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[W. J. Roberts

ENTRANCE HALL OF THE LONDON LIBRARY

Frontispiece

CARLYLE AND THE LONDON LIBRARY

ACCOUNT OF ITS FOUNDATION :
TOGETHER WITH UNPUBLISHED
LETTERS OF THOMAS CARLYLE
TO W. D. CHRISTIE, C.B. : *Arranged*
by MARY CHRISTIE : *Edited by*
FREDERIC HARRISON, LITT.D.
Vice-President of the London Library

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CHAPMAN & HALL, LIMITED
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MCMVII

"Non refert quam multos, sed quam bonos habeas libros."—SENECA.

"A collection of good books contains all the nobleness and wisdom of the world before us. Every heroic and virtuous soul has left his stamp upon it."

CARLYLE'S SPEECH, *June* 1840.

TO THE
LIBRARY

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PREFACE

THIS little volume describing the foundation of the Library by Carlyle, with a collection of his hitherto unpublished Letters thereon, which I feel it a public and a private duty to edit, has a story of its own at once curious and pathetic. It exhibits the prophet of Hero-Worship in the unaccustomed light of business organiser and founder of a great and prosperous institution. The letters themselves recently came to light amongst the papers of a well-known diplomatist and author, whose daughter took great pains in the pious task of arranging her father's correspondence and doing justice to his

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memory. At last, from her death-bed, she begged me, an old friend, and also an old official of the London Library, to take up her unfinished work.

Sixty-seven years ago the "Sage of Chelsea" designed and founded the London Library, which perhaps alone of all his fertile ideas and schemes has grown steadily in the public favour from that day to this, without meeting a word of criticism or opposition, without ever having known any set-back or enemy. The Letters manifest the passionate energy with which the apocalyptic Idealist could throw himself into a working scheme of practical business. And they also show the genius of good sense, foresight, knowledge of men and affairs which Thomas Carlyle could keep at the back of his head for the plain requirements of the busy world. As I read over again the wails and groans of

which his biographers have surely given us too much, I often wish that to-day he could walk into the hall of the London Library, which he founded with such zeal and hope, could see the long ranges of full shelves in the Book Store, mark the come-and-go of reading men and women, and note his own marble bust in the centre as the tutelary spirit and "pious founder" of the place.

When Carlyle, about the age of forty-five, having finished his *French Revolution* and given his course of lectures, was about to open on his *Cromwell*, he felt the urgent need of a high-class lending library which would give him the standard works he required at hand in his quiet study at Chelsea. He had already some powerful friends both in the world of letters and of politics; but he needed the help of a younger man with strength, leisure, and enthusiasm. This he

found in a countryman of his own, William Dougal Christie, a Cambridge scholar of twenty-four, just called to the Bar at the Temple, ultimately to be well known as M.P. for Weymouth, diplomatist, envoy to Brazil, as an active controversialist and author of several works of repute.

Mr. Christie died in 1874, leaving considerable literary remains, which were entrusted to his daughter, Mary, herself an author and critic, and Life Member of the London Library since 1882. Some time ago she found amongst her father's papers twenty letters of Carlyle respecting the foundation of the London Library in 1839-1841. If Carlyle were the true Founder of the London Library, William Dougal Christie was his indispensable lieutenant, his secretary, and *fidus Achates* in the task.

As I had been a member of the Library

for more than half a century, and a friend of Miss Christie and her family for at least five-and-thirty years, it was natural that she should apply to me for advice and help in obtaining publication for her collection of letters. I did what I could to help her. The last time we met was at the rooms in St. James' Square, when, in spite of her years and weak health, her finely chiselled countenance retained all its expression, and her active brain had lost none of its energy and lucidity. A cruel malady interrupted her task before it was completed. "For two years," she wrote, "she was fighting a losing battle against ill-health, anxiety, and over-work." And then for six months she lay completely prostrate on a sick-bed. When at last it was found that her malady approached its inevitable end, she dictated a letter to me requesting me to take up her

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work, and she desposited with the Librarian at St. James' Square the autograph Letters, with all the documents, notes, and narrative which she had prepared. I will do my best to carry out her task of filial piety and reverence for a great name :

His saltem accumulem donis et fungar inani
Munere.

November 1906.

NOTE.—I have to thank Dr. Hagberg Wright, the able Librarian, for much assistance and for the collation of the proofs with the original Letters.

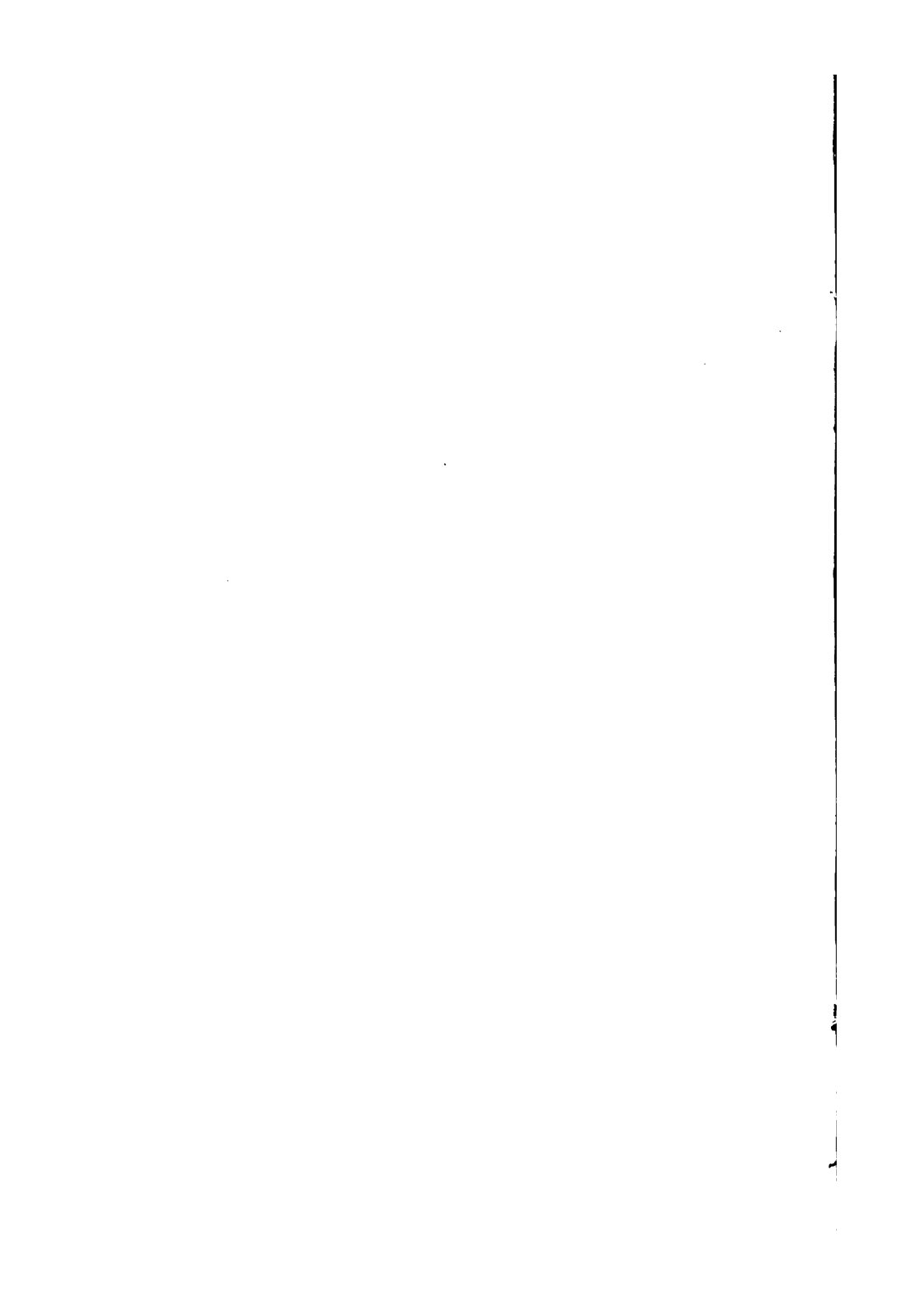
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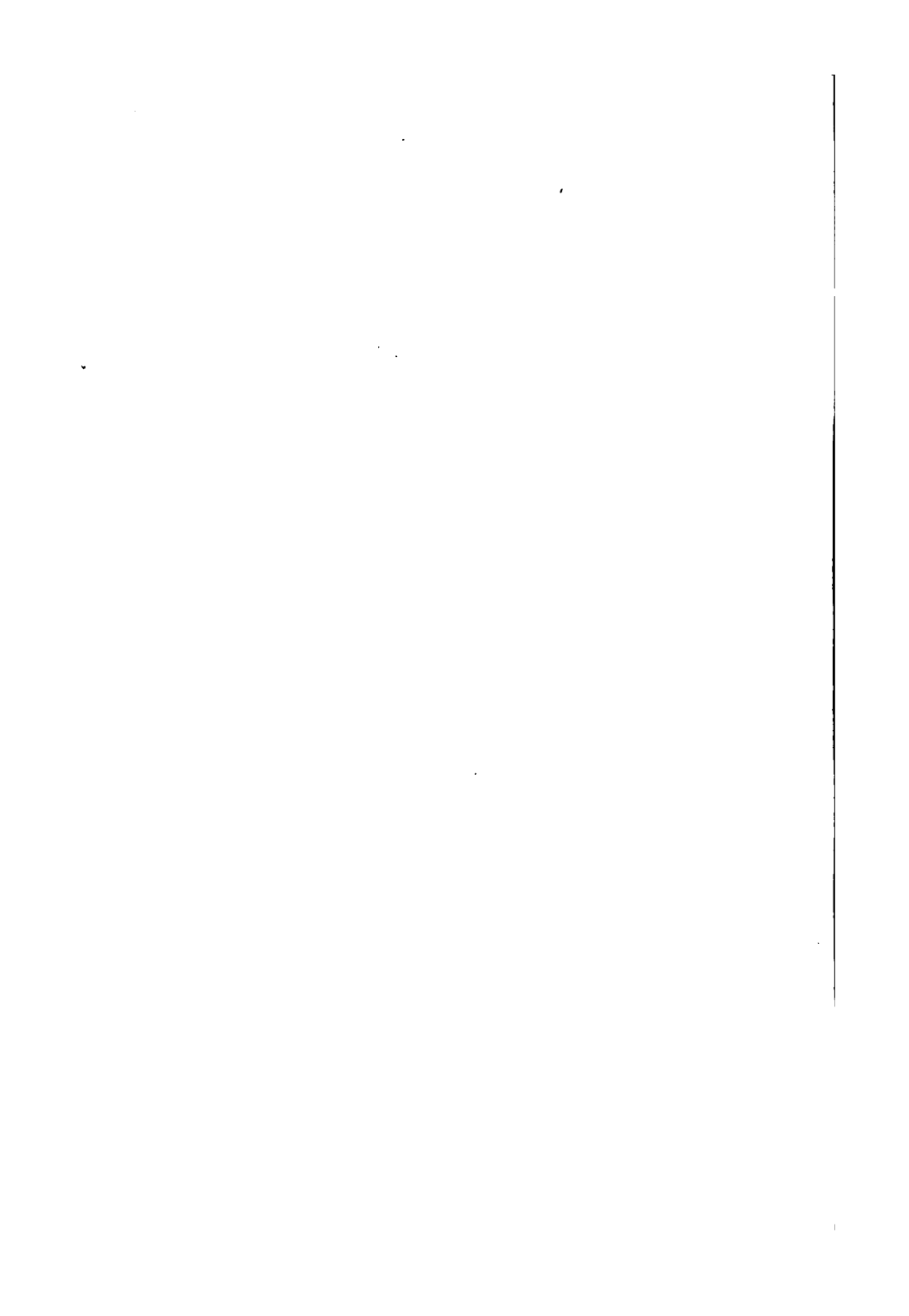
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WILLIAM DOUGAL CHRISTIE	<i>facing page 76</i>
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**THE ORIGIN OF THE
LIBRARY**



