt himself unable to speak out in the Eyre case:

But I find on my returning home that my two brothers, my older brother [probably Henry] who should know better and my younger [Lyulph] one who is an intemperate godless radical have both subscribed their names and sums of money towards funding means of persecuting Eyre. So I am anxious that one at least of my name should be seen to be of a different opinion . . . I shall be most happy to give £10 whenever it is required (NLS MS 1768).

The colonial office had established a commission of enquiry that investigated the troubles of October 1865 and the feud between Eyre and Gordon. It reported that although there had been genuine insurrection and that Eyre’s prompt action had been instrumental in avoiding a full-scale war, martial law had continued long after it was necessary and the punishments inflicted were excessive, “reckless,” “barbarous” “wanton” and “cruel (Semmel 67). Many of the stories of atrocities were verified by the enquiry and the report shocked some and outraged others.

Two committees had been set up; The Jamaica Committee, by Exeter Hall radicals, which, on the basis of the report by the Royal Commission, sought to have Eyre tried for murder; and the Eyre Defence Committee formed to defend Eyre. Carlyle joined the latter in August 1866 in spite of the fact that Welsh Carlyle had died only a few months previously. He wrote to a friend:

Poor Eyre! I am heartily sorry for him. [He] it seems has fallen from £6,000 a year to almost zero and has a large family and needy kindred dependent on him. Such his reward for saving the West Indies, and hanging one incendiary mulatto, well worth the gallows if I can judge (Froude *Life* 2:352-3)

Later having met Eyre he described him as a, “Visibly brave, gentle, chivalrous, and clear man” who had “something of the Grandison in him which was his limiting condition” (Froude 2:390), just the type of man of action Carlyle found admirable. He had previously shown equal admiration and support for Brigadier Colin Mackenzie who had been involved in a violent dispute with Muslims in Bolarum in 1855 over the celebration of a religious festival. Mackenzie had been criticised by the government

for acting rashly and was refused compensation for the injuries he received while attempting, single-handedly to put down the ensuing riot (*CL* 13:121).

On the whole literary men made up the Eyre Defence Committee among them Tennyson, Dickens and Kingsley. Froude reported that he never knew Carlyle “more anxious about anything” (Froude, *Carlyle* 2: 390) than he was about the Eyre case but he was happy to hand over much of the work of the committee to Ruskin who had been one of the first to come out in support of Eyre. Ruskin’s arguments challenged Mill’s interpretation of the law and denounced the government for making Eyre the scapegoat for their own incompetence not only in the colonies but also at home where people were suffering just as much as the blacks in the Caribbean.

Scientists, particularly evolutionists such as T. H. Huxley and Charles Darwin were on the other side. The main arguments on both sides were legal and moral, whether or not Eyre as a public servant who had probably averted a full scale rebellion should be deprived of a pension, whether or not blacks were equal to and deserved the same kind of justice as whites, the legality of Eyre’s prolonging of the period of martial law and above all the legality of the hangings. John Stanley in his letter to Carlyle goes on to say that his brothers:

have lowered their tone considerably as to Eyre, they pretend now that ‘they only want to know what the law is’ (NLS MS1768).

T. H. Huxley said that he had joined the Jamaica Committee not because of love for the Negro but because:

English law as such does not permit good persons as such to strangle bad persons as such. (quoted Semmel 121-2).

And to his friend Kingsley who was on the other side he wrote that he wanted to see Eyre indicted and convicted because all the evidence showed that Gordon’s death was political murder. He says that Eyre may have had the best of motives and done it all:

in a heroic vein. But if English law will not declare that heroes have no more right to kill people in this fashion than other folk, I shall take the earliest opportunity of migrating to Texas where there is less hero-worship and more respect for justice (quoted Semmel 123).

Huxley then, clearly referring to Carlyle, points the difference between hero worshippers who believe that great men should rule little ones if not justly then by “driving them or kicking them” and others, not hero-worshippers, the group to which he belongs who look upon hero-worshippers as immoral, “who think it is better for a man to go wrong in freedom than to go right in chains” (quoted Semmel 124) Dr. Joseph Dalton Hooker, a friend of Darwin, surprisingly joined the Eyre Defence Committee, his reasons: “the Negro in Jamaica is pestilential . . . a dangerous savage” (quoted Semmel 124). John Tyndall, Carlyle’s great admirer and Huxley’s friend also a member of the Eyre Committee wrote:

I decline accepting the Negro as the equal of the Englishman. . . . We do not hold an Englishman and a Jamaican Negro to be convertible terms, nor do we think the cause

of human liberty will be promoted by any attempt to make them so” (quoted Semmel 124).

Much has been written about this episode in Jamaican history, more than the size of the incident would appear to warrant. This was no Sepoy Rebellion nor was it a second Haiti. In 1867 a biography by Alexander Hume and a report of the court case by W. F. Finlason praised and vindicated Eyre. In 1933 Olivier’s book *The Myth of Governor Eyre* was published criticising Eyre. In 1962 Bernard Semmel wrote *The Governor Eyre Controversy*, firmly of the opinion that Eyre was both legally and morally in the wrong. In 1967 Bernard Dutton’s biography of Eyre, *The Hero as Murderer*, took a more generous view of Eyre. Dutton believed that as an Anglican:

[Eyre’s] honesty and integrity were genuinely outraged by the hypocrisies and extravagancies of the Negro Baptists (Dutton 396).

Gordon is the villain of Dutton’s piece Eyre’s main fault being a Grandisonian pride in dealing with the Jamaican blacks.

Most books on colonial history and literature discuss Eyre, the incident and the effect it had on the concept of empire. It made people confront issues of what race is. The Eyre committee won in the end; Eyre was exonerated and three years later received his pension and retired. Twenty years later James Froude who had been Carlyle’s intimate during the Eyre controversy made this statement in his book on his visit to the West Indies:

[T]he West Indies generally [are] an opportunity for the further extension of the influence of the English race in their special capacity as leaders and governors of men. We cannot divest ourselves of our responsibility for the blacks . . . or leave them to relapse into a state from which slavery itself was the first step of emancipation (Froude *W. I.* 98-99).

In 1867 the Eyre controversy and the Second Reform Act culminated for Carlyle in the publishing of “Shooting Niagara.” It is a pessimistic and bitter piece railing against the Reform Bill and democracy, in praise of martial law and Governor Eyre. In it Carlyle sees salvation in the government of a revived aristocracy with “the Drill-Sergeant” “the one official reality” (*Works* 30: 41). It is the work of a tired old man. It is easy to parody Carlyle over this, the “Discourse on the Negro Question” and his involvement in the Eyre Committee but was he out of step? Eyre was not punished for the massacre in Jamaica and as we have seen many of the intelligentsia shared Carlyle’s views if not his noisy expression of them. Many amongst those who wanted Eyre prosecuted, were not unequivocally on the side of the angels. Huxley, quoted previously, the great rationalist, abolitionist, believer in scientific principles and the law, wrote in 1865 at the end of the American civil war:

No rational man, cognisant of the facts, believes that the average Negro is the equal, still less the superior, of the average white man

and that the Negro would never be able;

“to compete successfully with his bigger-brained and smaller-jawed rival, in a contest to be carried out by thoughts and not by bite (Huxley 3: 66).

Like Carlyle he takes the inferiority of blacks as read. Darwin also has some very unscientific and uncomfortable things to say about the similarity between what he calls the “lower and barbarous races of men” and the “higher animals”(Wilson 1187). But at least Huxley’s science would not allow him to deny the humanity of black races, although many at the time did and science had illustrated for Darwin that there was greater diversity of ability, physical and intellectual, within races than between them. R. G. Price argues that some of Darwin’s offensive sounding language is because he was “simply using the standard lexicon of his time.” This is true but the standard lexicon is the mirror of the age’s worldview.

Of course there were others who saw the world differently even at the time. Emerson wrote in his journal:

“Here is the Anti-Slave. Here is man; and if you have man, black or white is insignificance”

and

“The Negro has saved himself, and the white man very patronisingly says I have saved you” (quoted Richardson 398).

