

**THE  
CARLYLE SOCIETY**

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## President's Letter

With another year's papers we approach an important landmark in Carlyle studies. A full programme for the Society covers the usual wide range (including our mandated occasional paper on Burns), and we will also make room for one of the most important of Thomas's texts, the Bible.

2012 sees a milestone in the publication of volume 40 of the *Carlyle Letters*, whose first volumes appeared in 1970 (though the project was a whole decade older in the making). There will be a conference (10-12 July) of academic Carlyle specialists in Edinburgh to mark the occasion – part of the wider celebrations that the English Literature department will be holding to celebrate its own 250th anniversary of Hugh Blair's appointment to the chair of Rhetoric, making Edinburgh the first recognisable English department ever. The *Carlyle Letters* have been an important part of the research activity of the department for nearly half a century, and there will also be a public lecture later in November (when volume 40 itself should have arrived in the country from the publishers in the USA).

As part of the conference there will be a Thomas Green lecture, and members of the Society will be warmly invited to attend this and the reception which follows. Details are in active preparation, and the Society will be kept informed as the date draws closer.

Meantime work on the *Letters* is only part of the ongoing activity, on both sides of the Atlantic, to make the works of both Carlyles available, and to maintain the recent burst of criticism which is helping make their importance in the Victorian period more and more obvious.

Our thanks, as ever, to Lifelong Learning for its hospitality. This year we look forward to devoting one of our meetings to the importance of such work – an area where Carlyle's publications and influence have been central for many decades.

Ian Campbell  
President  
August, 2011

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## John Aitken Carlyle, Lynchpin of the Carlyle Family

Jane Roberts

John Aitken Carlyle lived most of his life alone, married for only two years, and even in that time never setting up a family home. Instead he spent his time travelling, living in lodgings, visiting friends, and making prolonged stays with his brothers and sisters. The lack of a family of his own left him free to involve himself in the lives of his relatives, and so he became the lynchpin of the family; he was the one who kept contact with all the others, who travelled about between them, who passed on everyone's news, who advised the younger generation. He was sometimes rather bossy and opinionated, and sure of his own rightness, and he liked being the person in the know, the one that the others turned to for advice. The very fact that his siblings usually referred to him among themselves as "The Doctor" seems significant, to give him a certain status. Much of what we know about him comes from *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, and much of it is unflattering "for he often irritated Thomas and Jane: by doing well financially while not subscribing wholeheartedly to the Carlylean work ethic; by being dilatory, indecisive and mean; and even by having squeaky shoes. In her later years Jane called him 'an insufferable bore.'"<sup>1</sup> But I have found him a much more sympathetic character than that often described by Thomas and Jane. This paper aims to illustrate some of John's family relationships, concentrating on the late 1850s and early 1860s.

John A. Carlyle was born in 1801, six years younger than his brother Thomas, the same age as Jane. He was the only one of Thomas's siblings to receive the same level of education as himself, and so became the one with whom Thomas could most easily share his intellectual thoughts and interests. Thomas loved all his brothers and sisters, but John was his closest friend, and whenever they had been together, however much they may have irritated each other, Thomas always talks of feeling very lonely when they part.

Thomas never ceased to value John for his good qualities: "I know that

you have great pride combined with great bashfulness; a vehement, resolute heart, under shew of the great irresolution; and the truest love under an atmosphere of incessant contradictions” (TC-JAC, 4 June 1827. *CL* 4:230).

“He has a boundless affectionateness; this is his great quality. Manifesting itself too at times in strange ways, as in humorous frolicking...and as a genuine inexhaustible fund of bonhomie...How different from me; how much happier and better!”<sup>2</sup> “We are Brothers in the old good sense, and have one heart and one interest and object, and even one purse; and Jack is a *good man*, for whom I daily thank Heaven” (TC-RWE, 27 June 1835. *CL* 8:155).

“He is the old fellow throughout: the same childlike kindliness, brotherly frankness and love, the same *fluistering*, and *winged* incoherence of words; he has made me laugh more, one way and the other, than I had done for years.... A good fellow, as ever broke this world’s bread; whom we must just let alone to go his own way, and be what he cannot but be” (TC-AC, 16 May 1836. *CL* 8:346).

“There is not one of us so capable of finding interest for himself, out of next to nothing, as he.... He is far the *happiest* of the family I do believe; and it would be so easy for a grumbling discontented unhealthy nature to pick holes without and in the life he has had. I often look at him poor fellow, and his head (six years younger than mine) now old and utterly grey, with a tender and wondering feeling. He has a great deal of superior intellect running waste, and yielding no adequate crop at all; that is the worst if it: but that is nothing like the worst of *bad*s in this world, among the outcomes of human lives!” (TC-AC, 29 Aug. 1855. *CL* 30:49-50).

Jane however was not so generous about him: “If he does not choose to practice his profession or do any but study his own bachelor comforts and *eat the dinners which Carlyle declines*—for that seems to be the principle on which he is invited out—‘since we cannot get Carlyle we may always have his *brother*,’ one may *regret* that a man of some talent—and certainly without any *vice* should so waste himself—but he is not a child that he should be lectured for it” (JWC-JW, [12 November 1843]. *CL* 17:174).

John several times put forward the theory that Jane’s ailments were the result of her having “nothing to do” – which she naturally found highly objectionable: “He told me yesterday, ‘Could I give you some agreeable

occupation to fill your whole mind, it would do more for you than all the medicines in existence” (JWC-Eliza Miles, 15 July 1833. *CL* 6:410-11).

“He has been very hard and cruel—and mean inconceivably!... Fancy his telling me in my agony yesterday that ‘if I had ever DONE anything in my life, this would not have been! that no *poor* woman with *work* to mind had ever had such an ailment as this of mine since the world began!!!” (JWC-TC, [23 July 1864]. MS: NLS 608:636).

John studied medicine at Edinburgh University, financed by Thomas, and graduated in 1826. He then spent 2 years abroad doing further medical studies. On his return to London, he found that without capital he could not set up a medical practice, and so he became a travelling physician. John always loved literature, as well as medicine, but Thomas, as he did with everyone, seriously dissuaded him against becoming a writer. John wrote medical articles for magazines, he published a translation of Dante’s *Inferno* in 1849, with a revised edition in 1867, and in 1861 he edited the posthumous *History of Scottish Poetry* of his friend Dr Irving, adding notes and a glossary.

He read broadly in English, Latin, French, German and Italian, and in 1863 was learning Swedish and Danish. “Far from being indolent, Dr Carlyle was a perpetual student.”<sup>3</sup> Margaret Oliphant met him in 1860 and later remembered: “Dr Carlyle...I found surrounded with huge books. . . . My recollection of him is of a small, rather spruce man, not at all like his great brother.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1878 he endowed £1600 to found two medical bursaries in his name at the University of Edinburgh. He died at the home of his sister Jean in Dumfries, in 1879, and was buried in Ecclefechan cemetery, where Thomas later joined him.

As a travelling physician he was very well paid, and so he emerged at the end of that period, in the early 1840s, having paid off all his debts, and with plenty to live on.

In 1852 he married Phoebe Watt, a wealthy thirty-eight year old widow with four sons, whom he had apparently already known for some fifteen years. She gave birth to a premature stillborn child on 26 August 1854, and died herself a few hours later. John was appointed guardian of her sons.

The Watt boys were 16, 15, 14 and 12 when their mother died. Thomas wrote to his brother Alick about John in 1855: “Poor fellow, he makes a *business* out of guardian-ing these poor Boys (to which post he has been appointed by Chancery, with plenty of money); he writes, travels etc. etc. and fills his time, to some satisfaction, with it.... Today...he is leaving Scotsbrig; bound by rail towards Edinburgh and Leith, where he takes Steamer for Hamburg in Germany. The eldest of his Boys...is in some kind of rigorous disciplinary School in Hamburg, having been a *baddish* boy at one time, and in violent quarrel with his Mother, owing perhaps to misguidance mainly: he is now doing much better...and Jack is going across to have a personal survey of his affairs and him” (TC-AC, 29 Aug. 1855. *CL* 30:49-50).

Tom Watt seems to have continued a troubled soul, a “strange crazy mortal” (TC-JCA, 27 Jan. 1861. *CL* 37:104). In a letter to his nephew James in 1860 John wrote: “It is a sad thing to be born with such deep-rooted tendencies to lunacy as he inherits from his father” and continues, “you will easily conceive how I am bound to silence in regard to that tendency to insanity” (JAC-JC jr., 19 March 1860. MS: NLS Acc. 9086.4).

Henry, the second son, was already at sea when his mother died, and apparently made a success of this life, as he is listed as a shipowner when he registered his wife’s death in 1908. Various mentions of him through the years indicate that John felt he was getting progressively “more sensible.” He even considered enlisting his help in finding work for his nephew James: “Henry Watt has called to day & says he is going to take Scotsbrig on his way South. It has sometime struck me that he might be able to help you to some occupation in Liverpool, now that he has got so much more common sense than he used to have” (JAC-JC jr., 16 April 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Henry married the daughter of John Hunter in 1863; John wrote to his nephew James:

“Henry Watt is engaged to be married 8th April next to Miss Hunter of Craigcrook. Her father is an old friend of Gordon’s & mine, & is Auditor of the Court of Session. The courtship has lasted some three years—more or less—Miss H. is about 18 months older than Harry, & is a very well educated clever girl. I was not directly consulted in the matter by either party, & was rather surprised to hear of the success. It may be the means of giving Harry the quiet sobriety he has



had so much need of” (JAC-JC, jr., 24 Feb. 1863. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

The two younger boys were still at school. In 1856 Thomas wrote to his sister in law Isabella Carlyle: “The Dr was here last night; very well: and wholly busied with his three Wards,-or rather with Two, for the Sailor [Henry] one is fairly sent away some days ago, and sailing towards India now. A second [Arthur] goes off today towards Ayrshire, there to be boarded and taught till Winter and Edinr-College come. The third [William] is for Switzerland, thro’ France: and with him the Doctor sets off, some day this week.... The three ‘Boys’ will all be happily in their places for some good while coming, and a little out of people’s way in the interim” (TC-IC, 21 July 1856. *CL* 31:131).

William was going to a pre-military school in Vevey, Switzerland, and later went to the Royal Military College in Woolwich. Here he did not always behave himself: “Last week I was kept in a state of painful uneasiness by news from Woolwich, & perhaps I may have to go to London this week. On the 12th (Saturday fortnight) William Watt was ‘guilty of drunkenness,’ & was put under arrest & reported to the Duke of Cambridge who is Governor of the Royal Military Academy; & on the 17th he ‘broke the arrest & absconded himself,’ & was again reported. The Duke’s sentence for the first offence was only ‘rustication’; but now for the two offences combined the sentence is ‘dismissal’.... It is a bad business, & I dont yet see any remedy” (JAC-JC jr., 27 April 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

He did however manage to extricate him, and Thomas wrote to congratulate him:

“I was very glad to hear that you had succeeded in that military Watt business; it was more than I expected; and it will be very satisfactory to you,--and the *saving* of the poor young foolish creature, if he can now learn to be wiser, as there is some chance of his doing” (TC-JAC, 4 Dec. 1862. *CL* 39:1).

By 1866 William was an officer in the Dragoons, and married a Miss Smith from Jersey.

Tom meanwhile, having been a sailor, went to Australia, and on his return died quite unexpectedly of a brain haemorrhage in July 1862.

Arthur continued at school in Edinburgh, living in lodgings, and then took the “competitive examination which is to last through nearly three weeks” (JAC-JC jr., 25 June 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5) for the civil service. He failed

initially; John wrote to James: “I expect Arthur by the 8.40 train this evening from the South, & but for him should have started yesterday or today for Dumfries, only he requires consolation after his failure, though he stood high among the rejected candidates & is every way likely to pass next year if he keeps in health” (JAC-JC jr., 23 Aug. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Arthur did become a civil servant, and was married by 1870.

Although John never had his stepsons living permanently with him, he maintained responsibility for them, worried about them, often had them staying with him at Scotsbrig during holiday times, and was always there to help when the need arose.

John Carlyle also maintained communication with many of his nieces and nephews. He took a particular interest in his niece Jenny after her mother, Isabella, died when Jenny was 16. As the only daughter, she was expected to take over the household management. In March 1862 John heard that she was ill, and wrote to her brother James: “I am sorry to hear that Jenny is unwell, & I wish you had said what she is suffering from. I hope She will soon get better, & I shall feel obliged by your telling me at once if she gets any worse” (JAC-JC jr., 13 March 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Two weeks later he wrote: “I was glad to hear that Jenny had got better, but I should like to hear if she is now going on well. The weather is very trying for any one that is ill just now” (JAC-JC jr., 23 March 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Then in a letter to Thomas in August he wrote: “Whenever I get to Scotsbrig I set about contriving remedies for Jenny’s room. It is now all *stoothed* [lath and plastered] & papered, a good large tent bed has been put into it, instead of the close wooden one, & the upper sash of the window is hung so as to admit fresh air in small or large quantities. The bed is as big as yours, & like it curtained all round. Due ventilation will now be possible, & the papering will keep the room dry. The old arrangement had gone on too long & made poor Jenny quite unwell. I hope she will speedily recover: the worst symptom was vomiting after breakfast, evidently owing to bad air during the night” (JAC-TC, 7 Aug. 1862. MS: NLS 1775B.234).

A month later he wrote to James: “I came across to the Gill on wednesday with your father, to see how Jenny was getting on. We found her much better, &

she intends to stay till monday. The disease she had at Scotsbrig was mumps at first, & mismanagement of diet &c. confined her to bed & made her much worse than she would otherwise have been. She is not strong, but might keep well or at least out of confinement to bed, I think, if she took proper care.” He then goes on, very kindly:

“One cause of languor & tending to illness lies in the discouragement she must feel from never having got things in the house at Scotsbrig put into any order resembling what her Mother used to keep; & yet she seems quite capable of accomplishing that if she were duly seconded by your Father & John; & would find the greatest comfort in it if it were done & kept done. I spoke to your Father on the subject & he will try what he can. Perhaps I ought also to have spoken to John. To Jenny herself I found difficulty in doing any thing farther than merely hinting at the defect & its remedy. She is very good & affectionate, & had an excellent training; but has hitherto been too young for managing servants effectively, & seems to have had no assistance of a steady sort from anybody, & she is very thin-skinned and sensitive” (JAC-JC jr., 12 Sept. 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

John also helped his niece Margaret, by lending her new husband the money to buy his own farm. He sent the money to his sister Mary, Margaret’s mother: “I now enclose a £50 cheque for Mr Stewart which he may get paid at Annan next thursday. I send it to you for I don’t know exactly how to address a letter to himself. He can have the remaining £200, which I offered to lend him, whenever he chooses the sooner the better I should say. Of course he will understand that I shall look for strict repayment of the whole whenever he is able to repay it; & I should say about £10 a year for the £250 would be fair interest. I am glad he has got the farm to himself. He seems to me a clear-headed, skilful, diligent young man & is likely to do well” (JAC-MCA, 11 Nov. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

There is a large amount of extant correspondence between John Carlyle and his nephew James, son of James Carlyle at Scotsbrig. James had worked as a clerk in Glasgow, but had come home because of ill health. He wanted some kind of outdoor work, and had been looking for a farm to rent, with no success. John was tireless in his efforts to help his nephew find work. In November 1860 he wrote to

Thomas:

“Young James of Scotsbrig was here last week to look after a kind of partnership ‘in the wholesale spirit trade,’ & staid one night with me; but his project came to nothing. Farms are very difficult to get just now, & his Father thinks they are letting above their real value; & that was the cause why he looked out again for something else. I am glad he gave up the idea of that spirit trade at least” (JAC-TC, 22 Nov. 1860. MS: NLS 1775B.267).