THE ORIGIN OF THE LIBRARY

THE germ of Carlyle's idea of a great library in London occurred to his mind, says Mr. Froude,* in his early Craigenputtock days, when he noticed that a county town like Dumfries could maintain a gaol but did not possess a public library. In his journal, May 18, 1832, he had written :

What a sad want I am in of libraries, of books to gather facts from ! Why is there not a Majesty's library in every county town ? There is a Majesty's gaol and gallows in every one. †

* Froude, *Thomas Carlyle : his Life in London, 1834-1881*, i. 151-152.

† Froude, *Thomas Carlyle : his First Forty Years, 1795-1835*, ii. 281.

And in the library of All Souls' College, Oxford, now happily reformed, like the College itself, looking wistfully at the ranged folios, he exclaimed :

“ Ah, books, books ! You will have a poor account to give of yourselves at the Day of Judgment. Here have you been kept warm and dry, with good coats on your backs, and a good roof over your heads ; and whom have you made any better or wiser than he was before ? ” *

When, in 1839, he began to buckle to on his *Cromwell* he was embarrassed by the want of the old standard works of reference, and the difficulty of working quietly at the British Museum. His Cambridge friends procured him some books, such as those of Clarendon and Rushworth—“ sent me ” he tells his brother, “ by persons whom I never saw ; a most handsome and encouraging phenomenon ! ” But as journeys from

* Froude, *Life in London*, i. 151.

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Chelsea to Bloomsbury in winter became more and more irksome, he determined to try what could be done to found in London a permanent lending library of standard literature.

In a letter to his mother at Annan, dated January 13, 1839,* after speaking of his study of *Cromwell*, he writes :

Another object that engages me a little in these last weeks is the attempt to see whether a Public Library cannot be got here in London; a thing scandalously wanted, which I have suffered from like others. There *is* to be some stir made in that business now, and it really looks as if it would take effect.

Amongst the friends whom he enlisted in this task were James Spedding and Richard Monckton Milnes, then M.P. for Pontefract, and afterwards Lord Houghton. Milnes,

* *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, by Alexander Carlyle, 1904, i. 147.

who himself collected a great and famous library, was at first sceptical as to the scheme. But Spedding, in an admirable letter, dated January 22, 1839, rallied the young politician to the scheme and explained its value with excellent sense and clearness.* A library, he wrote, would be very useful to a limited number of subscribers, though it were not immense. A club library does not allow members to take books home, and clubs are not good places for study. Many persons in London would read to good purpose if they could get access to the books they need. "Carlyle is in hope," he concludes.

Carlyle himself wrote a strong letter to Milnes:

Let us see one another face to face, and discover whether the half-dead embers already gleaned will not kindle into red,

* *Life of Lord Houghton*, by T. Wemyss Reid, i. 234. James Spedding (1808-1881) was the author of *Bacon's Works, Life, &c. &c.*, 1861-1874.

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when brought together. I long to see the matter either in decided motion or else dead and ended. If London must lie bookless, Heaven and Earth will witness! *

On February 5, 1839, Carlyle could announce some progress in a letter to his brother at Rome :

I have also breakfasted with Rogers ; the occasion was a mighty project—no less than that of instituting a Public Library here from which books might be *borrowed*. I have *preached* upon it till people take it up ; Spedding has promulgated a Prospectus ; Rogers † approves, Hallam ‡ and a list of official Lords are expected ; your friend Sir James Clark § *zealously* approves ; and now the Newspaper engine is set a-blowing ; slight thunder from the *Times*, a fierce blast (from

* Wemyss Reid, *Life*, i. 236.

† Samuel Rogers, poet, banker, and critic (1763-1855).

‡ Henry Hallam, historian (1777-1859).

§ Sir James Clark, Bart., was Court physician (1788-1870).

me) in the *Examiner*, &c.:—it really looks as if the thing would take effect in one shape or another.*

The “blast” was not so “fierce” that it cannot be borne to-day; for Carlyle used strong tropes even in his private letters. As a specimen of his style in the unusual character of anonymous journalist it is worth reading. It reveals again his personal irritability of nerves.

We are gratified to learn that a plan is in agitation for instituting, by subscription, a public library in the western quarter of London, upon the principle of books being lent out to be read at home. It aims to become “a collection of standard books in various languages, calculated for the use of literary men and of all who prosecute self-instruction and rational entertainment by reading.” Its grand feature is that the books are to be lent out among the shareholders.

* *New Letters*, i. 150.

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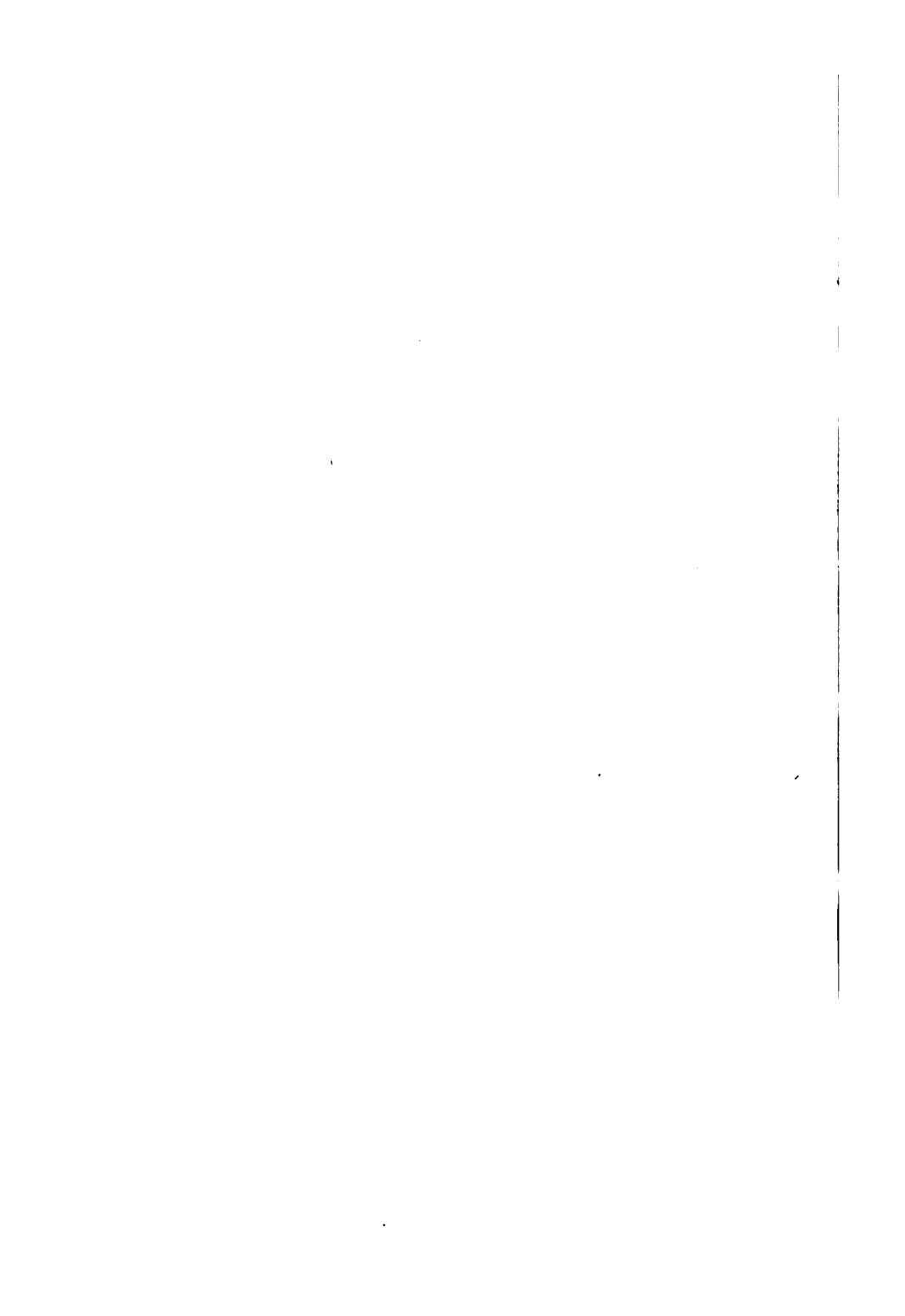
The details of the scheme are not yet matured; meanwhile some of the names mentioned are of excellent omen; and, indeed, on any reasonable scheme whatever we should think there would be plenty of subscribers found. The actual condition of London, in respect of accommodation for readers, is a shameful anomaly even in England. Several so-called Public Libraries exist; but chiefly they are for the use of special classes, and inaccessible and unknown to the public. The British Museum Library, where books are given out to be read in public rooms, is our sole public resource; a valuable one, which, under good management, might become more valuable, but, in any case, must be an altogether inadequate one. Many readers, engaged in business constantly during the reading hours, are as good as entirely excluded from this and from every such library. To all readers the buzz and bustle of a public room is an importunate distraction; to this waste of faculty add waste of time in coming and going; waste of patience in waiting; add discomfort, perturbation, headache, waste of