Frederick Douglass’s speeches and autobiography were known on both sides of the Atlantic. He was an ex-slave and like Carlyle was unequivocal and uncompromising. In a speech of 1850 entitled “What to the slave is the Fourth of July?” the chaos he sees is different from Carlyle’s notion of chaos; he answers the question with a classically rhetorical indictment of slavery telling his audience that 4th July:

reveals to [the black man] . . . the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. . . . To him . . . your boasted liberty is an unholy licence; your national greatness, swelling vanity; . . . your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery. . . . There is not a nation in the world guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour (Andrews 118-9);

and in a speech of 1881 nearly 20 years after Morant Bay and abolition in the US Douglass declared:

Few evils are less accessible to the force of reason, or more tenacious of life and power, than long standing prejudice. It is a moral disorder, which creates the conditions necessary to its own existence, and fortifies itself by refusing all contradiction. It paints a hateful picture according to its own diseased imagination, and distorts the features of the fancied original to suit the portrait. As those who believe in the visibility of ghosts can easily see them, so it is always easy to see repulsive qualities in those we despise and hate (Douglass).

However these two did not belong to the section of the British middle class who, as Hall puts it in speaking of the Eyre controversy, defined the agenda for the debate (Hall 256). Within the rather different intellectual landscape of Carlyle and Mill Carlyle was right; to govern the colonies justly without the excesses of people like Eyre was impossible. How do you make a population, which is at worst despised and degraded and at best patronised, work solely for the benefit of a country thousands

of miles away unless it is through fear? The Caribbean colonies were difficult to govern. The question is why shouldn't they be? It would have been extraordinary if on these terms they had been easy to govern.

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## **The Carlyles, Dr Gully and the Water Cure**

**Malcolm Ingram**

### **Introduction**

In 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, the Carlyles spent August at the spa town of Malvern, near Worcester. They were a hypochondriacal couple, and it may seem unsurprising that they should visit a spa, but they were both in fair health in this particular year, and visited Malvern only because they had been swept up in a strange medical craze that lasted for some thirty years, involved many other famous Victorians, and is a piece of social history worth exploring. The Dr Gully who treated them was very famous indeed, called by one of his patients, the Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen, ‘the most gifted physician of the age,’ but ended his life disgraced.

### **The History of the Water Cure**

The use of water for health reasons is, of course, a practice that goes far back in history, even before the Greeks and the Romans, and continues to the present day. In mediaeval times excursions to Holy Wells were popular and Malvern had four of them. As early as the 14th century the Belgian village of Spa gave its name to bathing resorts, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ‘taking the waters’ at spas became popular all over Europe. But the Water Cure, or Hydropathy as it was also known, was a specific course of treatment. A new rigour was introduced into water treatments at the beginning of the nineteenth century, largely attributable to one man: Vincenz Priessnitz, born 1799 in Graefenberg, Upper Silesia, a remote and mountainous part of the Austrian empire, now in the Czech republic and renamed Jeseník.

He was a semi-literate farmer’s son without medical qualifications of any kind. There are legends about his boyhood discovery of his water cure, rather like those that grow up around saints, all involving some kind of injury to himself or animals, which he treated successfully with cold wet bandages. He soon began to treat others, and his success aroused much opposition from local doctors and priests. In the 1820s he was charged with unlawful practice several times, and sentenced to prison in 1829, but this was reversed on appeal. In 1838 officials of the Imperial Home Office came from Vienna to investigate his huge practice, and decided in his favour. He had married the rich daughter of a patient, and by this time could boast of 22 princes and princesses, 149 counts and countesses, hundreds of officers, and many civil servants, priests and physicians among his clientele. At any one time he was treating between three and four hundred patients. By 1840 English physicians and patients began to make the long journey to undergo and to study his treatment (Claridge, 1842, Turner, 1967).

It was not for the faint of heart. He was an abrupt, laconic man, unwilling to discuss his methods with visiting doctors, did not seem to seek out patients, and was said to treat all of them as though they were ploughmen. Graefenberg was at a height of 2000ft., and the patients lived communally in a chilly barracks, with cattle on the ground floor below a vast communal dining room. They slept in surrounding wooden huts, designed to force them to go outside and exercise. The food was greasy, coarse and indigestible. Drugs, tobacco, tea, coffee and alcohol were forbidden. The main treatment was the application of cold water by wet bandages and cold douches to the affected parts of the body, starting very early in the morning. This wrapping in wet bandages, which were then covered by blankets, produced copious sweating. Priessnitz had the simple theory that his treatments would drive out the 'bad stuff' from the system. The regime often produced boils, itching, and rashes, which were thought to be a kind of crisis, and a matter for rejoicing. The village had no spa waters, but drinking large amounts of water was also part of the treatment.

One of the English doctors who came to be treated and to learn was a Dr James Wilson (1807-1867). He had a poor practice in London's East End, and became friendly with Dr Gully who had a West End practice. Wilson then became a travelling physician, as had Carlyle's brother John, but his patient, Lord Farnham, soon died abroad. Wilson stayed on, spent some further years in practice on the continent, then went to Priessnitz and had treatment for neuralgia and a skin condition (Grierson, 1998). He returned to London in 1842, cured and a convert, and took up with Gully again. He published a book on the water cure, and enthused Gully, and in May 1842 they travelled to Malvern with a view to setting up in practice together. Malvern had a Holy Well, an Eye Well, a Hay Well and a St Ann's Well. It had attractive hills, which Priessnitz said were essential, and a good climate. Soon they had flourishing practices in hotels they leased, then bought and expanded. By the 1850's each was earning £10,000 a year. There was much opposition from all the doctors in the surrounding area, and from the *Lancet* and the medical establishment.

By 1851 there were hydropathic establishments all over the country. In Scotland alone, there were several on the Clyde coast, at Rothesay, Shandon, Wemyss Bay, Kilmacalm, Seamill, Kirn and Skelmorlie, and others in Aberdeen and at Bridge of Allan, the last known as the 'Scottish Graefenberg' (Hembry,1997).

### **Dr James Manby Gully(1808-1883)**

Despite having less experience of the treatment than Wilson, Gully quickly became the more successful of the two. He had better contacts through his earlier wealthy patients in London, and worked hard at attracting the rich and the famous. He was short and balding, and it was said that despite his marked baldness he had no shortage of customers for his patent hair restorer (Grierson, 1998). Born to a wealthy West Indian plantation owner, he studied medicine at Paris and then in Edinburgh, taking his degree there (Hill,1970). He then worked for some years in London, not too successful in his practice, but writing and editing medical journals. He translated

a German text on physiology, was keenly interested in opera, as was Wilson, and wrote a play based on a Dumas novel, which was put on at Drury Lane in 1839 (Smith, 2006). By 1851, his name was a household word, and he had an impressive collection of famous, wealthy, and usually grateful patients.

The Carlyles first met Gully in December of 1850, when Thomas and Jane attended a grand reception and dinner at the Wedgwoods where the great and the good of the time were gathered. Thomas, as usual, grumbled about going, and afterwards groaned about the effects on his digestion for weeks. He blamed the ‘incessant speech and babble’ of the people he had met that evening, but Jane thought it was related to the ‘three crystallized green things’ he consumed during the dessert. In the course of condemning all these important people, Carlyle, writing to brother John (TC to JAC, 21.12.1850), mentioned one person favourably – a Dr James Gully, ‘a new acquaintance on my side, who seemed to be intelligent.’ Writing to John Forster, Jane made a list of the celebrities she had spotted, singling out Gully by putting an exclamation mark after his name (JWC to JF, 21.12.1850). The *Collected Letters* show that during the 1840s the Carlyles often had friends and acquaintances passing through Cheyne Row on their way to or from a water cure. They would have heard much about it from them and others, because of its growing popularity among the well-to-do, the only group that could afford it.

A month after meeting Gully, Carlyle wrote to his sister Jean:

‘Occasionally I think of a few months of Water-Cure; away to the West (120 miles off, near Worcester), where there is a good Doctor, whom I have seen, whom I really believe capable of doing me some good.’ (TC to Jean C Aitken, 23.1.1851)

Gully must have been a sympathetic listener, hence Carlyle’s impression of his high intelligence. As ever, he spent the next seven months dithering about when and where they would go. Carlyle was irritated by the opening of the Great Exhibition, and by the resulting crowds in London: ‘windy blockheads from all ends of the Earth, a fair proportion of whom directed itself towards me.’ He was finishing his *Life of Sterling*, and the proofs had to be read that summer, which decided him not to go abroad.

