

audience on a subject, about which they knew nothing, and he knew everything.

There were minor difficulties. He was resolved not to read his lectures, but to speak extempore, an ordeal doubly dreadful to a nervous man and one inexperienced in the art. Another cause for apprehension was that he, the peasant scholar, was to address an audience of fashionable and titled people at Almack's, the gathering-place of London society. One of his lady admirers was afraid he might even sin against the conventionalities, perhaps go so far as to begin with "Gentlemen and Ladies," instead of the usual formula. His wife knew that he was more likely to open fire with "Men and Women," or "Fool creatures come hither for diversion." As his nervousness increased with the approach of the fated day, Carlyle, to keep up his mother's spirits and his own, drafted the humorous valedictory which, after all, he did not need to use: "Good Christians, it has become entirely impossible for me to talk to you about German or any literature or terrestrial thing; one request only I have to make, that you would be kind enough to cover me under a tub for the next six weeks and to go your ways with all my blessing." A more important matter was punctuality. By putting on all the clocks and watches, Mrs. Carlyle knew that she could insure his being at "the place of execution" at the appointed time. How to stop him at "four precisely" was something harder. One device that suggested itself was to lay a lighted cigar upon the table just as the clock struck the hour. Happily all these fears and apprehensions were groundless.

May the First, 1837, was a notable day. In the afternoon, Carlyle lectured at Almack's; and in the evening Macready produced young Mr. Robert Browning's *Strafford*, for the first time, at Covent Garden. Hallam, of the *Middle Ages*, "a broad, old, positive man, with laughing eyes," was chairman