health ;—and we may fairly calculate that, for any book requiring study, one night in a man's own room might be worth a week in the other situation. Yet, without reading, there is no intellectual living : a life without letters is death, *vita sine literis mors est*. It has been well said, "He that forms a right public collection of books has opened the best of all high schools and universities, and even the only good university possible in these times." The government, in most civilised countries, has provided a supply of books which can be borrowed out, under proper restriction, by all that really have a call for them. Look at the state of France, of Germany, and then at that of England, above all of London ! There is a greater number of readers congregated here than anywhere else on the surface of the earth. That is one fact palpable enough. And now, in contrast with it, take another no less so. There does not exist here any library whatever, worthy of the name of library, from which a reader can borrow books ; nothing but "circulating" heaps of ephemeral rubbish,

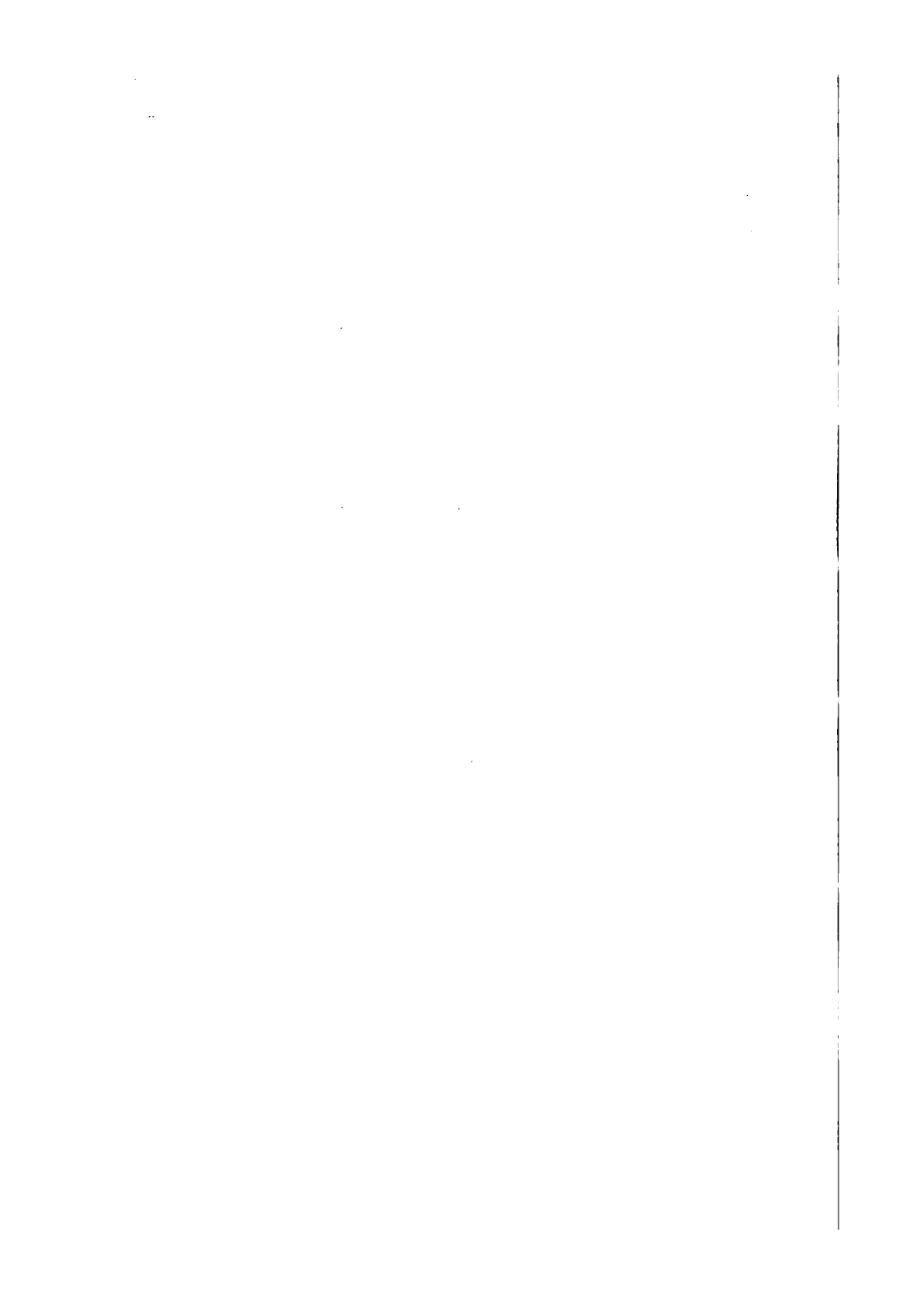
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charging their five and ten guineas annually, "libraries" which, for real purposes of knowledge, would be held contemptible in a sixth-rate provincial town! Since no government will remedy this want, the public is called upon to unite, and do it. We augur well for the present enterprise, and shall be happy to report the progress and success of it.*

* The *Examiner*, January 27, 1839, p. 52-53. The paper was at that time owned and edited by Carlyle's friend Albany Fonblanque. In 1839 Mudie's Library, "the Grosvenor," much less the Times Book Club, did not exist.



**LONDON SOCIETY
INTERESTED**



LONDON SOCIETY INTERESTED

DURING the year 1839 Carlyle was busy with reading for his *Cromwell*, with *Chartism* and other essays, and a course of lectures. He made friends, and began to visit occasionally in the great circles, both literary and political. In them he could not fail to push his library project. He breakfasted with Monckton Milnes, dined with the Marshalls of Leeds, the Barings (Lord and Lady Ashburton of later fame*), and with the

* William Bingham, second Lord Ashburton (1799–1864), married Lady Harriet Montagu, daughter of the sixth Earl of Sandwich, herself of the family of Cromwell's colleague and rival, the first Earl of Manchester: a lady destined to be famous as Gloriana in the Carlyle *Memoirs*; she died in 1857.

Stanleys of Alderley.* At Milnes' he met Bunsen, Henry Hallam, and Philip Pusey, M.P. At the Barings' he met Lord Mahon, the historian,† author of the *History of England* and the *Life of William Pitt*. Then he knew Count d'Orsay and Lady Blessington; Lockhart, Sir Walter's biographer, then editor of the *Quarterly Review*; Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David's, historian of Greece (1797-1875); Lord and Lady Holland,‡ Lord Normanby,§ Lord

* First Lord Stanley of Alderley (1766-1850); married Maria Josepha Holroyd, daughter of first Earl of Sheffield, Gibbon's friend and biographer. Carlyle was afterwards frequently a guest of the second Lord Stanley (1802-1869), and his wife Henrietta, daughter of Lord Dillon, who died in 1895. It is interesting to find Carlyle a frequent guest of the first Lady Stanley of Alderley, the extraordinary woman whom Gibbon so greatly esteemed, who was in effect the real compiler of Gibbon's autobiography, and who has transmitted so much of her energy and intellect to her numerous descendants.

† Fifth Earl Stanhope (1805-1875).

‡ Third Lord Holland (1773-1840). His wife was the Sultana of Holland House.

§ First Marquis, ambassador (1796-1863).

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Morpeth,* Lord Lansdowne; † Monsieur Guizot, French statesman; ‡ Lady Seymour; † Charles Dickens, whom Carlyle calls "Pickwick"; and John Stuart Mill.

He was now well known in the social and literary world of London, and the project of a meeting to start the Library was again taken up. He had written to his brother John in Ireland, February 27, 1840 :

"*Gerade zur unrechten Zeit*" once again, comes on our old speculation of a Library here! Spedding has formally given in; I must take the matter up; Forster, § Bulwer, ||

* Seventh Earl of Carlisle, statesman, reformer, and author, Irish Secretary and Viceroy (1802-1864).

† Third Marquis, great Whig magnate of early Victorian era, President of the Council (1780-1863).

‡ The Queen of Beauty at the Eglintoun Tournament, 1839, granddaughter of the Right Hon. Richard B. Sheridan, wife of fifth Duke of Somerset. She died 1884.

§ John Forster, historian and biographer, friend of Carlyle, Dickens, and Bulwer (1812-1876).

|| Sir Edward Lytton-Bulwer, first Lord Lytton, politician, man of fashion, and novelist (1803-1873).

&c. have agreed to act : it seems probable there will be a Public Meeting in a fortnight or three weeks, Lord Morpeth in the chair ; and so with speechifying and advertizing, the thing be fairly *tried*. . . . On Sunday last I had to go to an eight o'clock dinner with certain Stanleys. C. Buller,* was there, Fonblanque,† Bulwer,‡ Campbell of Islay,§ &c.||

At this time Carlyle began to act with the young barrister at the Temple, William Dougal Christie ; and he opened the correspondence with him which the family now make public. Christie took his degree at Cambridge in 1838, and was called to the Bar in 1840, being then twenty-four years of age. It does not appears by what channel he

* Charles Buller, M.P., Carlyle's pupil and devoted friend (1806-1848).

† Albany Fonblanque, editor of the *Examiner*, leading publicist of the time (1793-1872).

‡ See note ||, *supra*.

§ John Francis Campbell, Gaelic scholar ; d. 1885.

|| *New Letters*, i. 188.

was introduced to Carlyle. We may assume that it was by Fonblanque, as the young lawyer was already occupied with journalism.

