



Life, Literature and Education.



Thomas Carlyle.

The Dumfriesshire village of Ecclefechan lies in a sheltered hollow by the side of the Glasgow and Carlisle Road, which from time immemorial has been the main thoroughfare between North and South. A tiny stream creeps through the middle of the village, and the village common, where generations of children have sported in the twilight, is on the bank of that tiny stream. An unfortunate, wicked little village, Burns called it, when early in the year 1795 the young poet was snowbound there. Yet he had cause to repent the epithets he applied to this little town, for in that same year, 1795, was born in the despised Ecclefechan the greatest of Robert Burns' many biographers, and a prose writer second to none which Scotland has produced.

Thomas Carlyle was born on Dec. 4th, 1795, in a house built by his father, James Carlyle, a stonemason. This house still stands—a tribute to the workmanship of the man who built it, and a memorial of his illustrious son. To his parents Carlyle owes much, not only by the inheritance of their characteristics, but by the love and encouragement they gave to him all their lives. James Carlyle, the father, was the second of five brothers, all of whom were stonemasons, and who were described by the neighbors as "pithy, bitter-speakin' bodies, and awfu' fechtors." He was gnarled and cross-grained, yet sound to the heart and thoroughly reliable, his gruff speech and manner covering a soul of great strength and tenderness. The mother, too, was a remarkable woman—pious, high-minded and intelligent, with a devout, stern Calvinism which Carlyle defines as, "Infinite pity, yet also infinite rigor of law: it is so nature is made."

His surroundings in these early years had much to do with the making of the man. The stage-coach, rolling daily in the village, brought the breath of life and stir from the

outside world; the many memorials of the past with which the whole valley of Annandale was strewn—remains of a Roman camp, traces of early English beacon-fires, and other antiquarian delights—were ghosts from a world gone by; and last, but not least, the folk among whom he lived—great-limbed, hard-headed, hard-fisted men, with a rugged independence of character inherited from the old Border freebooters—touched him with their sturdy pride, their grim sarcasm, their Celtic fire and vim.

Here he remained until 1810. At the age of fourteen Thomas Carlyle left his native dale to become a student of Edinburgh. With the true Scottish parent's ambition, it was the desire of his father and mother that he fit himself for the ministry; his own desire was not so definite, university life meaning to him an opportunity to get "knowledge of all kinds," without any clear idea of the use to which it was to be put. Of his teachers and their methods he had but a low opinion—"inanimate mechanical Gerund-grinders," he calls them; but in the great library, among the living spirits of all the ages, he found a recompense for what he endured in the class-room.

During his whole course he was troubled about what choice to make of a career. He wavered between the ministry and a life devoted to literature, the one the desire of his parents for him, and, therefore, not lightly to be set aside; the other the bent of his whole nature. "Intensely he realized that every man comes into this world on a divine errand, and with a work for God to do, even to win, if possible, by victorious, God-inspired effort, a kingdom out of the realm of darkness around and without him, and in so doing, to subdue for the realm of light, the darkness within himself." Teaching he tried for a time, but the mental conflict still continued, with the happy result that he resolved that whatever his hand found to do it should be done with no sense or thought of self in the doing. "I, now in harmony with God, can sing at my work, and amid my toil find blessed rest. For, what though its immediate results shall have been small, the very attempt persevered in of working out the divine purpose in my life shall make that life a truly noble one."

With this consecration of his powers to his Creator, he turned to his writing. "Blessed," he says, "is the man who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness." And every book he wrote proclaims it on every page.

His wife, to whom he had been married in 1827, was a true helpmeet to him, who understood him thoroughly, and saw the heart of the man under the grim and, at times, bitter mask. Historians have gone to great trouble to prove that he was unkind and she was unhappy, but their letters to one another, since published, do not uphold this argument, but show the sincere, deep love they bore to one another.

