

REVIEWS OF UNWRITTEN BOOKS

II—DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON'S CARLYLE

IT certainly is most fortunate that Dr. Johnson is dead. One would have disliked him so much if he had remained alive. He was so merciless, so heavy-handed in the stripping of ruffles—and more than ruffles. And here he is, stripping Carlyle. Ah, sartor! Well, we must admit that it was very smart of Johnson to turn "Sartor Resartus" and its philosophy back upon its author; and to strip Carlyle for us as we find him stripped in the present work. It is a great coarse ungainly jest, that of stripping an ugly man; and it is rather hard on a middle-aged man who has become confirmed in the habit of clothes-wearing. Johnson might have remembered that he himself was even less suited to pose in the nude. However, it is not only with physical stripping that our author is concerned. The mind, he points out, wears clothes as well as the body. So, to his own delectament, he strips Carlyle's mind; and shows it to us running about seeking shelter, a little dark mind, but strong and wiry, seeking shelter ever in wrong places.

It is in this way, with much Latin vituperation, that Johnson heralds his long criticism of Carlyle's literary style. Carlyle invented a new style, which Johnson labels with the epithet "expletive." It was the "expletivity," we are told, which made Carlyle, which fixed him in men's minds, which