William Dougal Christie (1816-1874) was the son of Dougal Christie, M.D. in the East India Service. He had already begun to write, and was favourably known in the political world. He was Member for Weymouth from 1842 to 1847. He afterwards entered the diplomatic service, and was Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary to Brazil in 1859. He retired with a pension in 1863. He edited the *Life* of the first Earl of Shaftesbury, and a *Memoir* of Dryden, 1870. "As an editor and historical student he is entitled to high praise." "A man of great ability and worth: acute and industrious, open and cordial, endowed with expansive sympathies and genial warmth of heart" (Dr. Garnett, in *Dict. Nat. Biography*).

**UNPUBLISHED LETTERS
OF CARLYLE**

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF CARLYLE

CARLYLE, whose name is given as secretary to the proposed library, was now occupied in issuing the prospectus, drawn by Spedding, and circulars to friends. He writes to Christie :

CHelsea, *Wednesday*.
[April 10, 1840.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Sir James Clark to-day signified a wish to have 20 of those Prospectuses and Circulars ; so many for the present he thought he could despatch. The address is, George Street, Hanover Square (Bart., M.D.).

Darwin* was to call for 12, in like

* Erasmus Darwin, elder brother of Charles Darwin, the author of the *Origin of Species*, &c. Carlyle writes : "I rather prefer him for intellect" (*Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 1889, p. 309).

manner ; Craik for 12. I too could do with half a dozen here. Would you in the meantime send one to E. Sterling, Esq.,* 2 South Place, Knightsbridge.

I wrote to Cole † on Monday ; he was to correspond with you : are there any news of him yet ?

Pray give these enclosed sheets to some of your Temple friends—or keep it for cigars.

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

Next we pass to a letter full of admirable sense and sound judgment as to the requisites for a librarian. Some of these sentences ought to be inscribed over the portal of every one of Mr. Carnegie's new libraries.

* Edward Sterling (1773-1847), journalist, then on the staff of the *Times* ; father of John Sterling, Carlyle's friend.

† Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B. (1808-1882), Assistant Keeper at the Record Office, Managing Commissioner of London Exhibitions, &c. &c.—“King Cole” of the Press.

CHELSEA, *Thursday Evg.*

[? *April*, 1840.]

DEAR CHRISTIE,

There is much in what you say about Cochrane* that seems to me altogether reasonable; well worth considering, and balancing against what is to be said on the *other* side.

He is evidently *older* by ten years than one could have wished. He *may* have a shade of "obstinacy" in him,—tho' the testimonials praise him as a man of courtesy and good temper and I in my experience of him never saw anything else.

I can well believe, at least, that he will not be so easily *guidable* as one of the mere clerk species might be; the *guidablest* of all quadrupeds is a starved cadger's garron, † reduced to skin and bone; no kicking or plunging

* John George Cochrane (1781–1852) was then in his sixtieth year.

† Garran, or garron, is a Highland hack. "He will make their cows and garrans to walk, if he do no other mischief to their persons" (Spenser's *State of Ireland*).

from *him* ; but, alas, withal there is no *go* in him !

What I have known or got to believe of Cochrane is that he possesses sense, energy, discretion, enterprise ; that his whole life has been a qualifying of himself for the management of such a business, and that now he would undertake it, sharing the risks along with us, in such a spirit as promises, were reasonable field granted him, the best results for us.

He certainly does not *write* in a very oracular manner ; but he writes not without clear sense of something that he means, of something that he ought to mean : and elegant writing is not the chief point with us.

I think it one of the most promising symptoms our Adventure has ever exhibited, that a solid man, of grave years, of much acquirement, capability and experience, is willing to embark his life interest upon it —and make it either prosper or fail himself to prosper. We should not lightly throw away such a possibility.

For the rest I do not so much fight for

Cochrane as for the principle of action involved in choosing him.

A saving of £50 annually to get a clerk instead of a Manager and Fellow-Adventurer hopefully on mature calculation committed to the scheme, and *bound* to make it succeed,—seems to me the deplorablest thrift.

Lewis * says, we must feel our way, save our £50, get a subordinate man, and *then* when we have succeeded, appoint some Cochrane over him! It is like sending out a military expedition for conquest in foreign countries under a *serjeant*, with strict proviso that *when* he has made conquests, we will send a General! Alas, too clearly, there will never be any General needed.

I must oppose this serjeant-scheme as altogether unwise,—and if there be any general, on not impossible terms, attainable for us.

Perhaps this other Hertford man, the sub-editor, *is* a general? If so let him produce probabilities of it superior to those of

* Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart., M.P., who ought to have known better. But he was ever an over-cautious man, fond of tentative methods.

Cochrane, and it is for him and not Cochrane that we must all vote. *Does* he in reality still continue a candidate? I understood you to announce that he had given up. It is very possible that he—in that case might ultimately prove to be the likelier man. But for Heaven's sake, no Clerk when there is a real Librarian attainable! Let us all decide upon that.*

My notion of the Librarian's function does not imply that he shall be king over us; nay that he shall ever quit the address and manner of a *servant* to the Library; but he will be as a *wise* servant, watchful, diligent, discerning what is what, incessantly endeavouring, *rough-hewing* all things for us; and, under the guise of a wise servant, *ruling* actually while he serves. Like a Nobleman's

* John George Cochrane (1781-1852) was born in Glasgow, and became a partner in the firm of White, Cochrane & Co., in Fleet Street, which failed owing to Archibald Constable's bankruptcy in 1826. Cochrane was manager to the publishers of the *Foreign and Quarterly Review*. He catalogued Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford library. He was now editor of a paper at Hertford.

Steward : that is in some sort the definition of him. We may make more or not so much approximation to getting such a man. But I am deeply sensible that with no such man we are still hovering among the shallows, a cargo to win or to lose. No enterprise in this world ever prospered without some one man standing to it not *par amours*, but heart and soul as a business. Lewis says, Yes, but Christie will be that man. Dare you undertake so much? If so, it will very greatly alter my computation; I shall feel greatly disposed to vote for whom you like! But fancy a boat propelled now by this man giving it a kick and going his ways, and then by another giving it a kick and going his ways! There must absolutely be a man with the tiller always in his hand, or the voyage will end *in Limbo Patrum*.*

Cochrane writes to me this morning a most despondent response to the letter he has got from you. The endless *hours* (from 8 to 6) &c., &c., strike him altogether dumb.

* The outer zone of Hell, in which were the patriarchs who died before the coming of Christ.

I explain that these are as yet but *suggestions*, that nothing is fixed but the £150;—that on the whole he had better still persist in coming up on Saturday, in looking at the business and letting us look at him face to face.

Could I not see you to-morrow evening here? I broke the back of a good forenoon to-day, and except a fruitless word with Lewis made nothing of it—There is another Candidate with Testimonials &c. in Pall Mall: pray look you after him.

These, dear Christie, are my notions about this Librarianship: but I promise always to avoid obstinacy, to lie *open* to light; nay I may profess that my first wish about the thing is not for this man or that man—but to get my own poor self honourably winded out of it in some way before long.

I will willingly do whatever I can about Lists. But what in the world can anybody do? It is not a universal Library of the King; alas, we have only £2,000 to cover the whole field of knowledge with! I think one of your first things should be the buying of a good book of Bibliography.

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Such a thing ought to be in the Library at any rate, one or more such—Brunet's in French is very common. But there is one *Ebert** (I think) which I have seen in one volume that seemed much preferable.

Can you lend me the Signet † Library Catalogue, or any good Library Catalogue? I could mark in certain provinces—what books I understand to be good—Our first set of purchases ought to be popular, entertaining, what people will read and *continue to read* (which last narrows the field greatly): that is, to a great extent, the rule for us.

Is anybody drawing up a Code of Regulations? This must by no means fail, and will take jargon ‡ enough before it get completed. How needful is a *man* for us in these very days!

The Lord forgive you for making me scribble all this stuff!

* Ebert, F.A. (*Allgemeines bibliogr. Lexicon*, 1821-1830).

† The famous library at Edinburgh of the Writers to the Signet.

‡ Jargon is a confused talk. "What more exquisite jargon could the wit of man invent than this definition?" (Locke).

Come and see me to-morrow, or *soon* at latest.

I am,

Yours always,

T. CARLYLE.

Carlyle, pressed with his forthcoming lectures, urges young Christie to attend to details. This letter was no doubt the origin of the elaborate pamphlet that Christie published in the following year.

CHELSEA, 28 *April*, 1840.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have forwarded your letter to Craik ; who, I doubt not, will respond directly. His address, should he forget it again, is "Vine Cottage, Old Brompton."

I am so busy I can hardly get a word uttered to anybody! Be content with the following *semi*-articulations.

The Advocates' Library is understood to have been instituted under the guidance of Sir George Mackenzie, a Lord Advocate celebrated in the time of Charles II., and

afterwards—it contains now probably somewhat between 100 and 150 thousand volumes ;—It has had the advantage of a series of guiding minds at the centre of it ; Ruddiman,* David Hume,† &c., have been successive Librarians of it (Lessing was Librarian of Wolfenbüttel, Heyne of Göttingen). Under the guidance of such men, it has *created* itself,—instead of merely agglomerating itself under no guidance but that of stupidity and chance. The funds are the £200 which each new-made Advocate (called to the Bar as you say) is bound to pay towards it,—the principal part of his expense in that process : I should guess the income annually might be some 3 or 4 thousand pounds, hardly more than that. They have a splendid edifice &c., of many rooms—Dr. Irving,‡ a man known in

* Thomas Ruddiman (1674–1757), chief librarian to the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh from 1730 to 1752.

† David Hume (1711–1776), philosopher and historian ; keeper of the Advocates' Library 1752–1757.

‡ David Irving, Hon. LL.D. (1778–1860), author of *Lives of the Scottish Poets, &c. &c.* ; librarian to the Faculty of Advocates 1820–1848.

Literary Biography, Bibliography and the like, is chief Librarian; three or four assistants are all skilled in books.