His first book, "Sartor Resartus," was finished about 1832, but for six years journeyed from one publisher to another, finding no acceptance, until Fraser's Magazine undertook to publish it in instalments, and an

American firm printed it in book form before an English edition was sent out. "Sartor Resartus" (literally, The Tailor Patched) is the philosophy of clothes—man clothed for society and church, the garments of actions and manners; nature, but the garment of God—and we must look through this show of things into the things themselves. The book is a plea for the higher life, to be reached through striving, through action.

Carlyle preached the Gospel of Work. Work of whatever kind, so long as it was sincere; but there must be no sham, no semblance of work, no surface action merely for effect, but the constant striving upward for the real. Let us have real government wherein the governing is done by the truly able and wise; real religion in which the instructors are the truly pious; real education where the teachers are those who have the knowledge. These ideas he expressed first in "Sartor Resartus," but the essence of them is found again and again in all his works.

The next work was his, "Essay on Burns," one of the finest things of the kind ever written; and following it came the "History of the French Revolution," which some one has called "a grand prose epic," and in which he traces the result of a nation's desire to get rid of shams and come back to reality. "Heroes, and Hero Worship" contains sketches of the lives of those men who have been real, who have had true insight into the earnestness of human life. "Past and Present," is a contrast between the forces which governed English life in the thirteenth century and those which governed it in the nineteenth. Next came the writing of the life of his particular hero, Oliver Cromwell, who realized to the full Carlyle's idea of a true hero—one who has power to see and ability to carry out. And last of all, his great work, "The Life of Frederick the Great."

Carlyle's style of writing, like the writer himself, is unique. We have nothing else like it in English literature. The passion, the fire, the intense earnestness of the man, is seen in every line. So strong are the feelings within him, so great the desire for expression, that the words pour from him, sometimes coined out of his inner consciousness, often words, phrases, or forms of expression borrowed from foreign languages and woven into the glowing texture, and the whole lighted up by a strong imagination and a grim humor.

On the seventh day of February, 1880, this strenuous soul passed away, having set before a self-seeking generation a high example of brave, persistent toil, directed to a very noble object. A man of brave, generous sympathies with the true and noble, and a stern defiance to what he deemed the false.

FROM "SARTOR RESARTUS."

"May we not say, however, that the hour of spiritual enfranchisement is this: 'When your ideal world, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed and thrown open; and you discover with amazement enough, like the

Lothario in 'Wilhelm Meister,' that your 'America is here or nowhere'? The situation that has not its duty, its ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal. Work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free. Fool! the ideal is in thyself; the impediment, too, is in thyself; thy condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same ideal out of. What matters whether such stuff be of this sort, or that, so the form thou give it be heroic! O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth: The thing thou seekest is already with thee, 'here or nowhere,' couldst thou only see!

"But it is with man's soul as it was with nature: The beginning of creation is—light. Till the eyes have vision the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment when over the tempest-tossed soul, as once over the wild, weltering chaos, it is spoken—Let there be Light! I, too, could now say to myself: Be no longer a chaos, but a world, or even a worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it, then! Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called to-day; for the night cometh wherein no man can work."

Literary Society Topics.

You mentioned in your valuable paper something about starting "Rough and Ready Clubs." We have in our locality a Literary Society which has helped the members greatly, and I would ask you to give suitable subjects for debates, also about twenty-five or thirty subjects for impromptu speeches. By so doing you will greatly oblige many besides myself.

T. M. R.
In arranging for such programmes as our correspondent suggests, it is well to keep in mind the objects for which literary societies exist. Some of these are: (1) To promote social goodfellowship; (2) to improve and to encourage our citizens, more particularly our younger citizens, in the art of public address; and (3) to encourage reading and reflection upon matters relative to our citizenship. The range of subjects discussed and studied will depend upon the culture and facilities of the members of the societies. A public library, well stored with books, will afford means for almost endless study and research. A good way to secure an interesting debate is to have two persons chosen as leaders for the evening, and then to throw the subject open to the audience. This means, of course, interest in the work on the part of the members of the society. It must always be remembered that more fail in public speech because they have nothing to say than because of any unfitness for public utterance. A really well-stored mind is essential to effective public speech. For subjects of debate we submit the following: Resolved—

1. That a High-school education