Eventually, after cancelling a proposed trip to Brighton, he wrote to Dr Gully, saying that he and Jane wished to come to Malvern for a month. Gully replied by return, on the 27th July, professed himself to be a huge admirer of Carlyle’s work, and invited the Carlyles to come as his guests, and to stay in his home for a month while having treatment. He said that he had planned to write to Carlyle earlier, but had feared it might seem impertinent:

‘I owe you for many an elevating thought; & knowing your dyspeptic miseries, I have long desired to raise your physique out of them by the only means which appear to me to offer a reasonable power so to do:- doing something for your stomach of what you have done for my brain – purging it of depressing stuff & elevating its tone.’ (Quoted *CL* 29.7.511851; N.L.S. 1767.4)

This letter shows that Gully was an accomplished flatterer. Carlyle’s letter to him is lost, but Gully’s reply indicates that Carlyle laid down a few conditions. He assured Carlyle that he and his two sisters and two children lived very quietly, that he would have a quiet room to read and write in, and that while he would dose him with

water externally and internally, he would not stop him smoking, even promising ‘a large stock of cigars which would make a smoker’s mouth to water.’ Nor would he prevent him taking ‘*moderately* strong tea or coffee, provided it were not at too high a temperature.’ This is not what Gully advised in his bestselling textbook, which went through many editions, and was first published five years earlier:

‘Besides alcoholic stimulants, give up the scarcely less deleterious stimulus of *tobacco*, in the shapes of *snuffing* and *smoking*. Both tell injuriously on the nerves of the stomach as well as on the brain ... I defy any one to cure a nervous disorder or shattered constitution whilst the patient is allowed to snuff or smoke tobacco. I would have no patient who refused to give it up’ (Gully 1846, pp. 657–8).

Different rules for the famous! He concluded his letter by assuring Carlyle that ‘if nothing else were done, I am quite sure that the *obstinate bowels* may be overcome.’

Thomas was thrilled, and wrote to Gully, thanked him for his ‘magnanimous offer,’ made a token gesture of saying they would stay with him until they could find ‘eligible lodgings,’ and immediately planned the journey. He finished the final proofs of the Sterling biography on the 29th July, and set off with Jane by train on Saturday, 3rd August. They left London at 10am, Jane smuggling her dog Nero past the railway guards, reached Birmingham at 3pm, and completed the last thirty miles by coach, Carlyle sitting outside. They arrived at Malvern before seven in the evening, and found Dr Gully’s home to be ‘a beautiful ornamental little mansion with pleasure-grounds round it,’ Dr Gully (‘a clever modest solid-looking man of five-and-forty’) and his family were kind, attentive and hospitable, and despite the noise of dogs and cocks Carlyle slept well – at least that first night.

### **The Month at Malvern**

The day after they arrived, both the Carlyles had a consultation with Dr Gully, and later Carlyle and Gully set off for a brisk ride together. Gully had built a large house and property close to the centre, and had a large staff of attendants to treat his patients. Compared with Smith and Priessnitz, he was prepared to be less strict with the rules, as we have seen. Otherwise Carlyle had the full treatment. His first letter to his mother gives a detailed and accurate description of his treatment:

‘First at half-past six in the morning....a burly man, very civil in manner, breaks in upon you: you must instantly rise, and strip naked; he wraps you in wet-wrung towels then in abundant masses of blanket, all tightly stuffed round you as if you were a mummy with the mere head left out; this they call “packing.” It is *really* pleasant; for after an instant or two you begin to get very warm in your wet clouds....At the end of half an hour your ruthless bath man returns, peels you naked again, seats you in a cold water bath, begins slaistering your back with his towels, gives you sponge and towel to do the like with your front; splashes and slaisters this way perhaps for five minutes, then rubs you dry and goes his ways. You huddle on some clothes and rush out to walk, being rather cold’. (CL, TC to MAC, 8.8.1851)

Carlyle would then walk for an hour before breakfast, after which he strolled on the lawn, smoking and reading Marryats’s *Masterman Ready*, a suitably watery choice. ‘But at 12 there is a thing called “sit-bath” to be done: this is considerably nastier (to me) than “packing.” It consists, in fact, in *sitting* in a tub of cold water, up to near the knees and armpits (your feet are on the floor, over the edge of the bath or tub, and you have a blanket round your shoulders) for 20 minutes by the clock! This is a very surprising operation; and I cannot yet boast of having got to like it: however, it is

very potent too; for the instant you are out of it, being surprisingly cold in the middle part of the body, you rush forth again to walk, and the bowels themselves are aware of the strange influence!’

Dinner was at 2.30, ‘excellent plain dinner, where I am tacitly expected to refuse all wine.’ Another sit bath at 5, followed by another long and hilly walk, with stops to drink water at several of the wells, then tea at 8. Carlyle, and everyone else, retired at 11pm, very tired. This routine, Carlyle found, was relaxing, and indeed prevented much thinking going on, as he and others noted.

In short, this was a strict and healthy regimen, especially if the patient had no serious illness, and was strong enough to bear these dramatic procedures. Gully and Wilson fought a running battle with the *Lancet* and the medical profession, who tried to make capital of any case where someone died while undergoing the treatment. Such deaths were rare, as both were experienced doctors and rejected the very ill who sought their help as a last resort; and they were well able to defend themselves, compared with the many practitioners of the cure who had no medical qualifications. Undoubtedly Gully’s charm and bedside manner – his charisma - had a big part to play in his successes, as did his rich contacts. Women in particular were much influenced by him..

In his many letters to family and friends during August, Carlyle was objective in his remarks, cooperative but constantly sceptical, as he always was about the medical profession.. He boasted jokingly to Arthur Helps (*CL* 7/8/51) that he was staying in ‘the private mansion of the great Doctor himself (an honour done to Literature and to Dyspepsia).’ Gully would not think of them quitting his home when they politely suggested it. Within a day or two Carlyle’s insomnia returned, and his host moved him to a better and quieter bedroom. Sometimes he fell asleep during the packings. He took long walks alone, seeking silence, but kept meeting acquaintances who were also in Malvern for the cure, and Jane began to arrange tea parties which he reluctantly attended. After a week he wrote to his brother, Dr John:

‘One full week is now over; and certainly I feel very considerably cleared and invigorated in the nerves; but the most of that I could impute very well (hitherto) to unusually liberal exercise, fresh air, fresh water drunk so copiously: and what the precise effect of the water-cure *itself* may be I cannot say hitherto.’ (*TC-JAC*, 10/8/51).

By the end of the month he told his brother any benefit would be ‘very trifling,’ and confessed that he had resumed taking half a blue pill. Emerson was told that ‘It was no increase of ill-health that drove me hither, rather the reverse: but I have long been minded to try this thing: and now I think the results will be, – zero pretty nearly, and one imagination the less.’ (*CL*, *TC* to *RWE*, 8.7.1851). All this is not what might be expected of Carlyle. He was a pleasant, cooperative patient, and despite the failure of the treatment said not a word against Gully. Jane heard that one of the bath men was impressed by how ‘sweetly’ Mr Carlyle took his baths, and thought that the cold water must be ‘acting favourably on his faculty of patience and resignation if on nothing else.’ (*JWC*- *Wm. Allingham*, 11.8.51).