Each Advocate, has the privilege of borrowing 24 volumes; of these he can lend to anyone ("within seven miles of Edinburgh" I think the Law says, but the Law is not treated very strictly) what portion he pleases; the Books are called in, rigorously mustered and counted, once a year: a man failing to bring his books to muster, or do other bounden duty the Law may have appointed for him in that respect,—forfeits his right of reading; as a good many of my friends, the busier sort of advocates, have accordingly done.—The Advocates have long had, and even still have the privilege of a copy of each book from Stationers' Hall; a privilege they have well merited by their courteous treatment of all studious men,—to which indeed they consider this privilege as partly *binding* them in honour, as indeed it now reciprocally does. Were it *not* for the courtesy of the Advocates, Edinburgh were indeed better than London, yet but still a

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very poor place for books. Compared with Germany and France I believe *it* too, Advocates' Library and all, to *be* very poor.

Besides the Advocates, there is another Law corporation the next to them in dignity called Writers to the Signet, who within the last 20 years or so are fast getting together, by their own resources and subscriptions, a very respectable Library under precisely similar conditions: they too admit literary men, lend books to literary men, tho' they have no Stationers' Hall privilege as yet. I should have *excepted this* Library too when I compared Edin. with London for books. London is *incomparable*; the world cannot match it, not Reikiavik in Iceland can!*

There then it is on paper! God knows what I have written for you. You must not print a word of it in my name; print it in nobody's name till it be *combed*, cleared of its *crudities*, above all either verified with accuracy, or else expressed with due modesty and *roominess*. If you liked to take so much

* Which, as Carlyle had been informed, possessed a public library!

trouble, Dr. Irving, "Advocates Library, Edin." on your stating the case to him, and mentioning my name, would answer any *question*, I think, with due accuracy and decisiveness—But is it worth while ? *

Not at all, I should say. This morning along with your letter came that *Spectator*, and the paper in it,—by Webbe, I daresay. He has gone upon the *old* Prospectus, unluckily—His address is "E. Webbe, Esq., 11 Beak St., Regent Street"; pray, when you come back, see to have him a *right* prospectus and circular sent, or more than one. He is terribly deaf; one cannot speak to him: but he is in earnest about the thing. Darwin wants 12 more Prosp. and Circulars; Craik wants more:—in short, you are much wanted!

Fraser † has the white pasteboard affair, very conspicuous, announcing itself to all

* This *combing* and clearing was well done by Mr. Christie in the letter to Lord Clarendon, published by him in February 1841.

† James Fraser (d.1841). Publisher in Regent Street of *Fraser's Magazine*, *Carlyle's Heroes*, &c. &c.

Regent Street the last time I was there. Nothing or little will be done till you come ! It seems doubtful to me whether we shall be able to get up a meeting at all on Saturday. I am obliged to go riding every day ; I can see nobody, except those that will charitably come to see me. Few sons of Adam are in a greater tumble than I in these days ;—a chaos in little, what they call tornado in teapot, or the parturition of the mountains ! This day four weeks, *taliter qualiter*, I shall have it over,—God grant it might be for the *last* time under *such* conditions—But it does end ; all ends ; that is the comfort of it.*

In boundless (semi-articulate) haste

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

This letter has been considerably abridged in deference to the wish of Mr. Carlyle's

* The lectures on *Heroes* were given in May 1840. These were the last series of public lectures Carlyle ever delivered. See in Froude's *Life in London*, i. 176-185, and *New Letters*, i. 188-208.

representatives. He said himself that it was not to be issued in his name as it stood.

CHELSEA, 3rd May, 1840.

[Sunday.]

My DEAR SIR,

No Committee could constitute itself on Saturday ; Milnes had been called away suddenly by some unfortunate accident to his Father ; no committee-men but Craik and I made appearance ; except a sigh for the past, a wish and hope for the future, nothing could be done !—I found this letter lying from Cornewall Lewis (Poor Law Commission), who warmly joins himself to us ; I had sent a Note to him the day before—How he is to get his Twelve Circular-Prospectuses I cannot say till you come.

I supplied Darwin from my own 12 at Hooper's. We are now in pressing want of you here ! No *advertising*, nor any work will be done till you come and poke matters up. I have even my own doubts whether Fitzgerald * has verily distributed them. You

* This seems to be Edward Marlborough Fitzgerald, who left Cambridge about 1826, "in ill odour," says

are to be here to-morrow or next day? I address this to the Temple, thinking it probably the swiftest and certainly the surest method. Pray communicate with Forster as soon as possible, take order about these—Empson, Lewis etcetras, and let us see your face again.

Yours always truly,
T. CARLYLE.

The lecture course was in full swing, but Carlyle presses on the Library circulars.

CHELSEA, *Wednesday.*

[*May 6, 1840.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

I was sorry I could not see you yesterday—I conclude you *got* my two Notes ;

Thomas Wright (*Life of Edward FitzGerald*, i. 76, 312). He was a man whom Edward FitzGerald particularly disliked being mistaken for. This was one of the reasons why “Fitz” signed his initials E. F. G. It seems that E. M. Fitzgerald left the Committee and the Athenæum Club in 1842, and disappeared in *Limbum ignotorum*. He died in Paris. If it is true that he had a morbid habit of annexing books, he ought to have descended to a deeper place than Limbo.

and hope also that you are far on with your Review Article—Cannot you come down hither, and see me? I send you a dozen addresses for despatch of new Circulars—The return as yet, it seems from your examination, is but small; however, we must not despair—I suspect only a small fraction of Fitz’s Circulars are yet fairly off.*

We *must begin advertising*; we must begin working the great bellows—machinery of the Newspaper Press. To it!—I say to Forster and you; to it, like lions! Before the end of this month we may expect a very superior result to your actual “fifteen.”

If I can possibly I will attend you on Saturday, but alas, in these present weeks I am like a matron in labour,† and really do require to be dealt with accordingly—“As well as can be expected, thank you!”

* E. M. Fitzgerald seems to have been as casual as his famous namesake, and shortly to have slipped out of all connection with the Library, as also from the Athenæum Club. The true “Fitz” met Carlyle first in 1842.

† First lecture on *Heroes*, May 5, 1840; last lecture, May 22, 1840.

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Perhaps I shall see you before then.

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

They had now got as far as forming a committee and arranging the public meeting.

CHELSEA, *Thursday*.

[*May 7, 1840.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

To-morrow Night I shall be at home, and very glad to see you. Forster also would do no harm; at any rate, perhaps you could see him beforehand, and get out of him what news he had. I might have Craik here to meet you also; but I do not think he would have much to suggest that were definite.

At all events, come yourself!

My notion of this conclave at Milnes' is, that each come with his *own* notion in some sort of utterable shape, and there utter it; whereby a general notion, and scheme of procedure, may be articulated and got together. It were good, if we had the complete list of *parties present*, to consider

before hand, whether we shall make a Chairman, who shall be Chairman, who the Provisional Committee-men shall be &c. : these points we cannot settle here ; but these, and others, it will be well that we try to foreshadow for ourselves, so far as possible.

Come you therefore, with Forster, or with word from him ; with whomsoever or with word from whomsoever you find good ; if I fall in with Craik I will ask him too.

We have tea at six ; but I suppose that is far too early for you ? From half past six there is no tea more, and the decks are clear.

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

CHelsea, *Saturday eve.*

[? *May 9, 1840.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

I had summoned one or two people to Milnes' Conclave for Wednesday ; but learning from him that it must be for Saturday, I altered the date accordingly for these parties. The hour I mentioned was " Before two," we had better make it " Half past one for two "

(in the usual style of Placards): Milnes said "one *or* two" and we must not alter again if we can help it.

The persons I have asked hitherto are Bulwer, Forster, Fox,* (doubtful he) Craik, who is to bring a city man called Fry,† and a Scotch editorial character, Weir;‡ he was also to warn Long§ but perhaps you too had better speak or write to Long—Spedding and as many of the rest as you see good, and can come at, ought to be brought up. I will write to Milnes about it; and pray do you keep him awake and diligent in the interim.

Two things I think you should be prepared

* Rev. William Johnson Fox (1786–1864), Unitarian preacher, politician, and author; at South Place Chapel 1824; contributor to *Westminster Review*; M.P. 1847–1863; friend of Mill, Miss Martineau, Bulwer, and John Forster.

† Francis Fry (1803–1886), bibliographer, Quaker and peace deputy.

‡ William Weir (1802–1858), journalist, Scottish advocate; editor of *Glasgow Argus*; editor of *Daily News* 1854–1858.

§ Charles Edward Long (1796–1861), antiquary and genealogist.

with on the day we meet. First, a complete list of all the adherents already got ; secondly, a correct tale of what number of Prospectuses (in Fraser's, Ridgway's, your own, Forster's and Spedding's hands) do still remain to us.

In regard to the first matter, I have two new names to give you ; Thomas de la Rue,* 110 Bunhill Row ; William Weir, Esq.; Gloster Road, Brompton (mentioned above) ; a third name I conclude is Fry also mentioned above, but I do not know the designation aright—Fraser mentioned to me yesterday that he had sent a new name over to Spedding—The enumeration of the extant Prospectuses will, if we determine on a circular, of course be essential—Perhaps I shall see you before the day of meeting ? I go to ride daily at 2 ; am at home until then. Ridgway forwarded the Pamphlet, thro' the post, this morning. A man has it borrowed from me ; tho' not till after I had run over it myself—I do not in the least quarrel with your way of viewing *property* as an object of law, one of the most complex objects ; and

* Founder of printing firm (1793-1866).

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I find your cause vigorously argued. You give Sugden * a rap over the knuckles, knocking an absurdity out of the hand of *him* very handsomely ; for which, and for all else, thanks, thanks.

Believe me, My dear Sir,

Yours truly always,

T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, *Monday*.

[? *May* 18, 1840.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Fraser, I suppose, will write to you to-day about the Article. Perhaps your briefest way will be for you to go to him and to see at once what is feasible in the business.

I want some Prospectuses here. Fraser will take 200, will fold them up, and have them distributed on Friday at the door of the Lecture Room.† Names seem to

* Lord St. Leonards (1781-1875), Chancellor, and author of famous works on real property and equity. Sugden was a keen Tory, and Christie was an ardent Whig.

† Last lecture on "The Hero as King," May 22, 1840.

continue coming in. Stir every finger!
We *cannot* but prosper if we persevere.

Cole promises again this morning that he will do what he can—I do know slightly a young man called Lewes,* and will speak to him by the first opportunity: but I understand the *Monthly Chronicle* is just about expiring—We are to meet on Saturday *first*.