In June 1861 James asked his uncle for advice on a farm being let on land owned by a family called Jardine. John replied: “I have received your letter of yesterday, & will give you what suggestions I can on the subject, without delay.... There is a very great fall in grain &c. this week owing to that mad American war; & no one can foretell what distress it may cause even in this country, so it is necessary to be cautious in taking farms—as you yourself remark. / Your offer to expend £800—which must be borrowed money—on lime, seems to me decidedly imprudent & uncalled for: I advise you to modify this part of your offer. The Jardines are people who have plenty of money & can always do what is required for their own land. By expending £800 in lime at the very outset, one binds oneself to the farm...whatever turn things may take. I, for one, would not venture so large a sum on any land belonging to such people as the Jardines—who seem to be guided in letting, as well as in buying their land, by mere commercial views” (JAC-JC jr., 14 June 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

That farm was let to someone else. The next farm James was interested in was at Galson on the Isle of Lewis: “Yesterday forenoon [I] had a conversation with Mr McDonald the result of which I send you on a separate sheet. I see nothing for it unless you take the farm and assume me as a managing partner who will put £500 or £600 into the concern... The farm of Galson is situated about 18 miles from Stornoway. It consists of about 15,000 acres of moor and moss (past capable of improvement) and about 500 acres of arable land.... The arable land is very fertile and capable of growing all kinds of crops.... McDonald feels sure the farm will be let ‘a bargain’ to some one as the Proprietor is heartily sick of holding farms in his own hands” (JC jr.-JAC, 17 Sept. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

John replied: “My opinion is that there would be great risk for you in venturing on so large a concern, & in a place so far off & so new to you in all ways, more especially as you have so little practical experience in the details of

farming. Galson I find on my map, is at the extreme N.W. corner of Lewis. In no circumstances could I undertake the lease myself, for I could not now stand the anxiety & tear & wear of such a concern” (JAC-JC jr., 18 Sept. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

However two days later he reconsidered: “I feel that I know almost nothing of farming & may have made a mistake in regard to it. I have seen so many failures in the course of my experience that I perhaps take too dark a view of most projects. *Wd* your father go with you to see the place if I paid the expenses? Has *he* any hopes of its turning out a good thing? Let me know what your father says about the whole matter generally; & whether he is to be here next Tuesday or Wednesday” (JAC-JC jr., 20 Sept. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

James replied: “My Father thinks it extremely probable that Galson will be got very cheap, but how to raise the necessary capital for renting a place of its size is of course the difficulty with him. If we were to go and look at it we should require to be in a position to offer verbally for the place if it were thought well of.... My father is anxious to go and see the place and owing to the peculiar circumstances he thinks this a chance not likely to occur in a hurry again – only as before mentioned there is the money matter.... If we go to Lewis we must go on Monday week. The time till Martinmas [11 November in Scotland] is now sufficiently short” (JC jr.-JAC, [21] Sept. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

John replied: “Your letter came today, & I shall hope to see your Father here on Wednesday & have some more talk with him about Galson. My first opinion of it has not changed at all, & the main object of a journey of your Father & yourself to see the place & circumstances, if you undertake such, will be to get materials for enabling me to change that opinion.... One must *not* rush into so complicated a business without taking time for consideration! I have sent the documents to your uncle in Chelsea, asking him what he thinks of the project, & whether he would be ready in any circumstances to advance the half of the £1800 you need for its execution; & I hope to have his answer by Wednesday’s post, so as to show it to your Father” (JAC-JC jr., 23 Sept. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Thomas’s reply to John was not encouraging: “Never having heard of that strange Isle-of-Lewis Adventure till now, nor having at present any leisure to consider it, I can only say that it looks very wild and dangerous indeed. A miserable drowned Country, cut off from all the world.... My notions, however,

in this sudden hurry, are positively worth nothing in regard to the practical affair: but I can say at once that I have at present no such sum as £900 or anything resembling it which I could conveniently disburse” (TC-JAC, 24 Sept. 1861. *CL* 37:237-38).

No more was heard of the Galson project.

The next possibility was a job in Mauritius. John’s friend James Currie came home on a visit from Mauritius in November, and John asked James if he might be interested in a job out there, although he himself was doubtful: “I could not see my way to ask him any thing about the possibility of your getting work there if you wished to go; & indeed the first thing would have been to know whether you had any desire to go. Judging by the details I got from him about the management of the coolies & the estates on wh they labour, I did not see the prospect of getting genial work out of doors. So I said nothing about you” (JAC-JC jr., 29 Nov. 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

However there was a meeting between John and James and James Currie, after which John wrote to James: “Unless Mr Currie of his own accord returns to the subject of Mauritius—which is perhaps very unlikely—I shall say nothing more about it to him. Apparently he has made money enough there by sore work during nineteen years, but has also injured his health—for which no amount of money can be a compensation. And he is now under the necessity of going out again, & exposing himself to fresh dangers in the hot climate. I do not remember what he said in talking of Mauritius Law & Lawyers; but I noticed nothing in it that could have any relation to you, though I saw you setting all your hair on end with alternate right & left hands at the time it took place” (JAC-JC jr., 15 Jan. 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

More farms were looked at, and decided against, and then it seems that James thought of going back to clerking.

John wrote in February 1862: “This morning your letter has come, & I am glad to hear that your own views now coincide with mine in regard to what one ought to aim at for you. Some years ago I might have got you a situation as a clerk in some London or Liverpool house, but you had given me the idea that it would not be worth your while to accept such a thing, & up to this date you have never said or done to me aught that could remove that impression—which of course was painful to me, for I detest all swaggering or pretension in young men

& think it always dangerous for themselves. It is a real comfort to me to think that I misunderstood you then, & can now agree with you in all that you say respecting the kind of employment we ought to seek for you” (JAC-JC jr., 20 Feb. 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Two days later he wrote again: “When one has to treat of serious matters, it is much better to write in a simple & clear style & avoid all attempts at irrelevant smartness.... In this world it is much easier to fail than to succeed. I do believe you would succeed in anything you had made yourself fully master of; for you have many sterling good qualities & would be sufficiently zealous & industrious & prudent, if you had a fair chance.... It is to me most painful to find fault with you in any respect. Recollect this at all times. Continue to take as good care of yourself as possible” (JAC-JC jr., 22 Feb. 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

The following month he wrote: “Some time ago you will recollect I mentioned Mr Gordon’s name. Last week he told me he had spoken about you to Mr Wallace, ‘chief manager of the Bairds of Gartsherrie & a very influential man about Glasgow.’ Mr W. desired to know what qualifications you had, & what kind of situation you aimed at; & promised to use his best influence in assisting you with his friends in the West. I did not at once write to you on the subject, for I did not see my way clearly; & now I decide to ask yourself, who know Glasgow &c much better than I do, whether any thing can be made of Mr Wallace’s offer” (JAC-JC jr., 23 March 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

John advised: “Some occupation, partly out of doors, partly in, wd of course suit you best; but in your place I should rather make trial of any moderate in-door occupation than lie waiting in idleness which is the most unwholesome of all things” (JAC-JC jr., 19 April 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

James was offered a probationary position in the office at the Ironworks, and John advised him to accept: “The project of farm management can stand in the background meanwhile.... If you want any money, I shall be ready to supply you” (JAC-JC jr., 2 June 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

However quite soon there were problems: “You dont specify what sort of illness you had on the monday, so that I am left to painful conjectures alone. Perhaps smoking too much may have made you ill with depression of spirits, perhaps too much confinement & anxiety in the office. Take care of yourself & do not make yourself miserable whatever the result of the probation may lead to. Something else will be found, if you fail with the Bairds. It seems already pretty

clear that you cannot stand the confinement of the office; & if the Baird you speak of seems an unreasonable man you had perhaps better keep clear of any permanent engagement with him” (JAC-JC jr., 27 June 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5). However James continued to work there, in the Ironwork offices, hoping that something better would come along.

In August John wrote: “I can do little more than remind you that you have yourself to blame if you have all your time at command & can contrive no occupation whatsoever for yourself at Gartsherrie. At lowest you get *paid* for waiting ‘in a *perfect* state of idleness,’ which is more that you could look for elsewhere.... I think you might ask Mr Wallace when you see him again what the prospects are of your getting employment at Ury [a farm belong to Mr Baird, where James had hoped to become Factor]—&, if you chose, you might also ask whether you might not as well wait for the decision at Scotsbrig *without pay*, since there seems to be no chance of your finding anything permanently suitable at Gartsherrie.... Let me soon hear again from you; & write as simply & as precisely as you can not when ‘just leaving the office’ in a hurry, & without attempting any picturesque smartness” (JAC-JC jr., 28 Aug. 1862. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5). Eighteen months later James was still waiting.

John then wrote to an acquaintance of his, John Hannay, Factor to the earl of Fife and Banff, asking for advice on getting James a job as a farm Factor, but nothing came of this, and six months later James was still at Gartsherrie, and increasingly unwell.

In June John wrote: “I am sorry to hear that you have had another spitting of blood, & that neither Mr Wallace nor Whitelaw have been able to induce Mr John Baird to stir in the matter that concerns you. I have all along had an idea that nothing but the inertia of Mr Baird had hindered you from getting the appointment you had been lead to expect. One would think Mr Wallace & Mr Whitelaw might find you some occupation such as you seek on some other of the large estates of the Bairds; & perhaps they will endeavour to do so. I don’t think we have any right to blame either of them, for the inertia of Mr John Baird could not have been expected to last so long & I believe they sincerely desired to get you the employment you want. One thing is clear at any rate, viz. that your health will not allow you to take any permanent place in their Ironwork offices; & this, I think, should be respectfully & calmly stated to them with perfect distinctness. And at the same time you might state what employment you have all along hoped for



or looked forward to; & so let them do what they think best in the matter. There would be no use in complaining even if one had just cause to do so. Take time to consider if you choose, & make your statement to them brief & clear” (JAC-JC jr., 21 June 1864. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

James wrote to Mr Wallace and resigned, and went back home.

Although in his letters to James, John maintains that he knows little about farming, his letters to his relatives contain a great deal about crops, prices of lambs, harvesting, and other farming details, so even if he himself had little practical experience, he obviously kept himself up to date on the issues that affected his brothers and sisters. He wrote often to them all, and they obviously all wrote to him, and he always reported to each the doings of the others. And many of his letters end with requests for information about the health and welfare of family and friends. When letters from his brother Alick in Canada arrived, he copied them out and sent them around his other siblings so as to ensure that everyone was kept up-to-date.

Thomas also constantly called on John for help in a variety of ways. While deploring the fact that John had no work, or career, or home, he had no compunction about taking advantage of this state of affairs, apparently assuming that as John was “unemployed” he had nothing better to do than run errands for Thomas.

In 1859 Thomas and Jane decided to go on holiday together, and investigated possible houses in Fife.

Thomas wrote to John: “In the meanwhile some Miss Liddel or other set Jane thinking about a ‘Farm House with Lodgings,’ close by the sea some 4 or 3 miles from Auchtertool;—which looked, and still looks, rather seductive. Maggy has been giving account of it,—of *it*, and of some Furnished Mansion close by the Manse, ‘which is not to let now, but can be had’ (I do not well understand how),—in considerable disrepair, as to furniture, I guess. My notion about the whole matter is very dim; and perhaps you, if you have a day of leisure, could throw light on it to me,—going over to Auchtertool, looking pointedly into everything with your own eyes, and reporting upon it candidly. The Farm House and its capabilities seems to be the really promising matter: if the essentials there were

satisfactory, little Charlotte (who is an excellent clever little creature, & looks well after Jane) could cook, clean &c to the wholesomest perfection; and with my Horse there (which I should bring up in a steamer, and certain Books), and a little pony or ass for Jane (or a Bath-chair, if there be *roads*, and be a procurable man to draw it); with these and other attainable &c we should probably get a great deal of good of the Forth Sea-water and fine sea-sands and pure air, in summer weather and on country diet. In case you *should* be able to go (which I have no right to expect either) I will ask you to take an approximation to a foot-rule with you (stick *notched* to the length of a yard, for instance), and to tell approximately what the dimensions of the several rooms are,—*height*, length, breadth,—what kind of furniture, what &c &c; above all what kind of people. Whether they would take Care of one's Horse; furnish unexceptionable farm-produce (butter, eggs, fowls, milk), and be reasonable to live with. I mean my Horse to fill his insatiable belly with grass (nothing can equal his appetite for it just now). . . . / The delicacies of *sleeping*, question of cocks &c &c, all these and other such points you are alive to, without hint needed. In short, exercise your judgement and your eyes; and *say what* result they yield. / I have been interrupted... Jane, at dinner, read to me a new Letter of her Cousin Maggie's which gives a much more precise account of matters. So that, if it should be inconvenient to you, do not mind this Commission at all: most likely I shall have to come down myself, and take my luck of the thing" (TC-JAC, [? June 1859]. *CL* 35:106-7).

John obviously did go and look, as a few days later Thomas wrote: "Many thanks for your prompt attention, and for the lucid account you have managed to send. This is a real help to me at present; and, in the dismal, importunate and thrice-hateful chaos from *without* (beside all the chaos from *within*) which this business of flitting has caused me, I had need enough of help!— To Jane it rather emphatically appears, and to me too in a less emphatic manner, that probably the Paterson Establishment in the *village* of Aberdour will be the eligible thing. Most clearly a better *lodging* (the other indeed questionably dingy and stuffy in this respect): the only things that give me pause, are 1° *grass* for my horse (I want him to go at unlimited grass, for health's sake, with 2 feeds of corn daily), and 2° the 'unlimited command' (or quasi-unlimited, one's fancy thinks) of Farm-sustenance, milk, eggs, chickens! / So or not so, I cannot stand this wild jumble of dubieties any more; but will and do instruct you to end it for

us, by *closing with the Paterson offer* on Wednesday next (whether you go over in person again or not, whether you hear again from me or not), pray signify to Mrs Paterson that we take her apartments: *first* of July (or it may be last days of June) to August for certain; we ‘intend’ (you can say) to stay 3 months, perhaps more if it suited. / Wednesday come a week (if the wind is to *west*, at least!) I think of starting, Horse & Charlotte and luggage with me, in the Edinburgh Steamer,— Wedny *26th* 10 a. m., which I think brings one to Leith Friday forenoon:—there I should see you most hopefully!” (TC-JAC, 11 June 1859. *CL* 35:110).