Jane did not take the Water Cure. She regarded her stay in Malvern as a pleasant holiday with much socialising and many walks. Did she decide before coming, or

after her consultation with Dr Gully, that the treatment was not for her? She claimed in a letter to Kate Sterling on the 12th August that she had hoped that Dr Gully might have treated her, but that she was ‘passing for a woman in good health.’ She told Helen Welsh that the doctor impressed her as a

‘decidedly clever man... but there is something anti-pathetic between him and me that keeps me reserved with him as I felt the first day, which is probably as well as he is dreadfully persecuted with the devotion of *Ladies* – all his female patients seeming to feel it their duty to fall in love with him.’ (JWC-HW,28Aug, 1851)

She attended many tea parties with Nero, who was so spoiled with helpings of bread and butter that he lost all the fur on his hind legs, and had to be taken to the local vet who prescribed a pill and a lotion, put him on a diet, and threatened to bleed him if he did not improve: conventional medicine for dogs rather than the water cure. By the end of the month she agreed with her husband that he was no better: ‘I should say it has done simply – *nothing* – neither ill nor good.’(JWC-HW, 27/8/51)

One other visitor provides the only outside view of Carlyle at Malvern: Lord Macaulay, writing to a friend on 24th August:

‘Carlyle is here undergoing the water cure. I have not seen him. But his water doctor said to Senior the other day, “ You wonder at his eccentric opinions, and style. It is all stomach. I shall set him to rights. He will go away quite a different person.” If he goes away writing common sense in good English, I shall declare myself a convert to hydropathy. At present I believe that Doctor and patient are quacks alike.’(Quoted *CL* ,26, 141,1851)

The Carlyles left Malvern at the end of August, and travelled to Liverpool. Carlyle then continued alone to Scotland.

## **The Aftermath**

In retrospect the Carlyles’ joint verdict was that they had enjoyed their stay in Malvern but that it had no effect whatever on his health. Jane had got on well with Gully’s two sisters, and said that she could not remember ever before having stayed in a house for a month without wishing to be away. (JWC-TC, 5/8/51) Carlyle agreed that ‘we are bound in a deep obligation to them’. They both continued to walk more and to drink more water for a short time, but within days Thomas was drinking coffee again and dosing himself with castor oil. A month or two later he commissioned a leather-bound edition of his collected works, sent it to Gully, and became increasingly irritated when he had no word from Gully and did not know if the books had even arrived. Eventually a letter of thanks arrived in December, suggesting that the Carlyles make another visit. Carlyle was confident it would not take place.

When editing Jane’s letters of 1851 after her death he commented that: he ‘found by degrees water, taken as a medicine, to be the most destructive drug I had ever tried,’ and said of the water cure: ‘It was then, and perhaps still is, a prevalent delusion among chronic invalids.’ He recalled that he had felt forced to try it:

‘But I reflected to myself, “You will have to try it someday”.... No humbug can prevail among your acquaintances but they will force you to get the means of saying, “Oh, I have tried all that and found it naught.”’ (Froude, 1883).



The Carlyles were prescient. Jane had no inclination for such self-imposed discomfort, and from the beginning Thomas regarded it as an experiment, a trial he felt obliged to make, although he was not especially ill at the time. He recorded his experience in an objective, scientific fashion in the copious letters of that month, and gave his measured opinion after a thorough trial. He was a good observer and would have made a good doctor.

### **Friends and the Famous**

The huge popularity of hydrotherapy can best be illustrated by listing some of the famous patients involved, many of them writers. Among Gully's patients alone the number is impressive: Florence Nightingale, Charles Darwin, Bulwer-Lytton (who wrote an enthusiastic pamphlet about the water cure), George Eliot and G H Lewes, John Ruskin, Macaulay, Mrs Charles Dickens and Alfred Tennyson. Many of them were friends of the Carlyles.

Tennyson was treated by Gully in 1847, four years before the Carlyles (Jenkins, 1974). He presented Dr Gully with one of his poems: 'Come not when I am dead, To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,' (Ricks, 1964). It was an odd choice of verse to give to his doctor. In March, 1851, three months before the Carlyles, Dickens had taken his wife to Malvern for treatment. He found the place good copy, and started work on a farce about it, which he completed with Mark Lemon, the editor of *Punch*. It was called 'Mr Nightingale's Diary,' and was set in the Water Lily Inn, Malvern, with characters similar to Mrs Gamp and Sam Weller. It was a great success when put on after the opening of the Great Exhibition at Devonshire House, and afterwards went on tour.

Charles Darwin made several long visits to Malvern, and even had the equipment for the water cure installed in his own home. He describes his treatment in detail in one of his letters (Darwin, 1849). Just as he had allowed Carlyle cigars, Gully allowed Darwin a dozen pinches of snuff daily, although he later managed to make Darwin give up the habit. Florence Nightingale was a much later visitor, making repeated visits before and after the Crimean War (Cope, 1958). George Eliot's G H Lewes was treated by Gully for bilious headaches in 1861, and benefited very much (Jenkins, 1974). There are references to the water cure in novels of the period, and at least one set in Malvern (Hubback, 1855). In Charles Reade's *It is never too late to mend* (1856) a 'water doctor' named 'Gulson' appears, condensing Gully and Wilson.

### **The Rise and Fall of the Water Cure**

The Water Cure's popularity lasted for not much more than thirty years, roughly from 1840 to 1870. Crazes have always been a part of medicine: treatments, whether operations or drugs, devised by doctors and others, and peddled with great enthusiasm to a gullible public. The water cure was unpleasant, but appealed to the Victorians' conviction that cold baths were character forming. They might

have agreed with the poet Philip Larkin, who believed that holidays stemmed from mediaeval pilgrimages, and thus were not meant to be enjoyable.

In retrospect it is easy to see why the time was ripe for the water cure. It was a natural treatment, a reaction to the conventional medicine of the period, which had few effective remedies, and many drugs that did much harm, such as mercury, in the form of the famous blue pill, and castor oil, both firm Carlyle favourites. Frequent blood letting killed many patients. A regime that stopped drugs and blood-letting, and offered fresh air, exercise, a plain diet, a halt to alcohol and smoking, and a holiday removed from domestic stresses could do nothing but good. Charismatic practitioners were needed, as it was necessary to attract rich patients away from the Grand Tour, or from visiting continental spas.

The passing of the Lunatic Asylum Acts in 1828 and 1845 had tightened the rules for admission to private madhouses and rest homes, and made it necessary for anyone entering them to be certified by at least two doctors – there were no voluntary admissions. Tennyson entered a private asylum at Epping in 1843, but after that took his custom to water cure establishments, and there were many like him.

Little information is available about the types of patients that were treated at Malvern and elsewhere. Many had chronic illnesses: the rheumatic, the arthritic, the anaemic and those with tuberculosis. Many were alcoholics, and many were psychiatric patients: neurotic, anxious or depressed, labelled then as having ‘shattered nerves.’ Others were in good health, but complaining of what would nowadays be called stress, perhaps the product then of Victorian industrialization. The patients were from both the upper class and from the emerging middle class. The clergy and the military were prominently represented, as were academics, politicians, and the aristocracy, although Gully seems to have failed to capture any royalty. One Malvern doctor tried to provide cheap or free treatment for the poor and working class, a venture that failed within a year.

It is also possible to identify the causes of the treatment’s decline and fall after such a short span of years. Wilson’s early death in 1867, and Gully’s retirement in 1871 were factors in Malvern, but another hydropath’s conviction for murder a few years earlier, and Gully’s behaviour in retirement, did much to end the fashion for hydropathy. Other factors were the rapid advances in medicine and surgery, such as in anaesthesia and antisepsis, in the second half of the century, the growth of private hospitals, and a growing consensus that the water treatment itself was ineffective. But spas and hydros continue to flourish to this day, no longer tied to the medical profession, but constantly exploiting the latest fashions in alternative medicine, in dieting, and promoting beauty as much as health. And water too remains in fashion.

### **Dr Gully –Decline and Fall**

The remainder of Dr Gully’s life was to eclipse his success. Shortly before he retired in 1872, a Mrs Florence Riccardo came to Malvern as a patient, for a respite from her

violent, alcoholic husband. She was 25, Gully was 63; they fell in love, and he began an affair with this much younger woman. Her husband died within a short time and she was left a wealthy widow. When Gully retired he followed her to Balham, near Streatham, south of London, where she had bought a house, called The Priory, and was living discreetly with a female companion. Gully bought a house close at hand, and the affair continued. They toured Europe together. But she broke with him after a few years and in 1875 married a wealthy young barrister, Charles Bravo. Four months later, at the Priory, he died agonisingly of antimony poisoning in suspicious circumstances. For three days the best doctors in the land watched his death agonies, unable to do anything useful. The wife, her companion, and Dr Gully were all murder suspects.