Yours always,

T. CARLYLE.

I wish you would go and look after Fitzgerald, whose works are involved in great obscurity to me,† and Milnes? Bring him up also on Saturday.

The “Hero” lectures were still pressing; but Carlyle reminds Christie as to the preliminary meeting.

* George Henry Lewes (1817–1878), contributor to *Quarterly* and monthly reviews; first editor of *Fortnightly Review*. He was now but twenty-three years old, and unknown.

† Fitzgerald’s personal ways remained obscure to the end, and were certainly eccentric.

CHELSEA, *Wednesday.*

[? May 20, 1840.]

MY DEAR SIR,

The *Morpeth* project * is under way ; Forster is to tell me the result, at Rennel's Printing Office, Little Pulteney Street (not far from the Quadrant), on Friday at half past three o'clock. I wish I could contrive to have you too of the party there. Is there no place between this and that where I could take you up, a little before that hour ? Hooper's shop, † for example ? or could you contrive to be at Rennel's yourself ? it was computed that the Meeting should take place this day three weeks—I beg of you not to be idle ! I saw Milnes yesterday ; I am to leave Prospectuses for him to-day—He seemed not indisposed to act ; but needed *igniting*—as so many do.

* Viscount Morpeth, M.P. for West Riding, was then Irish Secretary, and too busy to take the chair at the meeting. Afterwards seventh Earl of Carlisle.

† Henry Hooper, bookseller and publisher, 13 Pall Mall East.

I will try to find out Empson* to-morrow;
 why did I not undertake to be there with
 you to-day ?

Can you see Mill ? † Do you know where
 Cole haunts ? ‡ Leave no stone unturned !

Yours in great haste,

T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, *Thursday*.

[? *May 21, 1840.*]

Thanks, my dear Sir, for your good news
 —This morning the note now enclosed came
 from Fraser which also seems a symptom—
 Could you contrive to furnish him in any
 way with what he wants ? That seems for
 me the shortest method. Forster has abun-
 dance more of Prospectuses ; you need not be
 stingy of them.

* William Empson (1791–1852), professor at Hailey-
 bury College; editor of the *Edinburgh Review* 1847–1852.

† John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was at this time
 proprietor and editor of the *London Review*, and was
 preparing his *Logic*, published 1843.

‡ Sir Henry Cole was working on a scheme of postal
 reform for the Treasury 1839–1842.

I have written to Milman ; no answer ; indeed not yet time for one. I have set Arthur Buller* upon Cole, if he do not play me false, and forget.

Lord Northampton † were my favourite too, I think ; but any Lord will do : it is a mere ensign ; “British flag flying at the royal masthead” ; All *depends* upon the *gunners* ! Fire away !

Ever truly yours,

T. CARLYLE.

CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA. *Saturday.*

[? *May 23, 1840.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

I am sorry I could not expect you yesterday ; still more for the cause, which I hope is in the way of abating now—I did not call at the Club ; my course leading me thro’ other streets.

You are an energetic labourer, with your

* Arthur Buller, younger brother of Charles, both Carlyle’s pupils and intimate friends.

† Second Marquis (1790–1851) ; succeeded as Marquis 1828 ; published verses ; President of the Royal Society.

21 letters a day! Pray, persist, and slacken not—A few more such shoulders to the wheel, and the very wheel of destiny must move. Forster had seen Bulwer, Bulwer had written duly to Lord Morpeth, from whom however at that date there was no response. Bulwer attributed the silence to the pickle our poor Whig Ministry had got into again; in which it seems his lordship had to act a main part. An answer Bulwer felt no doubt, would come, and in the affirmative; this he had undertaken to despatch instantly hither, as Forster was going out of town till Thursday next—I will send it on to you—I must bring you and F. together on his return.

I found Empson; very willing to act, but unfortunately soon bound for the country. He was to talk to Milman, to Lord Northampton &c. I have also seen Milnes again; he has made a convert of Pusey the member for Bedfordshire,* whom I wish I

* Philip Pusey (1799–1855), agriculturalist, and Tory Free-Trader; one of the founders of the Royal Agricultural Society in 1840.

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could see, for he is a good man, and slightly known to me. Could not you go, and blow upon Milnes again : the live-coal there is but of a *dull* red as yet. John Mill never emerges in my horizon of late ; I believe him heartily well-disposed to the enterprise, could he be set in motion.* Agitators are wanted—Agitate ! Agitate ! Agitate ! If you can get so far before 2 o'clock any day, or after 5 any evening, you are sure to find me here. Perhaps on Monday I may be in the Strand ; I will in that case try Harcourt Buildings,† but do not you stay in for me.

With the worst of pens, and in great haste,

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

* No doubt too busy at the India Office and with his *Logic*.

† Christie's chambers in the Temple.



PUBLIC MEETING

PUBLIC MEETING

DURING this time there had been sundry notices in the Press, especially in the *Examiner*, which was practically Carlyle's organ. On May 17, 1840, there was an advertisement giving names of the book-sellers—Longmans, Moxons, Rivingtons, Frasers, Ridgways, Hatchards, &c. &c.—who would enroll subscribers' names. The notice is signed :

THOMAS CARLYLE }
E. M. FITZGERALD } Hon. Secretaries.

12 *May*, 1840.

In the *Examiner* of the same date is an editorial note, written or suggested by Carlyle, again urging the scheme :

To the majority of students the British Museum is a sealed place ; to all who are engaged in the composition of learned or laborious works its only use at any time has been to increase the sense of the disadvantages they laboured under, by its tantalising exhibition of books which they could not possibly enjoy the use of. The sacrifice of time and of health may be thought all fair in such pursuits as these, but let it be recollected, however cheerfully disposed the majority may be to the sacrifice of both, there must always be very many remaining who find it utterly impossible to read or work in a public room at all.

It is interesting to see the hesitation with which Carlyle faced "a public meeting." It was the age of public meetings. And yet at his first attempt he made an admirable speech.

CHELSEA, 29 May, 1840.

MY DEAR SIR,

Here are two very premature letters from a certain Mr. Macray of Oxford, who wishes to become our Librarian.

I answered his first letter ; promising to write again if there arose any likelihood of his being useful to us or our being useful to him. I now give up the letters to your keeping as safer than mine.

It seems to me we want greatly a man *experienced* in Public Meetings ; as yet it all hangs very theoretic to me, very questionable. What *is* a Public Meeting ? I now, for almost the first time ask myself that,—and know not how to answer. The thing is scenic, phantasmagoric, real-imaginary ; a very curious thing ! My practical petition is, that you keep me very deep in the background ; altogether invisible if it so might be : I am in no case for speaking at present, were the ground never so clear to me.

I have been quite unwell since I saw you.

I will *attempt* Saturday ; yet with no absolute certainty of making it out.

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

Here is a characteristic letter with a curious mixture of good sense and *naïveté*. As Carlyle was advertised along with the *helluo librorum* "Fitz" as secretary, it was natural that the *Times* should call upon him to pay for the advertisement. He calls this "dunning" !

CHELSEA, Saturday.

[June 13, 1840.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Here are certain Documents about the Library ; only one of which is important, and that only important to the length of six and sixpence,—for a *Times* advertisement, which the Thunderer dunned me for to-day!

I know not what became of Spedding and Lord Clarendon—I *could* not join them—I wrote to Spedding, but have no answer.

I am very busy ; often enough at home till

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five in the afternoon ; then over to Wandsworth region, merely for a gallop to sustain life—and not once in Brick Babylon for days. Cannot you come hither ?

Yours ever truly,

T. CARLYLE.

Mill is appointed to come to us on Monday night.

Monday :—The post was missed on Saturday—the Thunderer did get impatient (papae !) anxious for his six and sixpence ; I have paid him, and now keep the document receipted—good against you !

CHelsea, *Monday morning.*

[? *June 15, 1840.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

Yesterday by accident I came to understand that we had made a mistake in our Lithograph : the date of Hooper's is not 10 but 13*—Pray have this rectified in time.

* Query. Christie's pamphlet, 1841, published by Hooper, bears on its title-page "London : Henry Hooper, 31 Pall Mall East," the number being changed.

Would it not be good moreover to *speak* to Hooper first on the matter ! Cole will take charge of 20 Prospectuses as soon as they are printed, and of 10 more inclosed in circulars without address. He promises farther to afford certain *Lists*, that will assist us in addressing the general 1,000.* Pray write to him accordingly (Hooper's) when the day comes—I beg you farther to concentrate all your attention on this general problem of the *addresses*.

Forster and you and Spedding ought also to have a fit advertisement for the Newspapers ready. Finally why do you not write an emphatic Pamphlet on *this*,—and a dozen emphatic Newspaper articles ? *Stir* the waters : *stir* them, leave no rest till they are all in white froth,—and the sea goddess of a Library born and floated safe to land thereby !

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

* Henry Cole during all this time was engaged in the new Post Office reform.

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The meeting came off on June 24, 1840, and was a much greater success than Carlyle, in his pessimistic and self-depreciatory way, had anticipated. He had written to his brother on the 22nd of that month :

On Wednesday we are to have a Public Meeting for that Library affair. I apprehend it will be but flat ; I have taken little trouble with it ; I am to make some kind of speech, along with others. The thing seems really as if it were taking life.*

Carlyle's speech was indeed a real success, and so was the meeting. The speech is so characteristic, and so full of sensible remarks as to the purpose and scope of the London Library, that it should be read in full as reported in the newspapers.

We read in the *Examiner* of Sunday, June 28, that the meeting of Wednesday, 24th, at the Freemasons' Tavern was

* *New Letters*, i. 198.

“crowded to overflow,” and was attended by persons “of literary and political distinction.” Lord Eliot, Lord Monteaule, the Rev. H. H. Milman, and Lord Lyttelton made clear and practical speeches, insisting on the necessity of books being taken from a library for any serious study, whilst the ordinary circulating libraries mainly contributed ephemeral literature. Mr. Carlyle was received, says the report, “with loud cheering,” and his characteristic speech is reported in full. The present report is taken from the *Examiner* (1840, page 408). Nothing could be said at once more practical and more incisive. It was a model for an address to a trained and sympathetic audience.