Two days later Thomas wrote again: “I have got your Letter; and no doubt you have, by this hour of the day, got mine. On reflecting farther, the ‘farm-produce question’ (about *unlimited* grass, milk, whey &c, a dietetic essentiality for horse and self) assumes additional importance; and I foresee you will have bother upon it in the Paterson case, and probably bother without complete *success*: we have also heard testimony just now, of an emphatic tenor...about the dreadfully ‘relaxing’ nature of Aberdour Village: ‘a pit of a place, backed with heights and rocks; roasts you to nothing,’ &c &c:—so that, on the whole, the *final* figure of the thing is this: *Give up* Paterson’s altogether; answer ‘No’ there, as you pass on Wednesday; and go on to *Humby*, and engage that: £1 per week; week *beginning* 2 days after that ‘*second* Wednesday by Steamer’ already described (which I *now* count to be ‘Friday evening *24th*,’ not being well provided with Almanacks!),— term from week to week... In fine you might ask whether there is any ‘Linen & Plate’ required *there*, and if so ‘Approximately what?’ Or you *need not*, if you happen to forget!— / Finally you must make yourself ready to go across with me (if you handily can) that Friday evening when Charlotte & I arrive at Leith Pier (if we are so lucky): the grandson Boy may have some kind of cart at Burnt-Island for Charlotte & the luggage; you & I can ride time about on the Horse.... / Forgive me, dear Brother; I shall grow *stronger*-minded again, had I a dip or two in the sea. But you discern what I mean & what to do.——

Jane had ‘written to Maggy’ (Saturday) to ‘give up Humby’;—that of course... you *revoke*, and declare null and void” (TC-JAC, 13 June 1859. *CL* 35:111-113).

And a few days later: “Many thanks for your finishing of that Humby business: it is an ugly burble now all neatly winded up; and there is an end to scheming and uncertainty. I make no doubt we shall do very handsomely till

August 6<sup>th</sup>; to me it is a great additional point that you are always within hail (as I hope), and that we may contrive to be a great deal together while one's poor old tabernacle is trying to refit itself a little by sea-bathing and country appliances!— / It will be very pretty to see your face on the Friday morning to breakfast, if all have gone right! You must calculate on going across to initiate me, and on staying there till Jane come” (TC-JAC, 16 June 1859. *CL* 35:114-15).

John's reply to this is full of information about ships and other travel particulars.

Thomas, Charlotte, horse and dog travelled on 22 June, and Jane was due to arrive several days later; Thomas wrote to John: “Two Notes from Jane came this morning; of which this inclosed is evidently the later, & contains her final determination: I have just written to say I comply with it in every respect,—and that she must make for your Lodging, during the three hours or so...she will have to wait in Edinburgh. I should not wonder if you were in waiting personally at the train,—tho' that is not necessary! If so, be good and soft with her; you have no notion what ill any flurry or fuss does her,—and I know always how kind your thoughts are (and also *hers*, in spite of any flaws that may arise!)— I will be in waiting at Burnt-Island from about 3½ p.m. You *need* not *come* across with her, I should think, at all at all; tho' perhaps you will, if she don't *peremptorily* object. There will be some scrap of dinner for you here, among the rest of us; and return at 8 p.m. from Burnt Island, if so.— Here are 2 articles wanted.

1°. One bottle good *sherry*; there is a stock coming from Leith, but *none* to start with...and possibly you may know of a *surer* shop than the Burnt-Isld Inn will be

2°. A *sixpenny walking-stick* (hooked, that will at once *hang itself* up,—peeled oak or the like, *not* weighty, light rather). Also, a small slip of *cane* (with hooked end, that too) for a riding switch (Mary used to get them at Annan, price 1 penny!)—an important order.

3°. Two *egg-spoons*, bone, the cheapest clean sort.

4o. A bread-rack (black wire, *painted* black,—I will give it to Mary when done with here).

5o. Halfpenny worth of *sprigs* (kind of *nails*, for fastening the sashes of these windows; I sent to Aberdour, but got too *short* a kind;—bring yours the length of the first joint of your finger.)” (TC-JAC, 27 June 1859. *CL* 35:128-29).

While they were staying in Fife, the brothers saw a lot of each other, and Thomas continued to ask John to do things for him: “I cannot think of coming tomorrow to Edinburgh; it *puddles* the whole mind of me, and is unpalatable to human indolence and diligence alike! Pray call at the Shoemakers as you pass, and bid him send the shoes as at first intended.... The only *nice* way of seeing us here, and having some talk together would be that *you* came across by Leith at 7 a.m., found us at breakfast here, dined, spent the day &c, and returned at 7,—on Saturday next? This is the real plan” (TC-JAC, 5 July 1859. *CL* 35:133).

“I have lost the curb-*chain* of my bridle (always losing something!)—I think it must have gone in the swift riding in the Park the day *before* you were here; had I remembered to write to you last night, I might have looked for a new one (3*d* carriage) tomorrow morning. As it is, I believe you are my promptest chance.— Pray go to our old saddler, and state the case. As my bridle is *old*, quite near its *end*; you may [buy] the *most* secondhand chain he has; otherwise a new one, *whh* I think costs only a shilling. You can *look* also at his Bridles, and ask the price: I need not take this one back with me” (TC-JAC, 11 July 1859. *CL* 35:144).

“The *Stamps* came, prompt & right, on Saturday morning; the Coffee, Saturday night (excellt stuff, as I can testify on two trials),—the carriage was 5*d*, as I find all parcels now are; 2*d* to him of the Wallet, who indeed deserves something. The best will be that you *bring* us over whenever you come a do of coffee (if you can be bothered with it),—the ruinous expense of Carriage may thus be evaded, if it cannot be borne!....

If you pass *Mackintosh* Shops, can you look whether there is such a thing as a *Mackh Cape* (of any promise,—a good roomy thing, to button round one’s neck and flow over the body in riding),—or in fact what *Mackh* resources there are for the rider in wet weather?— Don’t mind it *much*” (TC-JAC, 18 July 1859. *CL* 35:149-50).

John replied: “I have enquired today about Capes; & enclose the address where they are to be had, together with weights and prices. ... Of course I tried on the Cape & the two coats. The coats have slits behind, so that they would probably fall down the legs in riding, as far as the Cape would” (JAC-TC, 19 July 1859. MS: NLS 1775B.184).

Thomas wrote: “I suppose I must have one of those Capes; but it will be the safest course to come personally over, and fit it myself. I want new pairs of

shoes, I want various things,—money one of them;—lazy as I am, I shall have to get on board some morning soon. Meanwhile, you, I hope, will come over again Friday or Saturday: that is always the easiest plan for my loitering self!— / I also want £25, notes 15, and 10 sovereigns. Can you bring these over from *yr* Edin Banker, and I will give *you* a draught in return?” (TC-JAC, 20 July 1859. *CL* 35:153-54).

“The shoes have arrived today (carriage *6d*), and all is right there. Good tight shoes; *whh* I think will be very easy, were they broken in. They *are* a little tighter over the instep (just about the right thing there, tho’ on the edge of being too tight, tell our man): about the *breadth of the soles* I will say nothing farther, tho’ I think they *cd* stand with advantage a paring *more*, on the old terms, in that part. The *leather* ties are too thick,—very dirty to handle, too, for the present;—but silk or other strings are easily attainable.—On the whole, thank our man (as he well deserves) for his care & skill; and pay him his money, please,—with farther notice that I shall want *two pairs* more: one made like the present, only of stuff a little thinner (for riding with, what may be called almost summer boots); and another made in the old-fashioned *shoe*-form, namely with *latchets* (*two* holes in each latchet), and *to come up quite over the instep* (as far as the other kind do, or *as* far as he can manage),—this latter pair to be made of such stuff as those I have just now got. Tell him farther that I hope he can *send* these latter two pairs *direct to London*; if delivered in Cheyne Row *abt* the end of Septr they will do very well; and I will pay (you can add) so soon as they are on my feet. And bid him not mislay the last, that I may be fitted again when needful! This is all;—and this, in the way of bother, is about enough, I *shd* think” (TC-JAC, 18 Aug. 1859. *CL* 35:172-73).

“I wish you wd learn for me, at the Caledonian-Railway *Office*, or otherwise, what the hour &c for a Horse to Ecclefechan is: my next grand adventure must be getting anchor lifted from this place; and *it* will need to be well meditated beforehand, in wakeful mornings!” (TC-JAC, 22 Aug. 1859. *CL* 35:174).

“It appears there is a supreme Woollen Drapery Shop, ‘Paterson & Romanes,’ somewhere on the *Nth* Bridge (?): if you happen to be passing tomorrow, and *wd* shew him that fraction of very *worn* cloth,—and ask him for a specimen or two, the nearest he *cd* come? In *colour* and in *suppleness* (fineness

of wool), it *w'd* suit perfectly for a dressing-gown and jacket,—*whh* I *cd* get constructed at The Gill as I pass, if *material* were ready. Don't mind it much at all, for it is intrinsically not importt:—but if you do call, you may ask also for a specimen or two of *thick* 'winter-coat' stuff (dark-coloured, *supple*, these are the qualities)... On the whole, I fear you will do no good with this lefthanded 'Drapery' commission: fling it aside altogether, till I come myself, if that seem the wisest to you!" (TC-JAC, 25 Aug. 1859. *CL* 35:181-82).

"Thanks for the kind trouble you took with the Draper people, tho' you were in haste! It will at least save me the trouble of calling there; and admonish to *give up* the Scotch tailor speculatn, London being evidently the handier place to get clothes in. / I know not whether this will still find you at Scotsbrig tomorrow: You might at least run over to The Gill, to Dumfries, and return with some definite impressions. I always hoped somehow you were to be within reach when I came to that Country myself,—tho', on considering, I must own I do not see with any clearness how the feasibilities do lie! If you can so contrive it, of course it *w'd* be pleasant to me: but I know not whether you can.— At any rate pray consider my case, and *investigate* somewhat the cases of Scotsbrig, of The Gill; how they are forward with Harvest, how &c &c, in fact, what (without over-straining) their real capabilities for me are. Consider what I can do, and what they; and *when w'd* probably be the suitablest time. I can come off any day.... Point out for me, if you can, *what* time might be suitablest for the Annandale Localities and friends" (TC-JAC, 29 Aug. 1859. *CL* 35:183-84).

John replied to Thomas the next day from Scotsbrig: "I have received your letter of yesterday & read it to Jamie. He 'will be glad to see you here as soon as ever you can come'; & I think the sight of you will do him good as my coming has done." He went on to give him various train times, and then said: "if you want to see me in Edinr you should start this week, & I could return with you to Scotsbrig—say on friday or saturday—& stay a few days here along with you.... Everything is ready for you" (JAC-TC, 30 Aug. 1859. MS: NLS 1775B.205).

Thomas then replied: "Your Letter has just come to me,—in the hours, I suppose, while you are coursing back towards Edinr again. I must take things more *leisurely* than your rapid Program indicates: I had not any notion, nor have at present a good possibility, of starting *this* week; my view was always loosely directed upon 'the end of *next* week;'—and that, I think, will be soon enough for

me. / What little is in some sort definite about my journey Southward... lies in the following points: / 1°. That about the end of next week, scarcely *sooner*, was to be my time of quitting this, as above said. / 2°. That I did not (on practically considering it) wish that you *shd* be at Scotsbrig during the time of my week or few days there: it *wd* be better I imagined that you were there while I was at The Gill, so that we might meet as often as we liked, and be in nobody's road, &c. I know not how this *cd* be well settled;— / 3°. That I have not the least notion of pausing with anybody, except on busses, in Edinr;

Perhaps, before quitting Edinr, Saturday or when you like, it will be better to come over hither, and *quietly* stay all night, during *whh* we can settle everything” (TC-JAC, 31 Aug. 1859. *CL* 35:185-86).

Even John had his limits, and he wrote somewhat stiffly from Edinburgh: “Both Jamie & I got the idea from your letter of monday (which we read over more than once), that you were quite tired of Fife, & might wish to leave it this week; & I therefore [said] that you could be received at Scotsbrig to-morrow, or on any subsequent day, with perfect convenience, either with or without me. I have my rooms here till Monday next, & I should have liked to give you any assistance possible, & came back here partly to do what I could in helping you through the bother of crossing & of starting. I certainly should not have been able to do much that cannot as well be done by letter; & so I don't mean to wait through next week on the chance of your coming then. Better keep yourself altogether independent of my plans, as we do not meet at Scotsbrig.... I hardly think I shall be over in Fife again just now. I get no sleep for one thing in a strange bed” (JAC-TC, 31 Aug. 1859. MS: NLS 1775B.208).

Thomas had the grace to apologise: “I know not well what I wrote to you last time, such a flurry and hurry was I in; and yesterday... I had not the fair opportunity to write at all, as I intended. My genl notion was that there *wd* not be *room* for us both at Scotsbrig, that we *shd* be in one another's way &c &c: most of *whh* seems to be a partial or complete *mistake* of mine. You are very good to let the *thrown* mortal do as he will, *witht* snarling at him! You may look for me [tomorrow] betn one & 2. To return by the last boat there is; you with me if you will volunteer... there is really no difficulty *abt* giving you a perfectly good bed, four-poster & room as big as mine, and quiet as quiet can be!” (TC-JAC, 2 Sept. 1859. *CL* 35:186).



John not only helped Thomas with running errands and railway timetables, he also accompanied him on journeys.

In 1860 Thomas went to stay with Sir George Sinclair in Thurso Castle, and John went with him on the journey. After they had parted Thomas wrote to his sister Jean: “Poor fellow, he was very good to me, and really very useful and comfortable all the way; and it was a grievous sorrow to me...to roll away from him, so far from home partly for *my* sake, on Saturday in the rain!” (TC-JCA, 6 Aug. 1860. *CL* 36:162).

Thomas even got John to go and look up his old school friend Jean Otthenin, now living in Edinburgh. John then visited her fairly regularly, sending Thomas reports about her and her children. She too obviously liked him, writing to Thomas: “Your Brother left this, yesterday for Dumfriesshire for ten days; I count on him with his gaiety to enliven our little society this winter” (Jean Otthenin-TC, 23 Dec. 1862. MS: NLS 666.84).

