

lifted him out of the ruck—this and nothing more. “The French Revolution” is without historical accuracy; and throws no new light on obscure places. It is useless as a school-book; and uncomfortable as a book of reference; it tells nothing to one who knows everything about the French Revolution. It is simply a success of expletivity. The accident of its style is of overwhelming importance, in comparison with the essence of its subject matter. And this to Johnson is an *hysteron-proteron*. It is to abdicate the chair of the historian when the historian plays the part of poet.

Johnson lived in an age which worshipped the Golden. Carlyle is distinctly Silvern; and no doubt that is why Johnson did not appreciate Carlyle. Indeed, it would be absurd to expect him to have done so. We might as well expect to find appreciations of Tacitus in the writings of Cicero. Yet, in a way, Carlyle represented the ideal which Johnson was seeking. The finding of an ideal of course produces irritation because it is so disappointing. Johnson was the last man to underestimate the importance of style. In “Rasselas” for instance, we can see clearly that he was taking pains to give a peculiar literary form to his sentences. Well, after all that is only what Carlyle also was seeking to do, and succeeded in doing: but he did it in a different way, by being explosive and emphasising egregious epithets, and by neglecting absolutely his subject-matter. There seems then to be a little jealousy in Johnson. It never struck *him* to go the whole way and neglect his subject for the sake of his style, so as to make the style the one transcendent thing in his work. If it had occurred to him independently, he might have utilised the notion: but, when it is brought before him in Carlyle, he cannot away with such a second-hand idea. So he never tried to write on the plan of Carlyle: at least he never consciously did so. On the contrary, he made quite a point of emphasising his subject-matter, as may be seen in “Taxation no Tyranny,” where he has gone to the opposite extreme and given us matter without any form at all.