After a very public coroner's enquiry, which lasted for over a fortnight, and was reported at great length by the press, and conducted by the best barristers in the land, the jury concluded that she had been murdered, but by person unknown. The Bravo case has become one of the famous unsolved murder mysteries. Gully had to give evidence and it emerged from the evidence of servants that not only had he and Florence been lovers, but that she had become pregnant during their affair and that he carried out an abortion on her. That was what finished the affair. He was disgraced. The *Times* thundered its disapproval: he had violated 'the heavy duties of his profession, and with no excuse from the passions of youth, or even middle age, he abandoned himself to a selfish intrigue.' He was expelled from his societies and clubs, and spent his remaining years dabbling in spiritualism, publishing a book of drawings of spirit manifestations. He died in 1883, two years after Carlyle.

Over the years the Bravo case has inspired at least half a dozen books. The most recent and best researched (Ruddick, 2001) claims that Florence Bravo was responsible for her husband's murder, although Agatha Christie had earlier blamed Dr Gully. The story has also been told in a novel by Elizabeth Jenkins (Jenkins, 1972), and inspired two television dramas in the 1970s. Dr.Gully is now more remembered for all this than for his medical career.

### **Carlyle and Gully - latter days**

There is a sad footnote to these events in Froude's biography. Discussing Carlyle in his eighties, he describing Carlyle becoming at times very upset, uneasy and even violent, often without explaining himself and for the most unexpected reasons. He gives this example. When Carlyle became unable to do much walking, he and Froude often went driving in a fly. Once they were returning from Sydenham, and Carlyle wished to be home by a certain time. They were travelling by the quickest route but Carlyle suddenly became agitated, insisted that the coachman was wrong, and ordered him to take another road. They let him have his way, and when he calmed down Carlyle said: 'We should have gone through Balham. I cannot bear to pass that house.' He meant the house where the murder took place. Froude confirms that Carlyle had followed the Bravo case, and was 'shocked and distressed' by it

(Froude,1884). So Carlyle, like many another patient of Gully, felt upset by the fate of a doctor he had trusted.

Gully outlived Carlyle by only two years. Carlyle declined Westminster Abbey and chose Ecclefechan kirkyard; Gully went further –he made arrangements to keep his burial secret, and his grave is unknown to this day.

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## Carlyle and the Prime Ministers

Maurice Milne

Carlyle's contempt for the 'windbags' of the 'national palaver' is well known. Yet his years in London (1834-1881) coincided with the premierships of three outstanding parliamentarians: Peel, Gladstone, and Disraeli. All of them engaged with the problems encompassed by the Carlylean formulation of the 'Condition of England.' All were capable of inspiring 'hero-worship' from their followers (or intense animosity from their opponents). Where did Carlyle stand in relation to them? What did they think of *him*? Two of them were sons of commercial and manufacturing families, educated to take their place in the political nation. Both families acquired baronetcies, while Disraeli, coming from a literary parentage, gained an earldom. Were they exemplars of a 'working aristocracy'? If they were not (and, in two of the three cases, Carlyle remained deeply unimpressed), was it because of their shortcomings, or because the irascible 'Sage of Chelsea' set impossibly high standards?

Taking the three Prime Ministers in turn, the story is one of a significant and positive reappraisal regarding Peel; faint hopes for Gladstone, replaced by increasing disapproval, but complicated by the belated sharing of one common cause; and persistent personal prejudice towards Disraeli, redeemed – momentarily – by a magnanimous gesture on the part of the premier.

Carlyle's attitude towards Sir Robert Peel has been the subject of a valuable article by Jules Seigel. This included a fragmentary piece by Carlyle, held in the library of Yale University. The manuscript might possibly have been intended as an extra item in the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, published in the year of Peel's death. Carlyle certainly writes of Peel in glowing terms. Seigel notes the respect that Peel won from Carlyle by his repeal of the Corn Laws, at great personal cost, in 1846. He also shows how Peel's speeches on Irish policy in the late 1840s struck a common chord with Carlyle. There is no need to go over this ground here, when it has been so capably covered. Where there is room for clarification and amplification is in tracing the evolution of Carlyle's attitude towards Peel in the earlier 1840s. Seigel did not have the benefit of the *Collected Letters*, which makes the present task pleasingly manageable.

The first problem requiring resolution is whether or not Carlyle's character 'Sir Jabesh Windbag' really signified Sir Robert Peel. Sir Jabesh appears twice in *Past and Present*. First, at the end of Book Two, Carlyle remarks on the irrelevance of 'Fame' to the real worth of his hero, Abbot Samson. He then counterposes a modern politician: 'Or thinkest thou, the Right Honourable Sir Jabez (*sic*) Windbag can be made something by Parliamentary Majorities and Leading Articles?' In Book Three, concerned with 'The Modern Worker,' Carlyle entitles Chapter 14 'Sir Jabesh

Windbag.’ Here the contrast is with his greatest hero, Oliver Cromwell:

And now do but contrast Oliver with my right honourable friend Sir Jabesh Windbag, Mr Facing-both-Ways, Viscount Mealmouth, Earl of Windlestraw, or what other Cagliostro Cagliostro, Cagliostraccio, the course of Fortune and parliamentary Majorities has constitutionally guided to that dignity, any time during these last sorrowful hundred-and-fifty years! Windbag, weak in the faith of a God, which he believes only at Church on Sundays, if even then; strong only in the faith that Paragraphs and Plausibilities bring votes; that Force of Public Opinion, as he calls it, is the primal Necessity of Things, and highest God we have.

Seigel notes that Francis Espinasse made the identification with Peel, but he observes, ‘this seems doubtful since Carlyle was fond of Peel by this time.’ (Seigel,181,n.2). K.J. Fielding, in the *Carlyle Newsletter*, thought Seigel was being ‘too sceptical.’ (Fielding, 20,n.10). So who is right? The verdict is for Fielding, when we focus on the phrase ‘by this time.’ *Past and Present* was published in 1843, at which stage Carlyle remained deeply ambivalent about Peel. By proceeding carefully through the *Collected Letters* we can see that Carlyle’s attitude towards Peel fluctuated between hope and despair, but with the latter sentiment uppermost until 1845.

At first, Carlyle tended to lump Peel together with Lord John Russell as typical modern day politicians, better at talking than doing. Thus, writing to his mother at the end of Peel’s first, brief Ministry, in May 1835, Carlyle deplored the way politicians of all persuasions were insisting that the condition of the poor was improving. ‘It seems to me the vainest jangling, this of the Peels and Russells, that ever the peaceful air was beaten into dispeace by.’ (*CL* 8:117). When Peel returned to office in 1841, however, Carlyle showed prophetic ability in predicting that Peel ‘will perhaps try to *abrogate* these insane Corn-Laws (if the people do but agitate sufficiently), to institute Emigration-arrangements, Education-arrangements; &c &c...’ Writing to Monckton Milnes, on 2 December 1841, he responded to his friend’s observation that Peel was a man of ‘*real talent*’:

Pray heaven it prove so. If he be a man of really great talent, it seems clear to me he will endeavour somewhat as I say...But alas! alas! If he be, on the other hand a mere red-tapist, and cunning Parliamenteer,... he too will...be flung out like rubbish, as the rest have been. (*CL* 13:311)

Early in 1842, the omens were not looking good. On 9 February Peel announced a *reform*, and thus continuance, of the sliding scale by which the Corn Laws were levied. Four days later, Carlyle wrote in despair to Thomas Story Spedding:

For the last three months I have charitably been supposing that in the Rt Hon. Sir R. Peel...there might lie some elements, long concealed, of a great man; at lowest, of a rational man, meaning something by becoming Tory Minister, not meaning nothing.

He speaks; and audibly calls himself Windbag, pitifullest pettifogging Quack; ignorant that God's Universe stands on anything but electioneering majorities and Parliamentary "cases well dressed up." (CL 14:42)

A few months later, Carlyle's tone had softened. On 17 June 1842 he wrote a vivid pen-portrait for his mother, having heard Peel speak during his first (and last) visit to the House of Commons.