Often John was shamefully taken for granted. In 1863, having given up hope of being able to visit the Ashburtons because of Lord Ashburton’s illness, Thomas decided to go on holiday with John. However at the last minute there was a change of plan. Jane described the scene to Lady Ashburton: “You have seen children building card-houses; as eagerly as if it were houses to live in? and you have seen, as some push against the table, the *Houses* become a shower of cards? With just such an absurd suddenness and completeness, did your letter yesterday morning sweep down the schemes of travel, which Mr C and his Doctor-Brother had been building up and hithering and thithering amongst, for the two preceding days.... / We were sitting at breakfast, which, to judge from the look of the table, consisted mainly of pocket maps and Bradshaws, with a supply of which my Brother in law *always* surrounds himself; and for the twentieth time Dr C had just urged on Mr C that, ‘say what he liked, to sail to Jersey would be the most feasible thing, OR to—*Denmark!*’ and Mr C had just detailed the superior advantage of ‘taking a look at Orkney and Shetland’—or ‘perhaps better, after all, sail to Plymouth, and go on by land to Froude’s; tho’ it *would* be a nicer thing a cruse round the—Western Isles!!!’ the only point of agreement between them being that they should

start for *somewhere* tomorrow;—when your letter was brought in, which, when I had read it in silence, I handed to Mr C, who, having read the first page, said quite simply, ‘Oh! that is all right! We are going to the Grange Sir.’ ‘And you won’t *sail* anywhere?’ ‘Certainly not! I tell you we are going to The Grange’! I could hardly help laughing, as the *Dr* swept together, in an indignant manner, his aids to locomotion!” (JWC-Lady A, [19 Aug. 1863]. *CL* 39:175-76).

So John was left behind in Cheyne Row while Thomas and Jane went off to the Grange. Thomas hoped John would still be there when they got back, but John did not want to stay alone in London for long. He wrote: “Let us hope that we may soon meet again, though there is no immediate prospect of meeting. I feel rather melancholy here in the solitude & with the new servants, & have nothing more to do in London. But I have been pretty well all along in my week’s solitude. I have dined out every day, have taken no brandy or supper, have slept pretty well, have had James Aitken twice or thrice to tea &c &c” (JAC-TC, 31 Aug. 1863. MS: NLS 1775B.262).

He had decided to visit various friends on his way north: “I start tomorrow at 11.20 a.m. & ...I shall probably stay...with Mrs Hostage till Thursday morning; then go on to Bury to stay over Friday. I also have an invitation to York from a Lady...whom I knew long ago in Italy; but I have not decidedly accepted it, for I rather feel afraid of going into strange houses. So I may perhaps go on to Dumfries by some of the Saturday trains, & get done with moving for a time. Had I felt sure of your returning to Chelsea within any reasonable time I might have waited, as I have plenty to do with my Icelandic &c. But it is clearly necessary for you to get as much of the country air & quiet as possible after your long struggles” (JAC-TC, 31 Aug. 1863. MS: NLS 1775B.260).

Jane may have been his greatest detractor, but he never grudged her his help when it was needed.

When she was ill in 1864, and she and Thomas took a house in St Leonards in the hopes that the sea air would help her recovery, John came to stay with them, and it was he, not Thomas, who took her driving every day. And when she wanted to go to Scotland it was he who accompanied her. And once there, while she stayed with the Russells, he stayed with his family in the area,

visiting frequently, consulting with Dr Russell over her treatment, and eventually bringing her back home to London. And all this with no apparent thanks, but many complaints.

On their arrival in London from St Leonards he wrote to Thomas from his lodgings in Brompton Row: “Jane stood the journey quite easily and pleasantly.... I am to call and see [her] at ten o’clock or eleven in the forenoon. I hope to get some sleep as I am in my old room. Jane thought it unwise for me to go to Cheyne Row” (JAC-TC, 12 July 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.267).

He reported their safe arrival in Scotland, and continued with regular bulletins. When she moved to the Russells’ house he wrote: “I was all ready to go with her to Thornhill, and had offered to do so the previous day, but she thought it better for me not to go, as Mrs R might make a fuss in preparing some formal dinner if I went” (JAC-TC, 24 July 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.273).

Mrs Russell then wrote to Jean Aitken, with whom John was staying: “Perhaps Dr Carlyle (who I suppose is still with you) would come up some day and see how she is getting on. We would be very happy to see him” (Mary Russell-JCA, 27 July 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.291A).

He went a few days later: “First I found Dr Russell in his bank, who told me that Jane had slept moderately well the last two nights, & had just gone out for a long drive with Mrs Russell. We had abundant time for talking over the case in all its details. He has the same general idea of it as the other physicians—thinks there will be most room for hope of amelioration from patient and steady regulation of diet, using simple medicines only when absolutely required—not including any form of opium.

She will have ups & downs at Holmhill as elsewhere; but at no other place will she have so good a chance of getting back to her usual old state of health; for the quiet there is perfect, the kindness of Mrs R unquestionable, and Dr Russell’s patient & firm & quiet skill will help her greatly to keep herself in order & free from such unwholesome rudeness as she has been liable to fall into with her own relations. The doctor wished me to go back on Monday next, & I agreed to go for breakfast by the early train & return in the forenoon” (JAC-TC, 28 July 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.274).

A few days later he went again: “I went to Thornhill today by the first train a little before eight, & staid at Dr Russell’s till near two’oclock. Dr Russell

had wished to give her some medicine at bed-time last night, & I spent most of the time I saw her in trying to convince her that her best plan would be to take whatever he ventures to give her, and without asking him about either name or dose. He knows all the particulars of the case now, at least as far as she herself or I can tell him; & he is most cautious & prudent in giving medicines of any decided power. She knows all this herself even better than I do, & I hope she will see her way in the matter more clearly than she seems to have done yesternight” (JAC-TC, 1 Aug. 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.279).

Throughout her stay there he continued to visit, and discuss her case with Dr Russell, but wrote to Thomas: “Please do not say aught to Jane herself about the reports you get from Dr Russell or me, for that only annoys her” (JAC-TC, 21 Aug. 1864. MS: NLS 1775B.289).

When she was thinking of returning to London, he wrote giving her train times and suggestions for the best way of managing the journey, continuing: “You should allow me to go with you the whole way to London. Now that I have had time for consideration, I should feel very uneasy if you went alone, & in this I daresay *Dr* & *Mrs* Russell would agree with me. I don’t at all care for the fatigue of going on to London. Perhaps I might make a little tour to the Continent in October, instead of returning direct to Scotland; & London *wd* be the place to start from.... Please consider the matter fully, & I shall be most ready to take any plan you think best” (JAC-JWC, 21 Sept. 1864. MS: NLS 608.678).

John was a great traveller, and enjoyed moving from place to place, from house to house, and had many friends. His family constantly lamented that he had no home of his own, that he lived either in lodgings, or stayed with one of his siblings. However he had plenty of money, and could have bought himself a house if he had so wished. In 1857 he wrote: “The thought of getting into some house of my own is hardly ever out of my mind... I believe it *wd* hardly have been possible for me to live *solitary* in any new place even if my affairs had been settled, I do not know that I could stand solitary housekeeping even yet” (JAC-TC, 3 Nov. 1857. MS: NLS 1775B.7).

And Thomas wrote of him at the time: “He does not speak of setting up a House of his own, tho’ now abundantly wealthy for that; seems to keep much at home about Scotsbrig; and to be healthy and contented there. He is a placid

sanguine creature; looking always at the ‘sunny side of his cloud’ (as our dear old Mother used to say);—and has a much more satisfied life than some others of us” (TC-AC, 13 Aug. 1857. *CL* 33:25).

In fact it was John who understood the loneliness that Thomas sometimes felt in his self-imposed isolation with *Frederick the Great*. He wrote to his nephew James in June 1861: “Two days ago also, came a letter from Cheyne Row, stating that matters there were going on as usual. Do you ever write thither? Your uncle would be glad if you sent him some simple details from time to time, as I hear from himself, were it only to remind him of the friends at Scotsbrig; for along with his hard work comes a rather painful exclusion of society. I know your Father would be glad to see him again at Scotsbrig; & it might be well to say so, though he might be unable to come” (JAC-JC jr., 5 June 1861. MS: NLS Acc. 9086/5).

Although he several times looked at houses, he never settled down. I think he would have been too lonely, that without wife or family he did not like the thought of being alone in a house. His wandering life suited his temperament, he could have company or solitude as he liked, and always move on when he felt like it.

His sister Jean, writing to Thomas in August 1864, said: “We are all going on here in a quiet comfortable way. The Dr leads a *very* quiet life sits smoking on the Know top with his Bk & has at all times a table covered with Icelandic Dictionaries &c &c, up stairs. He is not ill to deal with when once the breakfast is over but is really much given to fault finding abt it. What his movements are I know not. Talks of taking possession of the two rooms up stairs ‘whether he occupies them or not’ But still thinks of having ‘a house of my own’ I sometimes feel inclined to tell him that a man turned of sixty shd either take a house of his own or at least give over talking abt it. I shall do my best for him while he is here poor fellow, that is all I *can* do for him. He had had sad want of a *tetherstick* since ever I knew him” (JCA-TC, [21 Aug. 1864]. MS: NLS 1775B.285).

## References

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**The Political and Personal Drama of 1844:  
Jane Welsh Carlyle, Giuseppe Mazzini, and the British Government's  
Secret Opening of His Mail**

Kathy Chamberlain  
The Thomas Green Lecture, 2010

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It is New Year's Day, 1844. The weather has just turned seasonably cold. Jane Welsh Carlyle, back from a snowy walk on Upper Cheyne Row, settles into a corner of the sofa in the downstairs parlor of her Chelsea home, wraps a big shawl around her, and begins taking sips from a tumbler of brandy. She has just started warming up when there comes a rap at the door. Her maidservant Helen Mitchell opens it to find a snow-covered Giuseppe Mazzini stamping his feet on the doorstep.<sup>1</sup> Nodding to Helen, he walks through the entranceway into the parlor, bringing the cold air with him.

A charming thirty-eight year old with dark hair and dark soulful eyes, the Italian revolutionary has a broad pale forehead and oval face made impressive by a full, neatly trimmed mustache. It is the countenance of a sensitive, grave, ascetic monk, though an urbane one—he enjoys a good Swiss cigar. Here in his London exile, he has been living a simple life, giving unstintingly to his political

cause and to anyone he perceives to be in need, rarely using for himself the sums of money his mother has saved up to send him.

He is Jane Carlyle's "first foot," or first guest this New Year's Day. According to the old Scottish superstition, if you like your first visitor, it means good luck in the year ahead. And like him she does. Very much. Tossing aside her shawl, she rises asking, "What on earth could tempt you to come out in a day like this?" Glad as she is to greet her slim elegant friend, clad in black clothing—worn in perpetual mourning for his fragmented Italy—she is disconcerted by the sight of "big drops of sleet hanging from the ends of his mustache." It would be amusing were it not for the fact that he is recovering from serious dental surgery. She worries that he might catch a cold, or worse.

Giuseppe takes a seat near the fire. Jane offers him a glass of wine, tasty figs her uncle's family sent the Carlyles for the holidays, and a fragrant, savory gingerbread that a sleepy Helen managed to bake after attending a party with other servants in the neighborhood the night before. While the family dined in style above, Jane tells him, the servants' guests in the kitchen below "were kept all the time 'washing and *polishing* glasses for upstairs!'" It is clear as he listens to her that the neat, pleasant appearance of his hostess and her quicksilver interest in life's variety hold considerable charm for him. Thomas Carlyle is, at the moment, at work in his upstairs study, tied into knots over the book he is writing on Oliver Cromwell.

Giuseppe and Jane relax into a confiding talk about politics. He trusts her, and freely—some would say incautiously—imparts information that few outside his movement have any knowledge of, including potentially dangerous secrets. He is confident she will keep what he is saying to herself, telling no one but her husband, until matters become public.

Giuseppe Mazzini's commitment to his country goes deep. Unlike most, his personal and public lives form a pliant whole. Because of this unity, he strikes many who meet him as a rare pure spirit. After he leaves her, moved by his visit, Jane writes in a letter to her cousin that he "looked almost dazzlingly beautiful" as he sat in her parlor. This beauty, she imagines, must be "the expression of some inward newfound joy!" She hopes against hope it means things are going well for his cause.





To Jane W. Carlyle  
501. Mazzini A

*Courtesy of Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University*

The year 1844 saw a profound moral and political scandal erupt in England. In its public and private ramifications, it engaged figures as disparate as a German governess, a British Home Secretary, a Scottish housemaid, an Italian revolutionary, and “The Sage of Chelsea.” Central to this telling of the tale is Jane Welsh Carlyle and her friendship with Giuseppe Mazzini.

The Italian hero was liked and admired from one end of the social spectrum to the other in the London of his time, wherever room was made for exiles from illiberal European regimes. Born into a Genoa that had fallen under Napoleon’s rule, he had organized Young Italy, the first Italian political party, in 1831 in Marseilles. In his current exile, he was a leader of the *Risorgimento*, the movement for the unification of his country’s separate political entities. His goal was one Italy, independent of the tyrants and foreigners who ruled its various parts, Austrian influence being paramount.

In London he started a journal, *Apostolato Popolare*, as well as organizations to assist immigrants: a Union of Italian Working Men; schools for adult learners; and La Scuola Italiana, a school for impoverished children, such as the organ-grinder boys, hawkers of plaster casts, and trinket sellers who were common figures on London streets.<sup>2</sup> Friends warned that these overworked urchins would never attend. But when the school opened its doors in 1841, some 200 had enrolled, including ten girls, to Mazzini’s delight. He who had known a number of unusually intelligent, talented women—like Jane Carlyle—believed in the education of women. Supporters of his projects (some gave small amounts of money, others helped out at the schools) included the Carlyles, the popular author Harriet Martineau, John Stuart Mill, Erasmus Darwin (elder brother of Charles), members of the Wedgwood clan, Catherine Macready (wife of the actor), and in time Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, and the American writer Margaret Fuller (Denis Mack Smith 38-39; 45).

Amid the jealousies and jostlings rampant in London’s literary and political circles, Jane Carlyle and Giuseppe Mazzini formed a remarkably affectionate friendship, although they were in many ways opposites. He disliked the ironic stance toward life,<sup>3</sup> when irony was her *métier*. She mistrusted airy ideologies and felt suspicious of martyrdom, whereas he, with his whole heart,

was a self-sacrificing idealist. Yet both were open-minded enough to “befriend” the tantalizing qualities in each other that they disavowed for themselves.

They strolled together in Piccadilly, and along Cheyne Walk in sight of the Thames. They exchanged confidences. In years to come, she would speak frankly to him of quarrels she had with her husband about Lady Harriet Baring (though Giuseppe would not always take Jane’s side); and he would confide in her about women who developed embarrassing passions for him. He mended Jane’s pens. She gave him little gifts and helped in such practical matters as finding doctors when he was ill, housing when he needed to change his place of residence, and translators for his political essays. Jane had, in fact, just commandeered her friend Geraldine Jewsbury into translating from the French an essay Mazzini was writing on Dante. Signaling a rebirth of interest in Dante in the context of the burgeoning Italian patriotism—a desire to link the *Risorgimento* to the country’s brilliant literary past—the piece would appear in the April 1844 issue of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. At odd moments Jane helped out a bit with translation work herself and ran interference with his editors.