CARLYLE'S ONE SPEECH



CARLYLE'S ONE SPEECH

It does not become us, who are as yet only struggling for existence, who are merely nascent, and have nothing but hopes and a good purpose, to commence by casting any censure on the British Museum. Accordingly we mean no censure by this resolution. We will leave the British Museum standing on its own basis, and be very thankful that such a Library exists in this country. But supposing it to be managed with the most perfect skill and success, even according to the ideal of such an Institution, still I will assert that this other Library of ours is requisite also. In the first place by the very nature of the thing, a great quantity of people are excluded altogether from the British Museum as a reading room. Every man engaged in business is occupied during the hours it is

kept open ; and innumerable classes of persons find it extremely inconvenient to attend the British Museum Library at all. But granting that they all could go there, I would ask any literary man, any reader of books, any man intimately acquainted with the reading of books, whether he can read them to any purpose in the British Museum ? (Cheers.) A book is a kind of thing that requires a man to be self-collected. He must be alone with it. (Cheers.) A good book is the purest essence of a human soul. How could a man take it into a crowd, with bustle of all sorts going on around him ? The good of a book is not the facts that can be got out of it, but the kind of resonance that it awakens in our own minds. (Cheers.) A book may strike out of us a thousand things, may make us know a thousand things which it does not know itself. For this purpose I decidedly say, that no man can read a book well, with the bustle of three or four hundred people about him. Even for getting the mere facts which a book contains, a man can do more with it in his own apart-

ment, in the solitude of one night, than in a week in such a place as the British Museum. Neither with regard to circulating Libraries are we bound to utter any kind of censure ; Circulating Libraries are what they *can be* in the circumstances. I believe that if a man had the heroism to collect a body of great books, to get together the cream of the knowledge that exists in the world, and let it be gradually known that he had such a Library, he would find his advantage in it in the long run ; but it would be only in the long run ; he must wait ten or twenty years, perhaps a lifetime ; he must be a kind of martyr. You could not expect a purveyor of Circulating Literature to be that ! (Cheers and laughter.) The question for such a person to ask is not : “ Are you wanting to read a wise book ? ” but “ Have you got sixpence in your pocket to pay for the reading of *any* book ? ” (Laughter.) Consequently he must have an eye to the prurient appetite of the great million, and furnish them with any kind of garbage they will have. The result is melancholy—making

bad worse;—for every bad book begets an appetite for reading a worse one. (Cheers.) Thus we come to the age of pinchbeck in Literature, and to falsehoods of all kinds. So, leaving all other institutions, the British Museum, and the Circulating Libraries, to stand, I say that a decidedly good Library of good books is a crying want in this great London. How can I be called upon to demonstrate a thing that is as clear as the sun? London has more men and intellect waiting to be developed than any place in the world ever had assembled. Yet there is no place on the civilised earth so ill supplied with materials for reading for those who are not rich. (Cheers.) I have read an account of a Public Library in Iceland, which the King of Denmark founded there. There is not a peasant in Iceland, that cannot bring home books to his hut, better than men can in London. Positively it is a kind of disgrace to us, which we ought to assemble and put an end to with all convenient despatch. The founding of a Library is one of the greatest things we can do with regard

to results. It is one of the quietest of things ; but there is nothing that I know of at bottom more important. Every one able to read a good book becomes a wiser man. He becomes a similar centre of light and order, and just insight into the things around him. A collection of good books contains all the nobleness and wisdom of the world before us. Every heroic and victorious soul has left his stamp upon it. A collection of books is the best of all Universities ; for the University only teaches us how to read the book : you must go to the book itself for what it is. I call it a Church also—which every devout soul may enter—a Church but with no quarrelling, no Church-rates——

“The remainder of the sentence,” says the reporter, “was drowned in cheers and laughter, in the midst of which Mr. Carlyle sat down.”*

The meeting was presided over by Lord

* The *Examiner* was at this time edited by Albany Fonblanque, Carlyle's friend, and the report was probably seen and corrected in proof by Carlyle.

Eliot *—not Lord Morpeth, who at the time was Irish Secretary in Lord Melbourne's Government. Other speakers were Lord Monteagle,† Rev. H. H. Milman,‡ Lord Lyttelton,§ Charles Buller, R. M. Milnes, George Cornwall Lewis,|| William Dougal Christie.

Carlyle was followed by Charles Buller, Monckton Milnes, and Sir G. Cornwall Lewis, Milnes saying that if Gibbon had not been rich enough to expend £7000 on books

* Then M.P. for East Cornwall, afterwards third Earl of St. Germans (1798–1877). On taking the chair Lord Eliot read a letter from Lord Clarendon regretting his absence owing to official duties and strongly recommending the scheme. He was then Lord Privy Seal and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

† Thomas Spring-Rice, first Lord Monteagle, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1835–1839; d. 1866.

‡ In 1840 Rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster; Dean of St. Paul's 1849–1868.

§ The fourth Baron Lyttelton, famous scholar; Under-Secretary for Colonies 1846; d. 1876.

|| Second baronet, 1855; M.P. 1846–1863; Home Secretary, Cabinet Minister, 1855–1863.

his great history would never have been written. Mr. Christie said they had already as many subscribers as they could expect, but more were required, and he hoped that all who had come "to hear," would remain "to pay." He insisted that those who studied for the world's gain might now be enabled to labour "free from the discomforts which were too often aggravated by the sensibilities of genius."

The chairman and all the speakers at the meeting were nominated as members of the Committee to draw up rules and organise the Library. And amongst others we read the names of the Earl of Clarendon,* George Lillie Craik,† E. M. Fitzgerald, John Forster, Arthur Helps,‡ Thomas

* Fourth Earl, ambassador and Minister (1800-1870).

† Editor, author, and Professor of Literature (1778-1866).

‡ Sir Arthur Helps (1813-1875), Clerk of the Privy Council 1860-1875, and author of various works,

Key,* Kenneth Macaulay, † Philip Pusey, M.P., James Spedding, Serjeant Talfourd, M.P., ‡ George S. Venables, § Sir Edward Lytton-Bulwer, W. E. Gladstone, M.P., || Sir S. Glynne, Bart., M.P., ¶ Sir W. Heygate, Bart., and Viscount Howick, M.P.**

* Latin Scholar, headmaster London University School (1799-1875).

† Kenneth Macaulay, Q.C., M.P. for Cambridge (1815-1867).

‡ Sir Thomas N. Talfourd, Justice of the Common Pleas (1795-1854).

§ Q.C., leading counsel at the Parliamentary Bar, journalist, friend of Tennyson, &c. &c. (1810-1888).

|| Four times Prime Minister (1809-1898).

¶ Ninth and last baronet, brother-in-law of Mr. Gladstone (1807-1874).

** Third Earl Grey, Whig statesman, Secretary for the Colonies (1802-1894).

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CHOICE OF A LIBRARIAN

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CHOICE OF A LIBRARIAN

SHORTLY after the public meeting of June 24 the Committee met to draw up rules and choose a permanent Secretary and Librarian. The first committee, held in July 1840, was attended by Carlyle, Gladstone, Lord Lyttelton, G. Cornwall Lewis, Milnes, Philip Pusey, and George Venables. And during the year, whilst Carlyle was in London, he attended various committees. During this time W. D. Christie was the acting Secretary, for Carlyle was too busy with *Cromwell* for secretarial work ; E. M. Fitzgerald being *non inventus*, and, for adequate grounds, a negligible quantity. The pressing point for Carlyle was a competent secretary, and in December he again wrote to Christie.

CHELSEA, 24 Dec., 1840.

MY DEAR CHRISTIE,

Inclosed is a letter about Simpson, the Candidate for the Librarianship: the writer is a Dr. Murray,* an Edinburgh literary man of respectable character, whom I knew long ago. Let it be *in retentis* till this mighty matter gets settled.

I had yesterday an immense letter from Cochrane; he is coming up on the 2nd January; and, I suppose, will invade your quarters then. He has sent a considerable Pamphlet of Testimonials, printed several years ago, without effect, in reference to the Advocates' Librarianship and the Signet do, —in both of which adventures he failed. He offers to reprint certain of these, with others now, for our behoof. I leave them with Brittan, and request you to look at

* Probably Thomas Murray (1792–1872), printer and miscellaneous writer, intimate with Carlyle, established a printing business at Edinburgh 1841; or Dr. John Murray (1786–1851), author of papers in the *Philosophical Magazine*.