Poor Peel, he really is a clever-looking man: large substantial head; roman nose, massive cheeks, with a wrinkle half-smile half sorrow on them; considerable trunk and belly, sufficient, stubborn-looking, short legs; altogether an honest figure of a man... (CL 14:206)

But five weeks later, writing to T. S. Spedding, he branded this 'honest figure' a 'Cagliostro,' Carlyle's synonym for the ultimate quack and fraudster. (26 June 1842. CL 14:209). Further epistolary abuse followed on 19 August, when Thomas wrote to Jane, at a time of Chartist disturbances in Manchester:

I have actually uttered a *forbidden* curse on Graham, Peel & Co, and feel that one's blood cannot *continue* cool at sight of men shot for famine – not, in these times, by these men. (CL 15:31)

So, as we reach 1843 and the publication of *Past and Present*, the weight of evidence in the correspondence does establish an affinity between Peel and Sir Jabesh. This is not quite to say, however, that the one 'is' the other, in the way that Disraeli was 'Dizzy' or the 'Hebrew Conjuror.' If we recall the Sir Jabesh chapter, we are presented with a cluster of political types, all of them in the Cagliostro mould. Peel was the most prominent politician of the day, and thus the prime suspect.

At this stage, in 1843-44, the figure in public life most admired by Carlyle was Lord Ashley. At least he was trying to *do* something to alleviate the most oppressive working conditions. In Book Four, Chapter 6, of *Past and Present* Carlyle names him directly, and with honour, for doing good work and, in the process, postponing the ruin of his Order. Peel suffered even more by comparison with the heroic figure who was then occupying so much of Carlyle's thoughts. Writing to his mother on 31 May 1844, he eulogised Oliver Cromwell, a man 'altogether incredible to the poor sneaking sponges and beggarly Peel – Russell and Company...' (CL 18:59)

The real turning point in Carlyle's attitude to Peel came in December 1845, when the news broke that Peel had finally resolved to make an end to the Corn Laws. In a doomed effort to hold his party together, Peel tried to soften the blow by talking of a phased process and incorporating it in a wider programme of tariff reduction, consistent with previous budgets. The Tory protectionists were not deceived, and nor, much more positively, was Carlyle. He judged the deed, not the words. Writing

to Alexander Scott, he observed:

There is really something brave in poor Peel. His actions point all or mostly towards truth; and his words – we will call them *meaningless*; a thing intended for the Morning Papers and the 27 million Blockheads merely. (5 Dec.1845. *CL* 19:74)

Carlyle repeated this view to Monckton Milnes at the start of the new parliamentary session: ‘*Vivat* Peel, - poor Peel whose words are usually false, but whose acts have real truth in them!’ (4 Feb. 1846. *CL* 20:117). At the end of the session, Carlyle correctly predicted to his mother that Peel would be replaced by the Whigs, as soon as Repeal was enacted, although he was wrong in expecting that Peel would soon return to office. He never did, for the rift with the bulk of his own party proved irreconcilable, and he was prepared to sustain, but not join, the Whig Ministry. Two days after this letter, Carlyle wrote directly to Peel himself, enclosing a copy of the second edition of his *Cromwell*. He made the linkage quite overt:

The authentic words and actings of the noblest Governor England ever had may well have interest for all Governors of England...But by and by, as I believe, all England will say, what already many a one begins to feel, that whatever were the spoken unveracities in Parliament, - and they are many on all hands, lamentable to gods and men, here has a great veracity been done in Parliament, considerably our greatest for many years past; a strenuous, courageous, and manful thing...(19 June 1846. *CL* 20: 211-12)

Peel responded in kind, expressing his personal gratitude and acknowledging Carlyle’s ‘exertions in another department of Labour, as incessant and severe as that which I have undergone.’ (*CL* 20:212 n.). Eventually the two men met at dinner on 18 March 1848, through the friendly arrangement of the hosts, the Barings. Carlyle has left two full and vivid accounts of the evening, one in a letter to his mother (*CL* 22:275) and one in his Journal (qtd. Froude I, 433-4). Both versions confirm the very high regard, personal and public, in which Carlyle held Peel. His great hope, in the next two years, was that Peel would return to office and resume his good work. Indeed, if ever Carlyle aspired to change his role as ‘brain-worker’ for a position actually in the public service, this was the time, and Peel would have been the leader. His high hopes were expressed in the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, particularly *Downing Street*, published 1 April 1850, and *The New Downing Street*, published on 15 April. The closing words of the second recall the great ‘veracity’ of Peel’s repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846:

Yes, and I believe England in her dumb way remembers that too. And ‘the Traitor Peel’ can very well afford to let innumerable Ducal Costermongers, parliamentary Adventurers, and lineal representatives of the Impenitent Thief, say all their say about him, and do all their do. With a virtual England at his back, and an actual eternal sky above him, there is not much in the total net-amount of that. When the master of the horse rides abroad, many dogs in the village bark; but he pursues his journey all the same. (171)



It really was by the cruellest of ironies that Carlyle's metaphor was to be confounded. On 29 June 1850, when riding an unfamiliar horse on Constitution Hill, Peel was thrown when something startled the animal, which fell on top of him and crushed him. He died of his injuries on 2 July. Peel and Carlyle had only just cemented their friendship: at dinner with the Barings in late May, followed by an invitation to Peel's house in Whitehall Gardens on 13 June. Now, barely a fortnight later, Carlyle took a forlorn walk to that same house, wherein Peel's body lay. As Jane told her cousin Helen, 'MrC is mourning over him as I never saw him mourn before.' (4 July 1850. *CL25:113*)

The door to public administrative service by Carlyle, if it ever stood open, was now firmly closed. If we wish to explain the evolution from the, granted, anti-democratic, but still purposeful *Latter-Day Pamphlets* to the shrill pessimism of *Shooting Niagara* (1867), the place to begin is with the death of Peel.

Political historians generally agree that the true heir to Peel was his ablest lieutenant, W.E. Gladstone. The rift of 1846 left Gladstone out of office along with his leader, and moving ever further away from his early characterisation (by Macaulay) as 'the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories.' It would still be another twenty years before Gladstone formed the first of his four Liberal administrations. The ensuing spate of reforms became (or, at least, once were) a standard theme of British political history. Anyone who chooses to delve deeper, by reading some of the splendidly-edited *Gladstone Diaries*, is likely to emerge feeling both humble and exhausted. The energy revealed there is quite staggering. Carlyle told each one of his readers to 'Know thy Work and do it.' No C19th prime minister excelled Gladstone in that. Did he, then, become a Carlylean hero? Sadly no, and it is worth exploring why not.

In the early years there are glimpses in Carlyle's letters of a cautious admiration for the young Gladstone, despite his High Church allegiance. Meeting Gladstone for the first time, on 13 April 1838, in company with Monckton Milnes, Carlyle recorded him in his Journal as 'a young man whom I like.' (*CL 10:66n.*) He remained positive in February 1839, when writing to tell R.W. Emerson that Gladstone had quoted from the American sage in his book, *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838). 'I know him for a solid serious-minded man,' wrote Carlyle, 'but how with his Coleridge Shovel-hattism he has contrived to relate himself to you, there is the mystery. True men of all creeds, it *would* seem, are brothers --' (*CL 11:25-26*). In 1842, in his despairing letter about Peel to T.S. Spedding, quoted earlier, Carlyle added, 'Except perhaps there be some hope in Gladstone, Conservatism...is rushing swiftly to its ruin...' (13 Feb. 1842. *CL 14:42*). Later that same year, however, writing to John Sterling, Carlyle's sentiments were more mixed. (Gladstone was by

then Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and soon to be President.)