This very year Giuseppe Mazzini called Jane Carlyle “the woman I value the most in England” (*CL* 18:230 n. 2). To stave off any alarm his Catholic mother Maria Drago, who remained in Genoa, might have or jealousy she might feel about this close friendship with a married woman, he reassured her by the tone of his description. Four years his senior, Mrs. Carlyle, he said, was “neither beautiful nor plain—tall, thin, vivacious, but with very poor health.” To his mother he also claimed, contrary to the evidence we have from Jane, “I have revealed hardly anything of my real nature to her . . . Some opinions about authors and insignificant matters have been the whole of our conversation.” For her part, because she wished his mother to know that her son did not languish alone in his London exile, Jane sent Signora Mazzini poetic notes in Italian: “I, brought up in the cold and stony North, and never seen by you, even in a dream, I am yet your child.” In a 1958 essay about Mazzini’s friendship with the Carlyles called “The Revolutionary and the Prophet” (from which most quotations in this paragraph are taken), Iris Origo characterized these notes as “garbled Italian.” But in telling his mother “*Giuseppe riconosce per sorella*” (“Giuseppe acknowledges me as a sister”), Jane was able to make her meaning clear. With

Acc 980

[? 14. vi. 44]

My dear my Carly W.

Thank you for your note, and Carly W  
 for his noble and warm-hearted decision.  
 I come just now from the House. The  
 petition for immediate redress and  
 appointment of a Committee to it;  
 : quire has been put off - referred -  
 by the majority. Sir James Graham  
 declared that the thing was perfectly  
 true, but then an old Act of Parlia-  
 ment - I forget the date - empowered  
 a Secretary of State to open letters,  
 with an express warrant. After  
 they few words, he did never utter a  
 jingle word. Darnley, Hunt, Waller,  
 Bowring, and one or two other  
 spoke without getting any  
 answer; they gazed through  
 what special reason they were  
 consulting themselves of the old  
 Act of Parliament: no answer -  
 The dumb majority voted for  
 Sir James Graham, and all was  
 over. Had we not a jingle

spark of life - a single feeling of honour -  
a single instinct of noble idea or aim;  
- pulse throughout the Hoys. within  
two days, the Continental press will  
laugh upon English liberty, and loyalty;  
but no body appeared to think of  
that. we shall see what the  
newspaper of to-morrow will say.  
My only wish was to  
make this thing known, and it is  
fulfilled.

Believe me

ever truly yours

Geo. Mazzini



Letter from Giuseppe (or Joseph) Mazzini to Jane Welsh Carlyle.  
(MS / NLS / 2883.151) Courtesy of The Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

one note, she enclosed a golden brooch containing strands of her hair and his braided together. Mazzini then had to reassure his mother: “rings and hair, which for us are precious tokens, and show the highest degree of love, are here mere tokens of friendship. I only love her like a sister.” Signora Mazzini sent Mrs. Carlyle a ring inscribed with the admonition: “Love the martyr of Italy” (203-04).<sup>4</sup>

Giuseppe and Jane perhaps defined themselves as brother and sister as a way to control whatever romantic feelings they may have had. Elizabeth Fergus Pepoli, married to an exiled Italian count, harbored suspicions about the degree of their intimacy after she caught them, one snowy January day, in “an unusual appearance of discomposure” (*CL* 17:238). But the reason for their flurry of embarrassment, Jane told her cousin, was that she and Giuseppe had been drinking wine. Hearing Elizabeth’s approach, Jane had whispered to Giuseppe to hide the evidence, and he had hastily stowed the wine glasses in the nearest receptacle: her writing desk.

Like many affectionate siblings, Jane Carlyle and Giuseppe Mazzini engaged in intense quarrels. A year before, she related one of these—concerning a scheme she considered mad—to her husband, then visiting his family in Ecclefechan. Writing at a furious pace, she conveys the drama of their dialogue with such intensity you almost hear the two friends shouting at each other across the Cheyne Row parlor, as the pictures on the wall swing in their frames: “[Mazzini] told me quite seriously that a week more would determine him whether to go singly and try to enter the country [Italy] in secret, or—to persuade a frigate now here, which he deemed persuadable, [‘]to revolt openly and take him there by force.’”

In her run-together words describing what he intended to do when—or if—he could gain control of this warship, we hear phrases of his English as she heard him speak it:

‘[A]nd with one frigate said I you *mean* to overthrow the Austrian empire—amidst the general peace of Europe?— ‘Why not? the *beginning* only is wanted’—I could not help telling him that ‘a Harrow or Eton schoolboy who uttered such nonsense and proceeded to give it a practical shape would be *whipt* and expelled the community as a mischevous [*sic*] blockhead!’ He was made

very angry of course—but it was impossible to see anybody behaving so like ‘*a mad*’ without telling him one’s mind—HE a conspirator *chief!*— I should make an infinitely better one myself— What for instance can be mo[r]e out of the *role* of Conspirator than his telling *me* all his secret operations even to the *names of places* when conspiracy is breaking out and *the names of people* who are organizing it?—*me* who do not even ever ask him a question on such matters—who on the contrary evade them as much as possible?— A man has a right to put *his own* life and safety at the mercy of whom he will—but no amount of confidence in his friend can justify him for making such dangerous disclosures concerning others—What would there have been very unnatural for example in my sending a few words to the Austrian government warning them of the projected outbreaks—merely for the purpose of having them *prevented*—so as to save Mazzini’s head and the heads of the greater number at the sacrifice of a few?

When he replies, “‘What do you say of my head?— What are results?—is there not things more important than one’s head?’” she responds, “‘Certainly—but I should say that the man who has not *sense enough* to keep his head on his shoulders till *something is to be gained by parting with it* has not sense enough to manage or dream of managing any important matter whatever’—!”

She concludes unnecessarily: “Our dialogues become ‘warm!’” (CL 17:93-94).

As Jane Carlyle well understood, her charismatic Italian friend was far from a wild-eyed ruffian. She allayed the short-lived fears of Fanny Wedgwood: “I can assure you, on the best authority, that you may send what invitation you like to Mazzini, without the slightest apprehension of his parading before your door with a stick—or sending you a challenge in the name of *La Jeune Italie*” (CL 14:44). The Carlyles’ longtime friend Isabella Buller, according to Jane, lost her head upon meeting the patriot in the summer of 1844 and hearing his “passionate pleadings for Italy.” She reported to Thomas that Mrs. Buller had decided, on the spot, to carry a bust of Mazzini “*with his name on it in large letters*” to his mother in Italy, at the risk of being caught at the border and thrown into prison, or worse. At this time it was “*death* for any one in Italy to have a book of Mazzinis or a picture of him in their possession” (CL 18:204). Although Isabella Buller liked to

live by her own rules and throw social caution to the winds, Jane persuaded her that she need not *literally* lose her head over Mazzini.

The year before, he had fascinated the wealthy society hostess Lady Harriet Baring, whose close though platonic friendship with Thomas was just beginning to cause Jane unease. When Giuseppe found himself seated next to the lady at a society soirée, he teased her about what might happen to her as a member of the aristocracy come the revolution (*CL* 16:329 n. 8). Not at all indignant, Lady Harriet flirted with him. Jane learned she had taken Mazzini into her confidence in that crowded drawing room and, confusingly for him (he could not figure out what she meant), signaled special secrets between them with her eyes. Jane described the encounter for her husband, pointing out his new lady friend's all-too-feminine wiles. In this letter to Thomas, Jane adopted her Italian friend's way of referring to Lady Harriet: "I am afraid my dear this Lady Baring of yours and his and John Mill's and everybody's is an arch coquette" (*CL* 16:329).

When Lady Harriet began sending Thomas Carlyle "flights of charming little notes," Jane pronounced her an Intellectual Circe and was grateful to discover that Giuseppe would "not be caught by that syren" (*CL* 16:183; 18:156). But Lady Harriet's father-in-law, Lord Ashburton, chastised her for "consorting with revolutionaries," and Jane had to concede that "for a Tory woman of *her* distinction connected with the enemy as she is," it was to her credit she took an active interest in the revolutionary and his cause (*CL* 18: 210 n. 5; 156). (She did not yet realize what a long shadow this aristocratic woman, through her friendship with Thomas Carlyle, would cast across her life.)

When Giuseppe confided to Jane plans for secret uprisings in Italy, his hope was that such events would prove to his compatriots they possessed the ability to gain their independence and encourage them to persevere. But a foray into southern Italy ended horribly this year, with the execution of two brothers captured in Calabria: Attilio and Emilio Bandiera. Caught in the tension of unfolding events, Jane wrote her cousin: "I am very sad about Mazzini the two young Bandieri are shot! God help their poor Mother" (*CL* 18:130). He was routinely blamed for such tragic incidents, even when, as seems true in this case, he had tried to dissuade the participants because of the dangers (Denis Mack Smith 41).



Believing her Italian friend to be noble and dedicated, Jane Carlyle was well aware of his role as an impassioned hero on history's stage. But regarding his political work, she who was not much drawn to politics for politics' sake told her cousin, "I never saw a mortal man who so completely made himself into 'minced meat for the universe! [']" (CL 16: 185). Of all the women he had close friendships with in his lifetime, none saw him with Jane Carlyle's sharpness and clarity. Although sincerely concerned for him and never bating on his fame, she cared more for his character, friendship, and sympathy than his—or anyone's—ideology. "I listen to his *programme* and miraculous hopes," she said, "with an *indifference* that drives him to despair" (CL 17:253). Yet it was not simple indifference; she felt angry that he was risking imprisonment, and worse.

Neither a communist nor an atheist—he opposed both those *isms*—Mazzini held progressive views on issues of the day, recognizing the urgent need in Europe for greater democracy. Thomas Carlyle disagreed about many of these matters, including, even, his plans for Italy.<sup>5</sup> Despite great mutual respect, the two men viewed each other with a critical eye. It was Giuseppe who said of Thomas: he "loves silence somewhat *platonically*" (CL 17: 177). In his *Reminiscences*, Thomas admitted he came to tire of Mazzini, who "fell mainly to *her* share; off and on, for a good many years, yielding her the charm of a sincere mutual esteem" (94). In 1846 Margaret Fuller, then traveling in England, memorably described for Ralph Waldo Emerson an evening spent with Mazzini and the Carlyles. Enamored of the Italian cause and at this stage captivated by its hero, she exclaimed that Mazzini was "a beauteous and pure music." She went on to say: "he is a dear friend of Mrs. C.; but his being there gave the conversation a turn to 'progress' and ideal subjects, and C. was fluent in invectives on all our 'rose-water imbecilities.' We all felt distant from him, and Mazzini, after some vain efforts to remonstrate, became very sad. Mrs. C. said to me, 'These are but opinions to Carlyle; but to Mazzini, who has given his all, and helped bring his friends to the scaffold, in pursuit of such subjects, it is a matter of life and death'" (4:248-49).

Despite this denunciation of "rose-water imbecilities," however, Thomas Carlyle had in 1844 published a vigorous defense of Giuseppe Mazzini in the *Times*. It was in reaction to the political controversy just then coming to light. Since early March, employees of Her Majesty's Post Office had been secretly

opening the Italian's mail.

A close connection existed between this imbroglio, the major political event of 1844, and the misfortunes of a governess. Her tale, which can be briefly told, illustrates the often invisible yet powerful intertwinings of private and public lives, those intricately woven nets of society, where a quiver in one corner sets the others to trembling in unexpected ways—as the personal becomes political.

In the spring of 1844 Jane Carlyle heard encouraging reports of Amely Bölte, a young intellectually minded German woman whom she had been helping to find positions, a delicate task because of the governess's passion for "the new ideas" about such subjects as marriage and religion. Assisted by Jane, Isabella Buller had acquired for Amely an excellent job. She was to earn 100 pounds a year as governess to the children of Sir James Graham, Home Secretary in Sir Robert Peel's administration, and his wife Fanny. Amely had joined in the Victorian craze for autograph collecting, and the Carlyles soon heard her employer was providing her with notable ones, indicating what "a great favourite" the governess had become in "Grahamdom."

One day in June, however, Thomas Carlyle discovered that "Lady Graham appears to be an entire goose." Amely had told him a dismaying tale. When the innocent Graham children asked her "What the Holy Ghost was like?" she had answered that "with all circumspection, she could not tell!" In the face of this "crime" (so it seemed) Governess Bölte was dismissed (*CL* 18:86).

Amely Bölte had, like Jane Carlyle, a skeptical bent. A previous employer had already fired her for holding irreverent views on "the first chapters of Genesis." This took place in the context of the new German criticism, which, by submitting the Bible to literary and historical analysis, seemed to threaten the fundamentals of religious belief. But the governess had the sympathy of both Jane and Thomas Carlyle, who thought the accusations against her unjust, even ridiculous. When accompanying various employers on visits, Amely had to listen closely to ascertain "whether someone might have discovered a note of skepticism" in what she said, remaining vigilant and watching her every word. "I always felt as if I were standing on glass," she would say, looking back, "and that feeling is awful. I had to appear as something I was not and yet all I ever wanted

Mary's letters affair

19 June 1844

215  
A

Dear Mr. Babbie

I have fixed my day -  
and mean to keep it - ~~on~~  
Monday next, god willing, I  
shall be deposited in your  
arms - transmitted by railway  
in better or worse condition -

I cannot yet specify the  
hour in the evening -

Meanwhile I am "very much  
excited" - more than ever  
needing to have my hair  
combed - if you have

been casting your serious  
eyes on the Public Prints  
you may have seen  
the affair of "Mazzini's  
letters" — I will tell  
you all about it when  
I come — it is no news  
to me for I have been  
in the secret for months.  
but it is news for  
this free country of  
England — disgraceful  
news — and the thing



What is setting up my <sup>216</sup>  
blood just show <sup>the</sup> cool  
way in which Englishmen  
take the acknowledgment  
of a fact which before  
it was acknowledged they  
declared to be too bad  
for being credited.

Caulfe has written a  
glorious letter to the  
Times on the subject.  
But the Times with  
its accustomed personal  
prejudices will probably

Decline inserting it -  
I am now advising me  
"to apply for copies of all  
my letters to Mr. at the  
Home office" - but my  
letters have a long while  
back been written more  
for the Ambria Embassy  
than for the person they  
were addressed to - has  
lately I saw at the end of  
a note requiring desirable  
that "Mr. Caugh" would be  
particularly obliged to the  
Embassy to lose no time  
in forwarding it" - God bless  
you all - I have no paper  
at - writing now - You are  
?C

was to be truthful” (57-58).<sup>6</sup> On this occasion, though, she was bewildered. The day before the Holy Ghost episode, the Grahams had voiced great satisfaction with her work.

