

THOMAS CARLYLE.

As we went to press last week came the news of a great man's death, too late for more than a brief tribute to his memory. And during the past week readers of the daily papers have been so flooded with accounts of Carlyle's life and works that there seems little to add to what is already before the public. We may be pardoned then if much of what is yet to say be but a repetition of what has been given before.

Carlyle was born close to Ecclefechan, a little hamlet in Middlebie parish, in the district of Annandale, Dumfriesshire, in the year 1795. His parents occupied no lofty social position, and though not what may be called "poor" they certainly were far from being rich. His father was a small farmer, but fortunately for Carlyle both father and mother were possessed of more than the usual share of strong common sense and native intellect. They intended their son for the Presbyterian ministry, and with that end in view prepared to give him the very best education their means could secure. His veneration for his parents was very great, and there can be little doubt, from the tribute he himself bears to their character, as well as from the repute in which they were held in the locality, that to his early intercourse with them he owes more of his peculiar intellectual bent than he does to almost any other cause whatsoever. His father he describes as one "abiding by veracity and faith, and with an extraordinary insight into the very heart of things and men"—a description which may with at least equal truth be applied to himself. His mother was his first teacher in letters, and seems to have been not only highly intellectual, but gifted with rare powers of perception in forming her estimates of character. Both father and mother were of a religious turn of mind, and both were somewhat deeply versed in the theology of the time, discussions about which formed an important element in the intellectual atmosphere in which Carlyle spent his childhood.

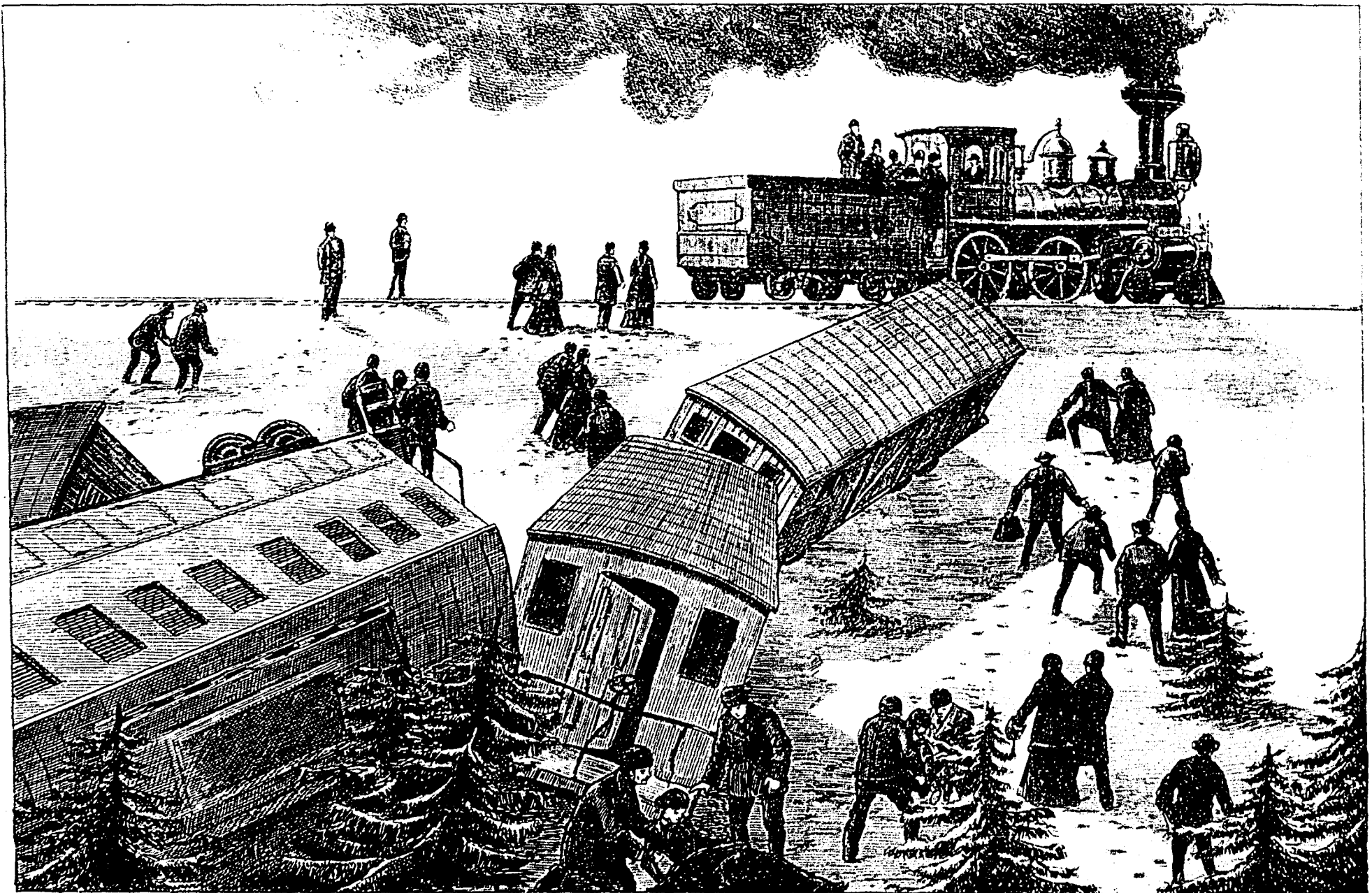


THOMAS CARLYLE IN 1865

After a brief period, during which he attended the parish school of Ecclefechan, Carlyle went to Annar, where he was prepared for Edinburgh. He has little good to say of his "Alma Mater," but he went through the regular course there, devoting, however, the greater part of his time to somewhat miscellaneous reading in the College Library. The large insight into the writings of his predecessors he there obtained, it did not absolutely decide his future career, at least made him, as that only could have made him, capable of the work he afterwards undertook.

This is neither the time nor the place to give any lengthened account of Carlyle's literary career. From 1823, the year in which he first accomplished literary work of any importance, down to within a comparatively recent period, he has been pouring forth from time to time the varied productions of his pen, not one of which has been without merit, and very few of which have failed to exert a widespread and, for the most part, beneficial influence. But it is by his actual published works that his position in English literature is to be gauged. Carlyle was the founder of a new, or, at all events, a distinct school of thought, and his influence is to be distinctly traced in the writings and utterances of a large school of thinkers, in some cases unconscious of the debt they owe the author of "Sartor Resartus."

The two works by which Carlyle, as a writer, is most likely to be judged, may, perhaps, bear a brief notice. "Sartor Resartus," which, in form, at least, may be considered as the outcome of the close study of German literature, to which he devoted himself at the opening of his career, is, without doubt, the most remarkable satire in the English language. German though it be in its inspiration, there is, nevertheless, an outspokenness and directness of attack throughout that is thoroughly English. Clothed in a strange, uncouth phraseology, which is fascinating, nevertheless, from its very uncouthness, it goes to the heart of the question. Under the guise of a treatise on dress, or, rather, the re-



RAILWAY ACCIDENT NEAR NEWMARKET. THE EXPRESS THROWN FROM THE TRACK.