I read, the other day, half an hour in Gladstone; a most methodic, fair-spoken, purified, clear-starched, *sincere-looking* man. How the human Soul can swathe itself, in formula within formula, like a very Egyptian Mummy, and still flatter itself that it is alive, - may be alive, for commercial and some other purposes! It is to me a rather melancholy spectacle; in which, however, I discern great benefit too.' (CL 14:240)

Gladstone, too, had uneasy feelings about Carlyle, as he confided to his diary on 21 June 1849: 'Dined at Ld Ashburtons: Carlyle was there in the evg & spoke very painfully about religion, and I must add in a manner the most intolerant.' (*Diaries* 4:131)

The year 1852 found Carlyle and Gladstone on opposing sides through the latter's seeming wilfulness in pushing for an exiled Neapolitan lawyer to succeed J.G. Cochrane as chief librarian at the London Library. Carlyle initially thought Lacaita to be 'an interesting man,' but increasingly came to believe that he ought not to be given preference over 'superior' native candidates. Engaging in counter-lobbying against Gladstone, he wrote to several interested parties: Lord Lyttelton, John Forster, Arthur Helps, and James Spedding. To Helps he lamented that Gladstone was leading in his candidate 'over the belly of both Rhyme and Reason,' (CL 27: 113), while he urged Spedding to 'turn the heart of that Senacherib from plundering the people of the Lord!' (*ib.* 115). Spedding found an alternative candidate, W.B. Donne, who prevailed over Lacaita by 12 votes to 4, at the committee meeting on 12 June. Carlyle's contribution on the day extended to pressing the matter to a formal vote. Reminiscing to William Allingham, in 1875, he clearly relished his victory over such an eloquent opponent, with Gladstone playing 'Valentine' to his 'Orson.' (Allingham, 236)

Gladstone had rather less need of the London Library than did Carlyle, for he was already well into assembling the 30,000 volumes that were to form the core of the personal library that he bequeathed to the nation: St. Deiniol's Library at Hawarden. Gladstone's diaries, recording his reading, prove that these volumes were acquired for use rather than ostentation, and Carlyle's works figured substantially in his collection. An even closer testimony to his engagement can be found in the pencilled marginalia to some of the books. Gladstone used a set of symbols which historians had roughly de-coded from common sense, but which are now much more precisely known thanks to the discovery of his annotation key by Ruth Clayton, while researching her doctoral thesis. She published the key in *Notes and Queries* for June 2001.

Gladstone's silent dialogue with Carlyle was particularly intense when reading *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, in September 1841. Carlyle's observation, in Lecture I, that, 'We see men of all kinds of professed creeds attain to almost all degrees of

worth or worthlessness under each or any of them,' drew from the devoutly Christian Gladstone a 'ma,' denoting a reservation. The claim that, 'No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men,' was marked with a vertical line, meaning worthy of notice. The assertion, in Lecture II, about the Book of Job, 'There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit,' attracted a firm 'NB.' Two remarks about Mahomet provoked diverging responses: disagreement when Mahomet's creed was called a better kind of Christianity than the theological wranglings of the early Christian sects, positive notice when it was contrasted favourably with Benthamism in its view of man and his destinies. Carlyle and Gladstone both revered Dante, and the Dante lecture attracted several approving marginal lines. Elsewhere, the two were at one in their deep admiration for Homer, but differed over Goethe. Indeed William Allingham records a reminiscence of Tennyson that Gladstone claimed Carlyle 'never forgave' him for this.(Allingham, 336). Carlyle's praise of Napoleon, in Lecture VI, for perceiving Democracy to be 'an insuppressible Fact' and for interpreting it as 'the career open to talents,' drew from Gladstone the acute query, 'but is this *democratia*?'

In this final marginal exchange, we find one of the issues on which Carlyle and Gladstone were to move so far apart: democracy. Paradoxically, at this early stage, it was the Tory Gladstone who was wondering whether democracy and meritocracy were synonymous. To find a sea-change in his thinking, we have to move briskly forward to the 1860s and the American Civil War. When it began, Carlyle and Gladstone were broadly agreed in *not* accepting the simplistic view of a virtuous Union bringing salutary correction to a rebellious Confederacy. Carlyle suspected the motives of the northern plutocrats, while Gladstone caused a stir when he declared that the leaders of the South had 'made a Nation.' As he was by then Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's Whig/Liberal administration, there was concern that the British government might be going to recognise the Confederacy as co-belligerents. It did not happen, and as the war went on, Gladstone's sentiments towards democracy became considerably warmer. He was doubly impressed by the perseverance of the Union forces and by the self-sacrifice of Lancashire textile workers, who were prepared to endure the consequences of the Union blockade of southern cotton exports.(The real story was actually more complex, but this was how Gladstone saw it.) So Gladstone emerged from the war committed to the cause of extending the franchise. He ceased to be MP for Oxford University in 1865, and instead came 'unmuzzled' upon the electors of South Lancashire. After some bewildering parliamentary manoeuvres, urban artisans were enfranchised by Disraeli in 1867, prompting Carlyle's dire warnings in *Shooting Niagara*. It was Gladstone, however, who triumphed in the 1868 general election. The story of how he was brought the telegram summoning him to form a government, while felling trees at his Hawarden estate, was once the sort of thing that 'every schoolboy knows.' What such schoolboys never knew, but was acutely spotted by David Bebbington, was that

Gladstone's copy of Carlyle's *Heroes* included a passage marked near the end with a vertical line:

Among the Northland Sovereigns, too, I find some who got the title *Wood-cutter*; Forest-felling Kings. Much lies in that...I suppose the right good fighter was oftenest also the right good forest-feller, - the right good improver, discerner, doer and worker in every kind; for true valour, different enough from ferocity, is the basis of all.

Bebbington suggests that wood-chopping gave Gladstone 'a way of identifying with the working man that he carefully exploited.' (Bebbington, 292). It was certainly the case that legions of pilgrims came away from Hawarden with almost as many wood chippings as once composed the true cross.

The more that Gladstone became 'the People's William,' the less patience Carlyle had with him. So when Carlyle was wintering at Mentone in January 1867, and Gladstone, returning from Italy, paid a courtesy call, Carlyle left this jaundiced impression in his Journal: 'a man ponderous, copious, of evident faculty, but all gone irrecoverably into House of Commons shape – man once of some wisdom or possibility of it, but now possessed by the Prince, or many Princes, of the Power of the Air.' (Froude II, 335). Gladstone's Irish policies, for example, designed to reconcile Irish Catholics to British rule, were dismissed by Carlyle as sops to the Romish Church (Froude II, 365 and 423). They did find themselves on the same side in opposing Disraeli's policies on the Eastern Question in 1876-78 (discussed below), but in general the gulf was simply too wide between Carlyle's authoritarianism and unorthodoxy, and Gladstone's self-identification with the will of the people, compounded by fervent Christian piety. The latter trait aroused Carlyle's deepest suspicions. He would have agreed with Henry Labouchere, who remarked that he did not object to Gladstone's always having the ace of trumps up his sleeve, if only he would not pretend that Almighty God had put it there.

For a good indication of what Gladstone thought of Carlyle, we can turn, finally, to the *Quarterly Review* for July 1876, where Gladstone reviewed G.O. Trevelyan's life of Macaulay. Noting that Macaulay disliked Carlyle's works and was disinclined to read them, Gladstone observed that the two writers actually had a good deal in common, both in their strengths and in their weaknesses:

Both are honest; and both, notwithstanding honesty, are partisans. Each is vastly, though diversely, powerful in expression; and each is more powerful in expression than in thought. Both are, though variously, poets using the vehicle of prose. Both have the power of portraiture, extraordinary for vividness and strength. For comprehensive disquisition, for balanced and impartial judgments, the world will probably resort to neither; and if Carlyle gains on the comparison in his strong sense of the inward and the ideal, he loses in the absolute and violent character of his oneness...Carlyle is at least a great fact in the literature of his time; and has contributed largely, in some respects too largely, towards forming its characteristic habits of thought. (Gladstone, *Gleanings*, 287-8)

Anyone reading *The Times* in January 1838, when Carlyle's influence on 'habits of thought,' and his unique mode of expression, were only just beginning to be felt, might have wondered whether they were reading a fresh effusion, or merely the homage of an early acolyte. A writer with the pen-name of *Coeur de Lion* began a series of ten homilies under the heading 'Old England,' from 3 January. The first opened by addressing John Bull. Was he asleep? In a trance? It was time to awaken.

Remember what the great Prussian said, old iron-hearted Frederick, when affairs were very desperate, though his salvation was nearer at hand than he deemed it: - "After seven years of struggle, all parties began to know their own position." You, too, have had your seven years' war, John...and the great question has not yet been answered, "How is the King's Government to be carried on?" Great question of a great man! True hero-question, prescient, far-seeing, not easily answered by common men. And now other questions arise, not less great, not more easily responded to, and not asked by heroes, but by common people...Reformed Parliament has not answered them; Reform Ministry has not answered them; town councils have not answered them; New Poor Law has not answered them; justice to Ireland has not answered them; colonial conciliation has not answered them; St. Stephen's is dumb, and Downing Street is dumb; and Castle of Dublin and Castle of Quebec, both are dumb...Yet answers must be found to both - to hero question and national question. You see, John, you must really wake.