Sir James Graham, a dedicated public servant and staunch adherent of the Church of England, and his wife Fanny would not have appreciated a Holy Ghost lapse. To Graham, correct views on Biblical matters constituted the very glue that bound society together. Imbued with the belief that his was the class destined to rule England, he could be arrogant, sarcastic, and cold in manner. An essay written this year in the liberal *Westminster Review* described him as “always rough and unfair to his opponents,” and charged him with having favored unconscionable legislation to rescue flagrantly indebted members of the landed aristocracy and gentry (Harwood 321-22).<sup>7</sup> Concerning England’s *other* classes, however, the Home Secretary recommended efficiency and frugality: he advocated cutting costs by lowering salaries and lengthening workdays.<sup>8</sup>

The stiff, fastidious man also believed that “The great characteristic of the present day, the prevailing national evil, is a constant thirst for change and love of innovation” (Harwood 336). Alarmed by any stirrings among the masses, he had referred to the demonstrations and uprisings of the Chartists—that powerful, surging working class movement calling for the franchise and parliamentary reforms in their “People’s Charter”—as “the mad insurrection of the working classes” (Parry 5). On occasion he had ordered out the troops, fearing the Chartist movement could turn into England’s French Revolution.

The scandal of the opening of Giuseppe Mazzini’s private mail by Her Majesty’s Post Office, under the direction of Sir James Graham, had its origin in the fall of 1843. The Austrian ambassador in London, Baron Philipp von Neumann, first requested that Graham, who as Home Secretary was responsible for police espionage, locate the Italian revolutionary’s secret hiding place in London. Graham agreed, but to his immense irritation the London police could not (or would not?) discover the address (F. B. Smith 189-90). The police force had been in existence only fourteen years and the detective division a mere two, yet this was baffling. Giuseppe Mazzini was living in Bloomsbury under his own name at 47 Devonshire Street, Queens Square, and openly visiting Jane and Thomas Carlyle and other friends.

In February 1844, when the police had finally identified his place of residence, the Austrian ambassador requested that the British government spy on Mazzini. Concerned about Italian plots against the Austrian regime, Neumann wished to discover details of his political activities and travel plans. He persuaded Graham—although Mazzini had broken no English law—to gather information from his private mail, have it copied, and passed on to him. The Home Secretary would have comprehended a similarity of interests; both aristocrats feared anti-establishment uprisings. Like the Austrian statesman Metternich they may, as a political ploy, have scornfully dismissed the romantic idea of *Italy* as “a mere ‘geographical expression’” (Reidy 2). On 1 March Graham complied, issuing a secret warrant, justified partly on the basis of an 18<sup>th</sup> century statute from the time of Queen Anne.

With the vast amounts of mail that each day passed through the main post office St. Martin’s le Grand, it took some doing, but a plan was devised. Inside a secret inner room, the Devonshire-street mailbag was examined, letters identified, seals broken, pages unfolded, read, and copied. They were then refolded, new seals pressed down on top of old—often ineptly—and postmarks forged. Lord Aberdeen, as Foreign Secretary, was the official passer of information to the Austrians, but, although thoroughly imbricated, he left Graham to bear the brunt of responsibility. The results pleased the Austrians. On 26 April Baron Philipp von Neumann wrote Sir James Graham: “Prince Metternich has desired me to express you his fervent thanks for the good important service you have rendered for the Cause of Peace” (F. B. Smith, 192).

Based on the information secretly gathered, leaks to the press ensued. References in local as well as Italian papers aroused Giuseppe Mazzini’s suspicions. When the writer of a *Times* article boasted of having seen “a mass of documents” containing details only a few Italian exiles should have been aware of, he decided to test the system to learn if the mail sent to him had been tampered with (Mazzini 242). After Jane discovered what was worrying him, he asked her to say nothing until he could be certain. She, for whom letters were the primary means of creative expression, grew concerned the notes *she* was writing him were being opened and read.

Jane Carlyle’s playfully inventive friend had years of experience in



France and Switzerland outsmarting spies and police, writing notes in codes and invisible ink. He now came up with several clever tricks. He asked his correspondents to enclose nearly invisible “grains of sand, poppy seeds, or fine hairs” so he could see, by their absence, if the letters that reached him had been opened (Mazzini 242). They also agreed to fold their letters in intricate ways hard to duplicate. When several Chartists and a friendly clerk inside the Post Office uncovered further proofs, Mazzini with the help of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the radical MP from Finsbury, and others, petitioned the House of Commons.

The House, however, referred the matter: the silent majority, obedient as sheep, had followed the lead of Home Secretary Graham. The moment he heard this dispiriting news, Giuseppe Mazzini rushed off a letter to Jane Carlyle. “The *dumb* majority voted for Sir James Graham,” he wrote her, “and all was over. There was not a single spark of life—a single feeling of honour—a single instinct of noble ideas or impulses throughout the House. Within two days, the Continental press will laugh upon *English liberty* and *loyalty*; but no body appeared to think of that” (MS / NLS / 2883.151).

On 6 June *Punch* published a cartoon that Thomas called to Jane’s attention. It depicts Home Secretary Graham as “Paul Pry at the Post Office.” He is wearing a country gentleman’s top hat, high collar, frock coat, plaid pants and knee-high boots, an umbrella tucked under his arm, as he voyeuristically peers into the tube of a sealed letter.

A *Times* editorial appeared 17 June proclaiming the opening of letters “unconstitutional, un-English, and ungenerous.”<sup>9</sup> “Hitherto, it has been the peculiar boast of England that she is not as other countries, that her citizens are not liable to the same petty persecutions, the same rigorous police, the same insidious and constant watching, the same dogging of their footsteps, opening of their letters, and prying into cabinets as harass the subjects of continental states.” The *Times* also stated: “Mr. Mazzini’s character and habits and society are nothing to the point.” In other words, the *Times* would speak out on the issue, but not on behalf of the man.

In response to this editorial, Thomas Carlyle wrote his letter testifying to Mazzini’s character, which was under outrageous attack: he was accused of being a murderer, a gambler, and a maniac. Whatever their ideological differences, he

never doubted the Italian's passion and sincerity. Mazzini was "a man of genius and virtue, a man of sterling veracity, humanity, and nobleness of mind, one of those rare men . . . who are worthy to be called martyr-souls; who, in silence, piously in their daily life, understand and practice what is meant by that." He further declared: "Whether the extraneous Austrian Emperor and miserable old chimera of a Pope shall maintain themselves in Italy, or be obliged to decamp from Italy, is not a question in the least vital to Englishmen. But it is a question vital to us that sealed letters in an English post-office be, as we all fancied they were, respected as things sacred; that opening of men's letters, a practice near of kin to picking men's pockets . . . be not resorted to in England, except in cases of the very last extremity. When some new Gunpowder Plot may be in the wind, some double-dyed high treason, or imminent national wreck not avoidable otherwise, then let us open letters: not until then."

Jane Carlyle proclaimed the letter "glorious," and Mazzini sent a copy to his mother, who was "full of the most *fervid* gratitude" (CL 18:77; 142). About these goings-on, Jane wrote her cousin: "I am 'very much excited'—more than ever needing to have my hair combed—if you have been casting your serious eyes on the Public Bruits you may have seen the affair of '*Mazzinis letters*.'" She confided, "[I]t is no news to *me* for I have been in the secret for months—but it is news for this FREE country of England—disgraceful news." And added that Erasmus Darwin had advised her "'to apply for copies of all *my* letters to M. at the home office'—but my letters have a long while back been written more *for* the Austrian embassy than for the person they were addressed to—nay I lately said at the end of a note requiring dispatch that 'Mrs Carlyle would be particularly obliged to the embassy to lose no time in forwarding it!'" (CL 18:77).

The letter-opening episode had touched a mid-nineteenth century British nerve. The social stratum Jane Carlyle was part of abounded in prolific letter writers who indeed regarded their epistles as "things sacred." The writing and receiving of personal letters had become woven into the fabric of daily life, a major means of communication; vital to human connectedness, intimacy, and entertainment. Increasingly in the Victorian era, letters were an expression of individuality. Regarding women, the phenomenon was not unconnected to the awareness that Jane Carlyle called *I-ity* (CL 8:138), an apparent female "egotism"

that—from a modern perspective—masked an emerging sense of personal agency. The emphasis on the individual could also be seen in the rage for autograph collecting, the selling of photographic portraits, and the establishment of national portrait galleries.

The penny post, created in 1840, had made the sending of letters cheaper and easier. Harriet Martineau waxed eloquent over the significance of the penny post for the many, extolling the “force and extent of its civilising and humanising influences, especially in regard to its spreading the spirit of Home over all the occupations and interests of life, in defiance of the separating powers of distance and poverty” (Martineau, *Life in the Sick Room* 86).<sup>10</sup> Private letters, to Harriet, were agents of civilization that would extend the feminine, moral sphere of the home to the rough and tumble masculine world of labor and commerce.

In this instance, however, she wrote Jane, “I *shd* not satisfy you quite abt the letter-business.” Although she understood no true gentleman would ever open another’s mail, Harriet had not seen enough evidence to convince her that Graham, who had so far offered little explanation, was as culpable as he looked: “[T]he insults to Graham while he is silent, are cruel & dastardly,—& I for my part will wait” (Fielding and Campbell 390). Helen Mitchell, on the other hand, weighed in firmly. In a pocket-sized notebook, Jane Carlyle carefully recorded the saying of her diminutive Scottish maid under the title “Helen on the Letter-opening question.” “They’re surely no sae particular now as they used to be,” said Helen; “it is a most awfully *debauched* thing to open Letters” (Jane Welsh Carlyle *New Letters and Memorials* 2:112).

In the months to come, committees would be set up and hundreds of pages of parliamentary record devoted to the debate. The mail of Polish exiles, several Chartists, including, possibly, a Chartist MP, as well as that of various embassies had also been opened. It was hard to determine exactly what had been passed to the Austrians, but if names of men associated with the Bandiera brothers were included, Italian independence fighters may, as a result, have lost their lives.

At one point, Sir James Graham angrily declared the Italian hero to be a convicted assassin. When Graham was forced to apologize for this, Mazzini refused to accept his apology. No solid rationale was given for the opening of private mail, though torturous explanations emerged. One had to do with



PAUL PRY AT THE POST OFFICE.

Paul Pry at the Post Office. From *Punch* vol 7 (1844)  
Courtesy of The Trustees of the National Library of Scotland

the British Protectorate of Corfu, the Greek island from whence the Bandiera brothers' ship to Calabria had sailed, and its connection to the peace and stability of "Europe." Translation: keep Italy safe for the Austrians.

In the midst of this drama, though few in the glare of public life had the least idea, a governess had lost her job. "Oh certainly!" Fanny Graham had assured Isabella Buller when she was arranging for Amely to work for them, "Mrs. Carlyle's recommendation is to be received as *conclusive*." But the day after Thomas Carlyle's letter had appeared in the *Times*, the Grahams had turned against their governess—and not because of her Holy Ghost lapse. Thomas explained to his brother: "[I]t is a fact, tho' one we keep strictly to ourselves, that Lady Graham, next day after the *Times* Letter, turned off poor Governess Bölte, who being a great favourite the day before could not in the least understand it;—Mrs. Buller had given Bölte's character as originating here" (*CL* 18:149). If *Mr.* Carlyle dared to write the newspaper in opposition to the Home Secretary, Graham and his wife would cease to employ a protégée of *Mrs.* Carlyle.

In Jane Carlyle's description, Amely Bölte was small, "humdrum," and manly looking (*CL* 17:44). However brilliant her talents, as an unprepossessing, skeptical foreigner, how was she to earn her living? Thomas wrote to Jane—now visiting her uncle's family in Liverpool—that when Amely had come by the house one day, she appeared very agitated. He gave her tea but found it "wearisome" that she "clattered in a wooden way . . . about 'Sir James,' the 'Holy Ghost' and I know not what" (*CL* 18:142).

Quick as a snap of the fingers, however, her wheel of fortune had taken a turn. As soon as Isabella Buller heard what the Grahams had done, she invited Miss Bölte to accompany their family on a trip to the Continent, having discovered she rather desperately needed Amely's help with her son Arthur's eleven-year-old love child, whom she had, on a whim, adopted as her "goddaughter." Since little Theresa was starting to exhibit an alarmingly precocious interest in the opposite sex, Mrs. Buller needed a chaperone as well as a governess and knew that Amely, who had worked for her before, could handle both jobs. When she heard of the offer, Jane wrote Thomas, "Oh I was *so* glad over Böltes new prospects," using her last name only, as all tended to do when thinking of her in her capacity as servant, rather than friend. Amely's spirits

soon rebounded; she was reported to be translating a German novel to earn extra money. She sent Jane a brave note: the anticipation of a journey on the Continent with the Buller family had made her “the happiest of creatures” (CL 18:92).

Curiously, until Sir James Graham’s role became clear and everyone knew, no one explained to the governess that the loss of her excellent position with the Home Secretary’s family had to do with the post office affair. Perhaps because the “calumnious” newspapers were kept hidden from servants and children in that household, Amely spent about two weeks in the dark. Knowing that for Giuseppe Mazzini’s own good it was incumbent upon her to keep his secrets, Jane had apparently said nothing. As late as 26 June Thomas wrote Jane that Isabella Buller “had strictly charged everybody not to whisper a word of Sir James Graham’s proceedings to Bölte.” But he added, “Of course all the world will know it” (CL 18:86).

A little later he wrote Jane that he was coming to regard “poor” Sir James as having been “unluckier” than anything. But Jane remained impassioned on the issue, and her husband sympathized with her for having to keep quiet about politics in her Tory uncle’s home, understanding she would find it “a great relief . . . to get her mouth opened again, and that pent reservoir of Liberalism emitted!” (CL 18:108-09).

As a result of the events of 1844, Mazzini and the Italian cause became wildly popular. A mass protest got underway. As historian Thomas Babington Macaulay put it, tracking the debates as a Member of Parliament, “the turning of the Post Office into an engine of the police was utterly abhorrent to the public feeling” (Denis Mack Smith 43). An economic reason also existed: letter opening was considered to be “subversive of the public confidence . . . so essential to a commercial community” (F. B. Smith 194).

London shops sold photographs of Giuseppe Mazzini by the thousands. Thomas Carlyle’s “a practice near of kin to picking men’s pockets” became a household phrase. Newly won adherents to the cause of Italian liberty stepped forward to volunteer assistance. Many scribbled outside their letters “Not to be Grahamed!” Stickers expressing anti-Graham sentiments gave people a simple, doable form of political protest. *Punch* sold wafers, those small disks of dried paste used to seal letters, in the shape of hedgehogs that said “Hands Off.” Others

read “Deliver me from Sir James.” Charles Dickens wrote merrily round the seal of a letter he sent 28 June: “It is particularly requested that if Sir James Graham should open this, he will not trouble himself to seal it again” (F. B. Smith 198).

As the controversy wended its way, taking months to resolve, Jane Carlyle had harsh words for Graham. The following spring she would write her cousin: “Have you been reading the ‘debates’ on the Mazzini question—good heavens what a *dirty* animal that Sir J Graham is! he does things which a street sweeper would not stoop to!—*The Murderer* [Mazzini, “the convicted assassin”] takes it all *calmly calmly* . . . and we his friends can all afford to take it *calmly* knowing what a man he is!” (CL 19:50).

Reverberations spread far and wide. Frederick Douglass, who visited England soon after to lecture as an ex-slave on the subject of slavery in America, praised the English who came out to hear him speak. “They are the people,” Douglass told his American readers, “who sympathize with . . . Mazzini, and with the oppressed and enslaved, of every color and nation, the world over” (278). Ironically, given Thomas Carlyle’s well-known opposition to the Abolitionist movement, on the issue of Mazzini and the post office, he and Frederick Douglass were on the same side.

The growing desire for individual liberties had joined an increasing revulsion against the machinations of the Austrian Empire—the revolutionary year of 1848 was fast approaching. As a result of the post office affair, the secret inner room operation of St. Martin’s le Grand was closed down. Warrants to open letters remained rare until what were referred to as “the Irish troubles” of the 1880s. Private letters had been tampered with before, but the 1844 warrant had been issued at the request of an unpopular foreign government when no threat existed to what Jane Carlyle had termed, in her inimitable ironic-yet-not-ultimately-ironic manner, “this FREE country of England.”

To the biographer, private letters are a precious genre, all the more so now that the art of writing them is nearly lost. Letters allow us to see many such fresh “in the moment” interweavings of the personal and political—the way life actually occurs—especially when written by a deft and creative practitioner like Jane Welsh Carlyle.

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<sup>1</sup> In this opening scene, I am practicing “visuality,” or seeing with the imagination in biography, a word the *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Thomas Carlyle with coining. Except for generally known facts about GM, most details and all quotations can be found in JWC’s letters to Jeannie Welsh, 2 January – ca. 9 January 1844: *CL* 17:231-32; 235; 238.

<sup>2</sup> Information about GM’s schools: Denis Mack Smith 38-39; 45. Henry Mayhew brings one such child to life in the touching story of an Italian boy from Parma who became an organ grinder in London (527-31).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, GM wrote JWC chidingly 10 July 1846: “It is not as a mere piece of irony that God has placed us here . . .” *CL* 20:222 n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> In Iris Origo’s otherwise valuable essay, she asserts without evidence a stereotypical picture of JWC, calling her “an unfulfilled woman—a woman childless, dissatisfied and lonely” who, therefore, required “nourishment” from GM (204).

<sup>5</sup> By 1862 TC’s disapproval had reached the point where JWC could tell a correspondent: “Italy he doesn’t take the slightest interest in—never did take indeed in ‘the emancipation of Italy’—even when the *personal* influence of Mazzini—irresistible in most cases—was at work on him!— — Mr Carlyle’s sympathies always have been, are, and always will be with Austria!!!” (Fielding and Sorensen 285).

<sup>6</sup> Translated by Renata Stein.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Harwood accuses Graham, in a review of his “Corn and Currency; in an Address to the Landowners / 1827,” of creating a “carefully put-together scheme for enriching debtors” (322).

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Parry’s “Sir James Graham,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online, offers a useful overview of Graham’s complicated political history.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpts from the *Times* editorial and TC’s response to it: *CL* 18:72-74.

<sup>10</sup> Aileen Christianson’s “Carlyle and Universal Penny Postage” conveys Thomas Carlyle’s stirring advocacy of postal reform. In a late 1830s draft of a petition to parliament, he states that “a man’s life is but an *utterance* of himself” and civilized

man is defined by “the art of writing (which is but an infinite extension of speech).” These beliefs underlie his argument that such legislation would increase individual freedom, unify and strengthen a nation, aid commerce, make letter writing more feasible for the poor, and (possibly) bring in revenue (18-19).

## Tracing Genealogy for the Carlyle *Letters*

Liz Sutherland

Thomas Carlyle (TC) writes in his *Life of John Sterling* – “And now enough of genealogy” which would lead a reader to believe that he found it a rather boring concept. In this paper I shall show, however, that he did not find it so, but that he, in his work, used it extensively.

Most people have a natural desire to know where they have come from, whether it is because of a particular colour of hair or being the only tall person in a family of small people. Some try hard to find some ancestor who was famous or was of the aristocracy. Some go the other way when it is a source of pride, a sort of badge of honour, as it is for many Australians who have had a relative who was sent out to Australia on one of the convict ships, whether for stealing a sheep or for a less misdemeanour. To be related to one of the original settlers, criminal or otherwise, has a certain status all of its own. On visiting Register House at the east end of Princes Street in Edinburgh, one is more likely to meet an American, a Canadian, an Australian or a New Zealander taking time out from their holiday to the old country in order to make some headway on a family-tree. It all seems quite straight forward until they realise how many Mackenzies, Mackays, Campbells or Sutherlands there are from the same villages in Scotland – and so very often with the same Christian name.

The Domesday Book of 1086 marks the beginning of our official records. It gave details of land held and who held it and what it was worth. Subsequently other records were kept and as government expenses became greater with monarchs needing monies to finance wars, that land could be taxed. It also meant that the crown knew the size and wealth of the estates and could charge accordingly. Thomas Cromwell as Vicar General, when Henry VIII appointed himself through his Act of Supremacy as head of the Church of England, was responsible for the origins of parish registers. In 1538 he issued instructions that a book and a coffer with two locks should be provided for each parish in England

and Wales, and that the parson of the parish was ordered to write in it every Sunday, in the presence of his church wardens, records of any births, marriages or deaths which had occurred during the previous week. A fine of 3 shillings and 4 pence was to be imposed for failure to carry this out – an enormous sum in those days. Seen as a tax, this was obviously very unpopular. But, as far as birth and death registration is concerned, it was the belief in some quarters that it was a universal requirement from the very beginning and was never optional or voluntary. A relatively trifling number of births have escaped registration, principally in the early days of the system on account of its novelty. The non-registration of a death has always been exceedingly rare and for many years has been practically impossible. But most parishes did keep records and they are a great source for anyone seeking their ancestors.

Following on from England, from 1551, Scotland was supposed to have a register of all births, marriages and later, burials, kept by the Parish churches. But, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the system, such as it was, had completely broken down. Indeed a history of Edinburgh written in 1779 notes that “the register of burials is kept by people whose faculties are impaired by drinking, who forget today what was done yesterday ... they enter not into the list of burials any who have not been baptised, or those relations are too poor to buy a mortcloth ... it is true that a list is kept at the south side of St. Giles’ Church, where any person who choose to go with a piece of money, will get the name and birth of a child inserted”.

In England and Wales, in July 1837, it became obligatory to register all births, marriages and deaths. But it was not until 1855 that Scotland succumbed to the ruling. Even then they sometimes did not get round to it. Perhaps they did not expect the child to live – infant mortality was very high. Also because parents had to pay for the privilege of registering their child, a son would be registered but not a daughter. In the case of marriage, Lord Hardwicke had introduced the 1754 Act of Parliament which stated that to be legal a marriage had to be performed in a church with signatures of both bride and groom in the parish register; bride and groom must be over 21 unless with parental consent; verbal espousals were

not legal. However this law only applied to England, hence the popularity of Gretna Green, the first village in Scotland where the legal age of marriage, with or without parental consent was 16.

However, although the records begin later, in many ways genealogy is better organised in Scotland. It is always disappointing to send to Kew in the expectation of acquiring a lot of information on a death certificate, to receive only the bare bones, so to speak. Scottish marriage certificates also have much more information than their English counterparts – naming fathers, with professions, and mothers of both bride and groom even when deceased, whereas English certificates have names of fathers but no mothers.

There is, however, a tendency in Scotland in particular, to use the same names within a family. So many Roberts, Johns, Jameses, Alexanders, Janets, Marys and Margarets, it is always a joy to discover a Frederick or George, a Sophie or a Georgiana. There was also a tendency to repeat a name if the first child bearing that name died. We look, for example, to TC's own family. His father's first wife, Janet, had a son they named John. After her death in 1792, he married Margaret Aitken and named their third son John, adding Aitken, her own maiden name, an old Scottish custom, to differentiate him. Sister Jean had two sons who died in infancy, both named Alexander, one 1834-36 and the other 1855-56. Both she and his brother James named their eldest son James, born within a year of each other. His brother Alexander had two sons he named James – one born in 1840 who died in infancy and then another who lived until 1924.

The Census also had problematic beginnings. An attempt was made in England in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to number the population. However the church objected strongly citing the First Book of Chronicles, chapter 21 in which it is written "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel", which David went ahead and did and a pestilence was visited upon Israel. Pressure was therefore brought to bear upon Parliament, who decided to reject the idea on the grounds that it would provoke God's wrath. By 1800, however, the legislators had become rather less particular and a sort of Census was held but it was not until 1841 that a proper one was taken.

At the beginning of Book 2 chapter 1 of *Sartor Resartus* which TC appropriately calls “Genesis”, he writes -

“In a psychological point of view, it is perhaps questionable whether from birth and genealogy, how closely scrutinised soever, much insight is to be gained. Nevertheless, as in every phenomenon the Beginning remains always the most notable moment; so, with regard to any great man, we rest not till, for our scientific profit or not, the whole circumstances of his first appearance in this Planet, and what manner of Public Entry he has made, are with utmost completeness rendered manifest. To the Genesis of our Clothes-philosopher, then, be this first chapter consecrated. Unhappily, indeed, he seems to be of quite obscure extraction; uncertain, we might almost say, whether of any: so that this Genesis of his can properly be nothing but an Exodus (or transit out of Invisibility into Visibility); whereof the preliminary portion is somewhere forthcoming.”

I submit that although a note in Vol 2 of the *Letters* says that the above is a “rather scornful treatment of genealogy”<sup>1</sup> I have chosen three of TC’s works to show the importance and the usefulness that he himself found in the subject of genealogy. Indeed, after a trawl through the *Carlyle House Catalogue* and the *Houghton Carlyle Collection* we find that he made extensive use of genealogical reference books. If we look at the books listed in the *Carlyle House Catalogue* published by the National Trust in 1995, we find that he had copies of and had made notes in Sharpe’s *Peerage of the British Empire* 2 volumes, 1833; *Abrégé Chronologique de l’histoire des Empéreur*s 2 volumes, 1767; Debrett’s *Baronage of England* 2 vols., 1824; Burke’s *Peerage and Baronetage*, 1857; Burke’s *Dormant and Extinct Peerages*, 1866; Douglas’s *Peerage of Scotland*, 1764.

And in the Houghton Carlyle Collection it lists 8 volumes of *The Peerage of Scotland* published in 1767; Collins, *The Peerage of England*, 4 vols. 1741 with the supplement, 2 vols, 1750; D’Alton’s *Illustrations, historical and genealogical of King James’s Irish Army List, (1689)*, 1855; *The Peerage of Ireland* 2 vols., 1768; *The Peerage of Scotland*, 1767; Hübner’s *Genealogische Tabellen* 8

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<sup>1</sup> CL 2:33

vols., 1725-28 in which he notes (“A book of rare excellence in its kind”); Oertel’s *Genealogische Tafeln* [1847]; Pütter’s *Tabulae genealogicae ad illustrandum historiam*, 1768.

In October 1854 he wrote to Harriet Lady Ashburton telling her that her mother Lady Sandwich “was here again, last Sunday, and brought me a great *mass* of Gotha Almanacs”.<sup>2</sup> The *Almanach de Gotha* was an annual German publication founded in 1763 listing the royal and titled families of Europe. That same year he also wrote to Emile Montégut looking for a genealogy of Voltaire. In 1848 we find him thanking Neuberg for the Goethe genealogy.

When TC began writing his “lives” he usually began by setting his scene. This he did by immediately introducing his reader to the background of his subject. What made John Sterling the man he was; what made Frederick II the man *he* was; what influenced Oliver Cromwell.

Therefore the first chapter in his *Life of John Sterling* after his introduction which he called “Birth and Parentage”, he describes where he was born, that his parents were Scots/Irish but became English “by long residence and habit”. But instead of saying more of John, he lays his emphasis on John Sterling’s parentage, first of all to Edward Sterling, his father, a son of the Episcopalian Clergyman of Munster. We are told that the family was founded by a “Colonel Robert Sterling, called also Sir Robert Sterling; a Scottish Gustavus-Adolphus soldier, whom the breaking-out of the Civil War had recalled from his German campaignings, and had before long, though not till after some waverings on his part, attached firmly to the Duke of Ormond and to the King’s Party in that quarrel.” TC, before going on to tell us more, tells the reader “A little bit of genealogy, since it lies ready to my hand, gathered long ago out of wider studies, and pleasantly connects things individual and present with the dim universal crowd of things past, -- may as well be inserted here as thrown away”. This first chapter then does not mention John again until the penultimate paragraph when his birth at Kaimes castle on the isle of Bute is introduced.

Likewise in his introduction to *Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches*,

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<sup>2</sup> CL 29:160

chapter III, which TC calls “Of the Cromwell Kindred”, he uses 15 pages to describe Oliver’s antecedents. He places Cromwell’s father in the hierarchy of the family and then explains to the reader that Oliver’s mother “[t]his Elizabeth Steward, who had now become Mrs. Robert Cromwell, was, say the genealogists, ‘indubitably descended from the Royal Stuart Family of Scotland’; and could still count kindred with them”. TC carries on to quote

“From one Walter Stewart, who had accompanied Prince James of Scotland ... One of his descendants, Robert Stewart, happened to be Prior of Ely when Henry VIII. dissolved the Monasteries; ... [t]he profitable Farming of the Tythes at Ely ... were the fruits of Robert Stewart’s pliancy on that occasion. The genealogists say, there is no doubt of this pedigree; -- and explain in intricate tables, how Elizabeth Steward, Mother of Oliver Cromwell, was indubitably either the ninth, or the tenth, or some other fractional part of half a cousin to Charles Stuart, King of England”.

TC lists all eight sisters and one brother, with as far as possible their births and deaths and who they married. He also details Oliver’s uncles, Sir Oliver, Henry, Richard and Sir Philip, the aunts Elizabeth and Joan, and states that “there is no doubt at all but Oliver the Protector’s family *was* related to that of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, the Putney ‘Blacksmith’s’ or Iron-master’s son”.

We now turn our attention to the *History of Frederick the Great*. Before we reach Frederick himself, TC treats us to a history of the great families of Prussia, of the Brandenburgs, the Hohenzollerns and the house of Hanover. He sets out for his readers clearly in the first volume who is who and who is related to whom and tries to simplify the complicated connections within the royal houses of Europe. Not helped of course by the repetition of names. Indeed in describing Frederick’s mother, TC writes

“Frederick’s mother, Sophie Dorothee of Hanover, is the cousin of Friedrich Wilhelm. She is brother’s-daughter of Friedrich Wilhelm’s Mother, Sophie Charlotte: let the reader learn to discriminate these two names. Sophie Charlotte, late Queen of Prussia, was also of Hanover ... his mother, -- that Sophie Charlotte, a famed queen and lady in her



day, daughter of Electress Sophie and sister of the George who became George I of England by and by”.