The series continued on 6 January with a warning to John Bull to distinguish between 'a true nation-cry and a sham nation-cry.'

Then come a new cry and a new name, like a new quack medicine. Dr. Eady is worn out, then try Dr. Morison. "Public Opinion" is discovered to be a hoax, then try "The People." If "People," with all their irresistible powers, turn out, after all, to be but a very drastic dose of gamboge, then heigh! for animal magnetism and "The Masses."... Papineau orators in the House of Commons quote Masses...Papineau writers out of Parliament concoct articles in reviews...about the Masses...Glory to the Masses; choice, generous phrase! By no means inert or cloddish; specially complimentary. What, if said Papineau orators and writers, by some mischance of a lapsus linguae, or damnable error of the press, do but omit the initial letter of that name wherewith they have defined, and in a manner baptized, their countrymen? And may not the next stage come even to this? - First - Public; Second - People; Third - Masses; Fourth - Asses? ...O England! O my country! Shall I live even to see this? Shall I live to see thee even governed by the Asses? Rise Aristophanes, rise from thine Attic sepulchre, here is theme only fit for thee! Our long-eared Government, braying in all quarters, filling Downing Street with their melodious song...

Who was *Coeur de Lion*? Several of Carlyle's friends thought he was the author. He of course knew better, but not as well as he imagined. Writing to his brother Alec

on 10 January, he professed having had ‘a loud laugh’ over the parodies, and named the culprit:

‘It is that dog Thackeray...he I am persuaded and no other: I take it as a help and compliment in these circumstances, and bid it welcome so far as it will go.’ (CL10:6) A month later, Carlyle realised his mistake, recording in his Journal, ‘*Coeur de Lion* in the *Times* newspaper, who some thought me, proves to be Ben d’Israeli, they say. I saw three of his things, and thought them rather good in the grotesque kind.’ (Qtd. CL 10:6n.)

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Disraeli flattered Carlyle more seriously in the novels he wrote during his ‘Young England’ period, especially *Sybil* in 1845. The similarities to (and differences from) *Past and Present* would require a separate paper to explore. A summary quotation from a recent study must suffice. ‘Their analysis is offered not as a mere resistance to change...but as an active force *for* change - an attempt, through writing, to influence and shape the course of English social history.’ (Ulrich, 171). As for the third novel in the set, *Tancred* (1847), Carlyle described it in a letter to Robert Browning as ‘(readable to the end of the first volume), a kind of transcendant spiritual Houndsditch...’ (CL 21:241)

That final epithet, with its allusion to East End Jewry, raises an awkward question: did Carlyle’s anti-semitism, particularly regarding Disraeli, go beyond the conventional insensitive stereotyping? Fred Kaplan is inclined to be charitable, noting that Carlyle admired the Old Testament patriarchs, while deploring the materialism and anachronistic orthodoxy of modern Jews. Insofar as England was tending to mirror these same defects then, yes, it was grimly appropriate to Carlyle that a Jew should become prime minister. (Kaplan, 526-7). If we look at the references to Disraeli in the *Collected Letters* for 1852, however – the year when Disraeli became Chancellor of the Exchequer – it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Carlyle manifested a degree of personal prejudice that went beyond the conventional, even allowing for the private format. (See CL 27:52, 57, 72, 123, 365, 368. Also CL 28:111). Not that Carlyle was shy of referring publicly to Disraeli’s ancestry. When, in a virtuoso display of parliamentary manoeuvring, Disraeli in 1867 carried through an enlargement of the franchise that Gladstone had *failed* to enact, Carlyle gave his own jaundiced view in *Shooting Niagara*.

A superlative Hebrew Conjuror, spell-binding all the great Lords, great Parties, great Interests of England, to his hand in this manner, and leading them by the nose, like helpless mesmerised somnambulant cattle, to such issue, - did the world ever see a *fleBILE ludibrium* (pathetic farce) of such magnitude before? Lath sword and Scissors of Destiny; Pickelherring and the three *Parcae* (Fates) alike busy in it. This too, I suppose we had deserved. The end of our poor Old England (such an England as we had at last made of it) to be not a tearful Tragedy, but an ignominious Farce as well! (*Shooting Niagara*, 11)

In 1874 Disraeli's true moment came, when he won the general election. A series of much-needed social reforms ensued, including measures to facilitate slum clearance, build artisans' dwellings, and improve public health: the very kind of administrative intervention that Carlyle had urged in the 1840s. It would appear that he was prepared to back his words with money, now that he had some. A letter in the National Library of Scotland, from John Aitken Carlyle to Thomas, on 7 March 1875, observes:

As to the proposed investment of money for the dwellings of the poor which Shaftesbury & Forster approve of, I should be ready to make some investment beyond what we have already made. You & I have only £300 each in it; & it seems to be well managed so far as I am able to judge. (MS 1775 F, fol.138)

As Prime Minister, Disraeli was now able to confer, or withhold, public recognition upon the venerable Sage of Chelsea. He appears to have done both. At least, William Allingham noted in his diary for 27 May 1874: 'The post of Historiographer Royal for Scotland was "about to be offered" to Carlyle, but the attack on Dizzy in *Shooting Niagara* put a stop to this. So C. told me today.' (Allingham, 233). True or not, there is no doubt whatever about Disraeli's offer of the GCB and a pension to Carlyle in December 1874. It is a tale too familiar to require re-telling (see Kaplan, 525-6), but reflected great credit on Disraeli's magnanimity, as well as a less lofty wish to honour someone so notably antipathetic to Gladstone. Momentarily it softened the old curmudgeon, but when Disraeli's policy on the Eastern Question in 1876-78 seemed to risk a repetition of the Crimean War, Carlyle took the same side as the resurrected Gladstone. In two strongly-worded letters to *The Times* (28 November 1876 and 5 May 1877) he inveighed against the government's pro-Turkish and anti-Russian stance. In the first, he adopted Gladstonian phraseology, urging that 'the governing Turk, with all his Pashas and Bashi Bazouks, should at once be ordered to disappear from Europe and never to return.' Speaking privately to the journalist James Macdonell, Carlyle branded Disraeli 'a cursed old Jew, not worth his weight in cold bacon.' (Nicoll, 379). For all the distastefulness of such remarks, there is no good reason to dissent from the received opinion, going back to Froude and currently with Kaplan, that Carlyle generally saw Disraeli as the preferable of two deeply-flawed politicians. At least there was the toughness that had prevailed over early adversity, and a clear-eyed self-awareness, in contrast to Gladstone's seeming humbug.

Carlyle died in February 1881: Disraeli in April. In the intervening month Froude published the *Reminiscences*. As early as June, the *New York Tribune* (as reprinted in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* for 14 June) noticed the contrast between how Carlyle was revered in his life, but was now being reviled, whereas Disraeli, so often slandered in life, was now being praised for his human qualities. The bubble reputation was taking its inconstant course.

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## SYLLABUS 2008-9



### CARLYLE SOCIETY: PROGRAMME FOR 2008-9

Oct 11 2008	Ian Campbell:	On the <i>Reminiscences</i>
Nov 1	Ian Deary:	Intelligence and Civilisation
Nov 6		Scott Club/English Dept lecture
	Stuart Kelly	Scott and Satire (Advocates' Library Edinburgh, 1715))
Nov 22	Thomas Green:	Thomas Green lecture
		Tom Toremans Carlyle and the Rhetoric of Romanticism, followed by 2008 AGM and pre-Christmas party.
24 January 2009	Malcolm Ingram:	Carlyle and Opium
Feb 14 2009	A L LeQuesne:	Carlyle and the Crisis of the 1840s
Feb 28	Linda Dryden:	On Conrad
March 14	David Sorensen:	Carlyle and Darwin

MEETING HELD IN 11 BUCCLEUCH PLACE, EDINBURGH on Saturdays,  
1415-1600 All welcome. Details from Ian.Campbell@ed.ac.uk

Enquiries should be addressed in the first instance to  
the President at the Department of English Literature  
The University of Edinburgh  
David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JX

Enquiries can be made by fax to 0131-650 6898; or by electronic mail to  
Ian.Campbell@ed.ac.uk