Instead of working backwards, as he does in *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, by using extensively Hübner's *Genealogische Tabellen*, TC goes right back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Henry the Fowler, the first of the ancestors with a definite date. “The beginning of the German Kings; the first, or essentially the first sovereign of united Germany”. From there TC takes his readers through the history of the Prussian states in the first volume of *The History of Frederick II of Prussia called Frederick the Great* naming as he goes the Margraves of Brandenburg and thereby hanging histories on the many and various characters in Frederick's family history, like Albert the Bear in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, followed by all the Kaisers from Barbarossa and Rupert, the Kurfürsts and the Electors up to birth and early life of Frederick II.

Knowing that he had so many books to hand, aristocratic friends would ask TC to trace family connections for them. Therefore many of the reference books above mentioned would come into their own when, in March 1863, TC had a request from Edward Twisleton to confirm a connection between the Field-marshal James Keith's family and Emily Jane, Lady Lansdowne, the eldest daughter of Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, Baroness Keith (1788-1867), who believed herself to be the great grand-daughter of Lady Mary Keith (1695-1721), a sister of the 10<sup>th</sup> earl Marischal. It is obvious from the reply that Thomas thoroughly enjoyed responding to the question. TC first gives a résumé of the life of the Fieldmarshal and of his elder brother, George Keith, 10<sup>th</sup> earl Marischal. Then goes on

“They had two sisters: the elder married the then Earl of Wigan, -- and left one daughter, Clementina Fleming; who married the Lord Elphinstone of *her* time: the children, I observe, are looked upon by the old Marischal as *his heirs*: one of them (a *cadet* Elphinstone) became famous in the Navy; “took the Cape of Good Hope &c &c; -- and was raised to the Peerage, by the title of *Keith* (own Xtian name was Keith, & his Grandmother's people had stood Marischals *regni Scotiae* for 700

years: this one was the Father of the Lady Keith-Flahault.-- -- Fieldm//  
Keith was *Grandson's Grandson* of him who founded *Marischal*  
*College, Aberdeen* (honour to *him* also).<sup>3</sup>

TC's own family were interested in their antecedents as is evidenced by the letter sent to him by his sister Jean in Dumfries in Feb. 1862. In the letter she attached a "family tree" and wrote "a branch of the 'tree' *wh* John has copied off in a rough way for me using the end of a pirl to make his circles – this is our entire branch; & is unfortunately somewhat incomplete in two of the names – 'the ink in the old papers being unreadable, ... Well not to tax your patience too far the story begins with 'Crinan of the Western Isles' & after 23 generations ends with 'George Lord Carlyle son of George of Dumfries who was grandson of Michael of 1573 succeeded William *3rd* of Locharthur'. / But I will not attempt any of the side branches or indeed any more of the matter here – we have got a copy of the document which will cut no bread lying snug in a drawer till sometime you have leisure to look into it".<sup>4</sup>

TC wrote beside his grandfather Thomas Carlyle's entry: "This, then, is my Grandfathr,—whom I remember, *abt* 84. Must have been born, 1720. Had 4 sons (my *Fr 2d*) and 3 *drs*". He wrote on the envelope "Carlyle pedigree *keep* carefully; / don't *copy*". It is obvious from this that TC as well as JWC was interested and laid great store on having an almost aristocratic list of forebears to look back upon.

In volume 4 of TC's notebook, we find that he had visited the family graves at Ecclefechan and at Pennersaugh churchyards and had listed with notes of his own the dates and ages of the members of the family directly related to himself buried there, bemoaning the fact that some of the information was almost obliterated.

And, of course, JWC was always asserting that she was a direct descendant of John Knox. TC writes in his *Reminiscences* that "My wife's name as Jane Baillie Welsh; --these Baillies always claimed to descend from Wallace (ie Sir

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<sup>3</sup> *CL* 39:100-101

<sup>4</sup> *CL* 38:62

William Wallace) and John Knox are a proud Ancestry; -- and really the latter I reckon to be probable, though quite express documents are unknown to me". In the explanatory notes in *Reminiscences* it states "little is known of JWC's mother's family. John Welsh (1579?-1622) was born at Dunscore, received his MA at Edinburgh 1588, was minister at Ayr from 1600 until banished in 1606, became a Protestant minister in France. He returned to London in 1622. He had married, 1596, Elizabeth (d.1625), John Knox's eldest daughter." What I find surprising is that JWC does NOT claim descendancy from Sir William Wallace!

Indeed later in *Reminiscences* TC, when writing his short biography of JWC, after explaining her background in relation to Craigenputtoch and Collieston in Dumfriesshire, he tells the reader that

"[m]y Jeannie cared little or nothing about these genealogies but seeing them interest me, took some interest in them [myself]....To my present judgement there is really good likelihood of the genealogy [re John Knox], and likelihood all going that way; but no certainty attained or perhaps ever attainable".

He goes on.

"By her mother's mother, who was a Baillie, of somewhat noted kindred in Biggar country, my Jeannie was further said to be descended from 'Sir William Wallace'; but this seemed to rest on nothing but air and vague fireside rumour of obsolete date; and she herself, except perhaps in quizzical allusion, never spoke of it to me at all. Edward Irving once did (in 1822 or so) in his half-laughing grandiose way, as we three sat together talking: 'From Wallace and from Knox, there's a Scottish pedigree for you!'

TC did what is recommended while writing his short biography of Jane. He wrote to her aunts in Morningside, after her death in 1866. He writes

"june 13. This morning the adjoined Paper has come from Miss Grace Welsh, youngest of the Three Aunts, in answer to our requests; which ratifies some of the above dates, and chronological sequences. It is extracted 'from the Old Family Bible' and other sure sources.

Although the information did not affect JWC's own parentage directly the information gleaned by TC was obviously very useful. When he is writing the

history of JWC's mother, he later bemoans the fact that his request for information from Auchtertool "who are of that genealogy, children of my Mother-in-law's brother John ... 14 June – reverend Walter has not yet sent me the dates etc; perhaps will tomorrow. (June 15 (still nothing from Auchtertool)". The reader can almost feel TC's frustration.

However on a lighter note, JWC relates to Emily Tennyson in January 1857 how much TC's horse means to him. She tells her that if that horse (Fritz) dies TC would write a biography of it. Indeed he had said that very day "My dear, I wish I could find out about the genealogy of that horse of mine! And some particulars of its life! I am beginning to feel sure it is a Cockney".

JWC was also interested in the antecedents of people in her circle. While visiting Mary Russell in 1862, she showed rather a spurious curiosity in the Monboddo family when they were visited by a certain Arthur Burnet, the Sheriff of Lanarkshire. She tells TC in a letter "He was a round faced, cheery-cheeked, black-eyed young man, of the entirely uninteresting sort, when last seen by me! Now he has got transformed into the most ridiculous, yet touching likeness of Jeffrey!" JWC went on

"I have been instituting searching inquiries as to the character of Mrs Burnet of Monboddo; for I have not the slightest doubt in my own mind that Arthur Burnet is Jeffrey's Son (unofficially). I find that this Mrs Burnet was the Daughter of Monboddo, and contracted a secret marriage, with her Father's Secretary, one Williamson, who had "eventually" to take her family name. A woman who commenced with an irregular marriage, you see! Quite easy to arrive later at an irregular Baby!"<sup>5</sup>

TC, at the end of his reply was sharp in admonishing her "What dainty budgets of news you send from Nithsdale! Don't scandalise poor Mrs Monboddo".<sup>6</sup>

When I began with the *Carlyle Letters*, it was at a time when it was still very time-consuming to trace persons mentioned by the Carlyles in their

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<sup>5</sup> CL 38:142-43

<sup>6</sup> CL 38:145

letters but it always concerned me that there were so many entries in the notes “Unidentified” or “otherwise unidentified”. I felt that if the Carlyles felt that they were interesting enough to mention then it was up to me to find their dates or any other relevant information about them. In the beginning it was a case of laboriously trawling through the endless reels at George IV Bridge library or of spending whole days at Register House in order to arrive at the dates of perhaps one or two people. But, in the intervening years and with the growth of technology, it has become more and more straightforward to trace individuals mentioned in their letters.

It can be a very frustrating exercise; to feel that one is going round in circles, believing that one is almost there only to discover that that it is necessary to dig ever deeper.

In the summer of 1860, TC goes to visit Sir George Sinclair in Thurso. While there he is invited to the home of a certain Macdonald some 13 miles off “The Highland laird, an old Peninsular Soldier, was really not a bad fellow, quite the reverse indeed; had a fine sleek Wife and Wife’s sister (Panmures, I was told); ... a Son just from India and the Crimea (good for nothing but grouse-shooting, and getting married next week to a Lindsay Balcarras in London ... a smart sonsy little Daughter, very nicely *dressed* (almost *à la Goody*, I thot) who made the Caithness dialect beautiful, and was the prettiest item of the lot”.<sup>7</sup>

A lot of information and clues and at first this looked very straightforward. Alas no sign of them in the census for 1861. The original Duke note had named the laird as Donald Macdonald and David Sorensen had added the entry from the *Times* of the marriage but what of the Panmure connection and the name of the “sonsy daughter who made the Caithness dialect beautiful”? Burke’s *Peerage* and also the *Landed Gentry of Scotland* where most of the rest of the information could be found was the obvious next step, but names were often changed or added or, indeed, missed out altogether. Eventually, after much frustration, all became clear and the final notes were finalised.

Walter Rye in his *1857 Records and Record Searching* gives excellent

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<sup>7</sup> CL 36:179

advice. He writes “Never attempt to theorize or speculate too soon. If you got wedded to a theory, you will find yourself unconsciously specially pleading in its favour, and not looking at thing fairly”. In the following example this advice was truly necessary

TC wrote to JWC in September 1860 while visiting his sister Jean in Dumfries.

“Curious enough, a Sister of Allan Cunningham’s now lives on an annuity (Life Annuity of £60) derived from the Italian-Warehouse or ground story, *whh* was hers, and *whh* she sold on those terms”<sup>8</sup>

In previous notes, it had been suggested that this was Mary Cunningham living in an Almshouse in Dumfries. This, of course, had to be checked and confirmed or otherwise. There was indeed a Mary Cunningham listed in the 1851 Census as living at Carruthers Almshouse aged 76 but by the 1861 Census she had disappeared. As TC was writing in September 1860, she could have died in the interim. However, I was suspicious. Why would she be living in an Almshouse if she had an income of £60 a year? According to the *ODNB* entry for her brother Allan Cunningham, born 1784, which, incidentally, mentioned that he had four brothers, all of whom are named, and four sisters, none of whom are named, they were all born in Dumfriesshire. Usefully, however, both father John, and mother Elizabeth Harley are named. The source for the entry in *ODNB* was David Hogg’s *Life of Allan Cunningham*. This was extremely useful as the Old Parish Records of Register House had no record of any children born to John Cunningham and Elizabeth Harley. David Hogg wrote

“Of the four Daughters of John Cunningham, one now survives (April, 1874) the sole representative of the family, with her dark eyes as lustrous, intelligent, and penetrating, as if she were only twenty instead of fourscore”

On the next page, Hogg goes on

“In the death of John Cunningham, his widow removed with her family to Dalswinton village, where, through the generous liberality of Mr Miller (unidentified further), she was allowed a free house and a small

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<sup>8</sup> *CL* 36:254

field for a cow's grazure during her lifetime".

Then the most useful clue.

"This she did not long enjoy, however, for her daughter Mary, Mrs Pagan, at Curriestanes, kindly prevailed on her to remove from Dalswinton and reside with herself".

A return to Register House where the census details for years 1841, 51, 61, and 71 were available on-line. Mary Pagan with her husband, William Pagan, appear in 1841, and even more remarkable also with their second son "Allan Cunningham Pagan". She appears alone in 1851 and then disappears. As deaths did not require registering until 1855, it appeared that the end of the search had come.

However, later in Hogg's *Life*, he includes some letters from Allan Cunningham to his mother. In several of these he closes with his kind regards to Mary and – to Mina.

Returning to the 1861 Census and one Mina Cunningham aged 67, listed as a house proprietor and born at Kilmahoe (as was Allan Cunningham). Searching the 1871 Census, is found a Wilhelmina Cunningham registered aged 77, annuitant, and born in Kilmahoe. Then to the registers of death where it is discovered that she died 5 April, 1875 aged 81, father John Cunningham, land steward, mother Elizabeth Cunningham née Harley. Died of "old age and dropsy".

It was fortunate for this researcher that she had died in Scotland. If she had died in England, there would have been no father and mother mentioned. Death certificates in Scotland are full of pertinent information. Not only parents' names but usually also the profession of the father and the maiden name of the mother. Sometimes it is a near relative who has registered the death. There was sometimes a mystery surrounding a death. Certainly no-one would have been told that James Rutherford Russell, son of the eminent surgeon, and a well-known homeopathic doctor in his own right, went off to Elgin in 1866 and died by his own hand.

Recently in a letter dated the end of March 1864 from TC to JWC, he tells her that "A man of the Dunlops sent up his card, to inquire for you; said you would be sorry to hear of Mrs Trail's death". The original Duke note suggested that it was possibly a sister of George Traill of Ratter and Hobbister, MP for Orkney and Shetland. But a connection with the Dunlops who were originally

from Haddington had to have some importance. The Haddington Census of 1841 listed a Margaret Traill, wife of the Rev. James Traill, minister of the Episcopalian Church. The *Haddingtonshire Courier* (which only began publishing in 1862) announced “at Cheltenham, on the 23d instant, Margaret Vetch, widow of the late Rev. James Traill, Episcopalian Clergyman at Haddington”. As she had died in England, had it not been for the local newspaper obituary notice, it would have been almost impossible to confirm who this person was.

Working with genealogy is both frustrating but at the same time extremely interesting and very, very rewarding. It is necessary to think latterly; there are so many sources available, from the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, which lists not only the ministers of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation but usually their family and even, sometimes, who the children marry, matriculation and graduation rolls of Universities, early army and navy lists, biographies, to letters, sometimes not relating directly to the subject in hand. Genealogy requires time, patience and a great deal of persistence.

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## SYLLABUS 2011-12



### CARLYLE SOCIETY: PROGRAMME FOR 2011-12

**All meetings in 11 Buccleuch Place, Centre for Lifelong Learning,  
starting at 1415. All welcome.**

October 1	Aileen Christianson: The Carlyles and Photography
October 29	Ian Chisholm: Burns' changing reputation.
November 26	AGM: Christmas entertainment: party
January 28	Joyce Caplan: The Challenge of Lifelong Learning
February 11	Malcolm Ingram: The Carlyles and Mesmerism
March 10	Ian Campbell: Reading and Misreading the Bible

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  
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