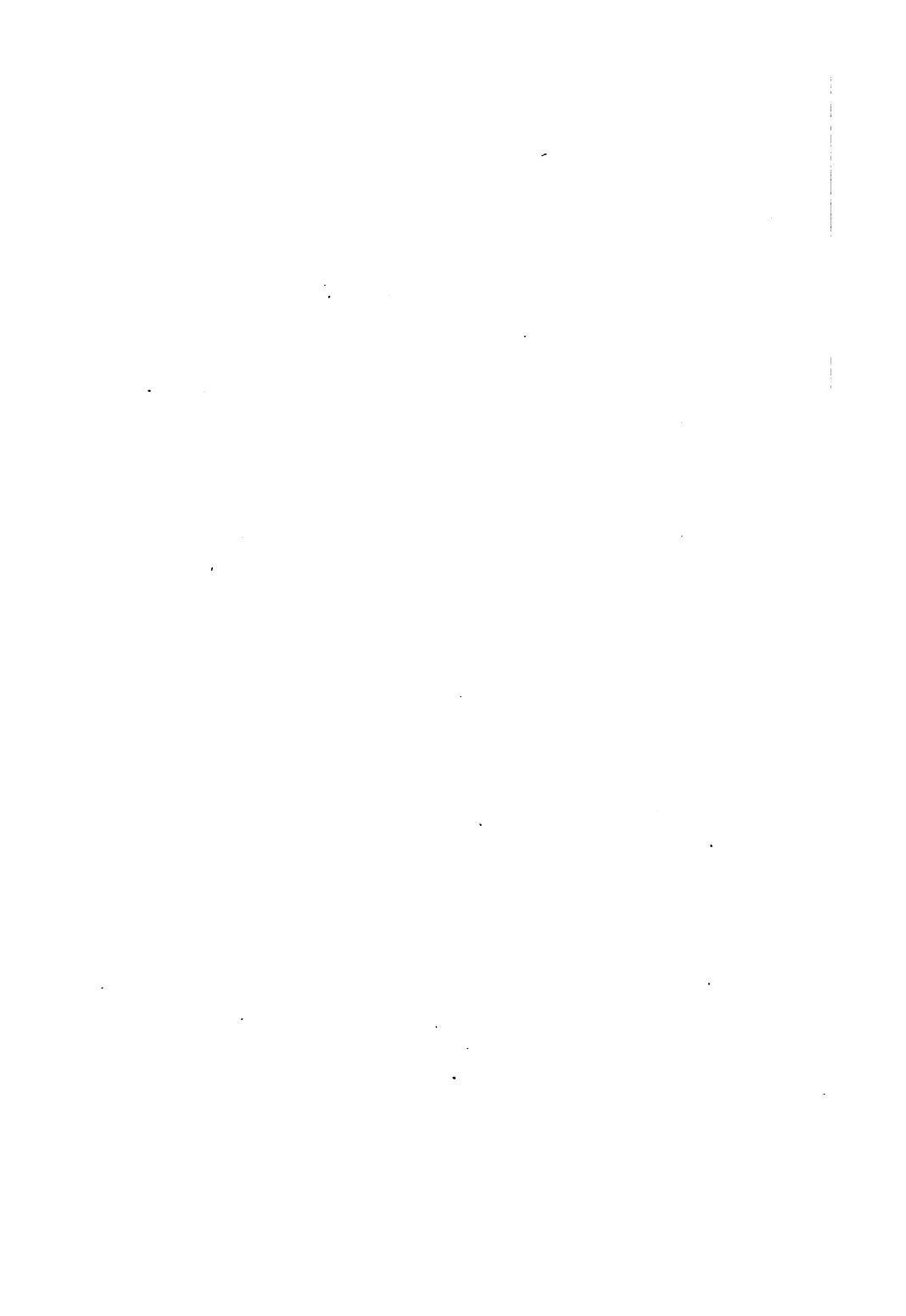


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[W. G. Roberts

WILLIAM DOUGAL CHRISTIE

(From a portrait by George Richmond, R.A.)



them, and shew them to your neighbours, as you find occasion.

One other point:—the Pamphlet,* it seems, is *unique*, the safety of it must be guarded like the apple of one's eye! My conviction that this Cochrane, since we can get him, will be the most important of acquisitions for us, is strong.

Yours always truly,
T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, 8 Jan., 1841.

DEAR CHRISITIE,

I hope you have not frightened away poor Cochrane; he seemed in tolerable spirits on Saturday night, and I have heard no whisper of him since!

Lady-day is not so good as the morrow morning would have been; yet we must not say *Non est* for that.

I have just seen Fisher; a solid Irishman, not without sense; totally without experience,

* Apparently the letter to Lord Clarendon, published by Christie in 1841.

without habit of self-direction in any kind (I fear), who does not look as if he could go many yards without driving! Cochrane *versus* him would detain no Committee long, I think.

By the way, what *is* Washbourne equal to? Is he getting proofs ready? Let us see that between *three* stools we fall not to the ground!

It seems *Washbourne* is the bookseller that *failed*. Whether Cochrane ever did such a feat is as yet entirely hypothetical for me.

The Catalogue is come; *not* the old *Class catalogue* I was used to! *Que faire?*

Yours always,

T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, *Wednesday evening.*

[*1 January 12, 1841.*]

DEAR CHRISTIE,

There cannot be a better *Circular* than this which you have constructed. Let it be printed, and sent abroad with all despatch. The line in italics seems to me to express sufficiently all that we can do as to

shaping out a general form of a Library, *till once a right Librarian be found*. That is the great point at present. General maps of Human Knowledge, Encyclopedical Trees of the Sciences, &c., &c., can be found in abundance ready-made (d'Alembert and others have made such; the Library Catalogue contains such), when once we have any funds for realising them! Let us get the best possible *man*, and set *him* to work in the middle of our possibilities: the line in italics will be his best guidance I think.

As to Cole, consider that I have said whatsoever I had to say; that, for the rest, I have no wish in it at all.

Do what you shall find advisablest; you are to see the man, and will judge what help lies in him, how it may be brought out of him,—or perhaps left lying in him.

You will scan Fisher as with microscopes, you, Spedding, Venables and the rest of you. On Wednesday at farthest—I calculate on hearing something. Fisher or another once found, you will let me out of the affair. I am the Peter the Hermit, you the Louis VII.;

and behold the Crusade now marches,—Peter retiring to his prayers again!

At Buckingham House, did you observe there stood a row of cabs, always eager to run towards Chelsea with a *man* like you?

Yours always,

T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, *Wednesday.*

[? *January* 20, 1841.]

DEAR CHRISTIE,

I rejoice to find you still busy—visible or invisible.

Were it not for the frightful 4 miles of mud and frost—fog, I would gladly be with you to-morrow night: but really it *is* frightful; almost equal I think to swimming of the Hellespont in that *Greek* climate of Leander's!

But do you meet me at the Library office to-morrow by daylight! We will say 3 o'clock, and decide on punctuality. Or if you do not like to-morrow, call it Friday, and warn me.

Cochrane, two days ago, apprises me that

he is still a candidate ; that he is rapidly printing Testimonials. I had given it as my notion that the Lady day was not fatal.

Washbourne seemed to me a sensible, good-tempered, active, useful-looking man. He professes to be no great bibliographer, ignorant indeed except of English (I think) but he could *buy* Books &c. very well. I have seen Haas too and Baynes,—the latter of them a shrewd kind of man. Now, let us meet to-morrow ; unless you wish to be excommunicated ! There should be order taken too (on the Committee day which pray keep !) about the getting of a house. Does Venables know anything on that ?

Yours always,

T. CARLYLE.

CHELSEA, *Tuesday evening.*

[? *January 26, 1841.*]

DEAR CHRISTIE,

The Postscript was altogether right ; all that was wanted, had I known of it—“ Commutation ” cannot, of course, be spoken

about again ; there is nothing more to be said of that.

As to the voting, I have no plans at present : a plan doubtless will not be difficult to fall upon. Alas, I hoped we might have got the matter managed *without voting* !

But if a man's conviction differ from that of another man, or other men, he not only will but should express it. Bunbury, by the bye, I remark, is not on the Committee. On what side he will vote, I know not ; or whether he is not aware of this fact and will abstain from voting. Of course it were fit that he should be apprised *before* attempting to vote rather than after.

Mr. Hayes' Testimonials have arrived this morning. It seems, contrary to what I had conjectured, that he is about Cochrane's age (or Washbourne's) *not* destitute of worldly experience at least. His bibliographical and other acquirements seem to be a little more problematic as yet. Is it true that he failed *twice* as a bookseller in London here ; or only once ? Consider this ! Well ! I wish we were handsomely over to-morrow. Before

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many more morrows go I design to be handsomely out of the thing altogether.

Yours truly always,

T. CARLYLE.

The Minute books of the Library show that Carlyle attended meetings until the election of the Librarian. On January 27, 1841, (Dean) Milman being chairman, Carlyle proposed Mr. Cochrane as Librarian, and he was duly elected. He entered on his duties shortly afterwards ; and Carlyle, as he had always stated, ceased to be a regular attendant at committees. They were frequently attended during these early years by Milman, Henry Hallam, Sir Harry Verney, Sir John Shaw Lefevre, George Grote, and many men eminent in literature and politics.

After the election of the Librarian Carlyle's principal interest lay in the acquisition of a nucleus of a library. Immediately after the meeting of January 27 Carlyle writes to Christie as to the list of books.

CHELSEA, *Friday.*

[? *January 29, 1841.*]

DEAR CHRISTIE,

Here is a kind of Italian List furnished by a very gifted native of that country, not entirely unacquainted with ours.* It will require great *sifting*.

Brittan has undertaken to stay till the 17th. My announcement to Cochrane was merely that he was elected; that he was looked for here *not later* than the above date. [No doubt February 17.]

Yours always truly,

T. CARLYLE.

The Committee being now in full work, and the Librarian duly elected, Carlyle does not seem to have found it necessary to give personal attendance. Years afterwards an unknown member applied to him and re-

* This was doubtless Joseph Mazzini, who was on friendly terms with Carlyle and his wife, but *mal vu* in the English official world, and is therefore not *named*. See *Life in London*, i. 344.

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ceived the reply that follows. The London Library recently acquired the original, and we add it to this series of letters. I venture to think that all which Carlyle wrote in 1846 of the Committee, and still more of the Librarian, will be found to be entirely justified in 1907.

CHELSEA, 6 November, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

Here, according to your request, is the enclosure contained in your first letter. My name stands in the Committee List of the London Library, but I do not take, and never took, any share in the management, and indeed in late years am rarely able to attend at all. I am very sorry you find the performance of the poor Institution so unsatisfactory. To me it yields on the whole tho' by no means what I wished, yet some average approximation to what I hoped. The Committee, I believe, will readily listen to any practical suggestion; and the poor Librarian, with all his defects, is a most obliging good-natured man, eminent for patience,

cheerfulness, *and bibliography*, who will rejoice to do for any member, still more for any member like you, whatsoever is really in his power.

Believe me, My dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

T. CARLYLE.

LIBRARY IN FULL WORK

LIBRARY IN FULL WORK

EARLY in the year 1841 Mr. Christie published the pamphlet in which Carlyle took such interest, in the form of a letter to the Earl of Clarendon, dated from the Temple, February 15, 1841, and published by Henry Hooper, 31 Pall Mall East. As the pamphlet was evidently inspired by Carlyle and received his warm approval, it may be useful to give a sketch of it.

It begins by explaining the object of the Committee to be "the establishment in London of a large, general, comprehensive Library, from which books may be taken out to be read at home." Such libraries, it shows, existed in almost all the capitals and larger towns of Continental Europe. In Paris there

was the Bibliothèque Royale, the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève, and the Bibliothèque Mazarine, together having (then) nearly a million of volumes. From all of these books could be taken away under certain conditions. The same is true of the royal libraries in Berlin, Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart. Throughout the German States, with the exception of Austria, in every town where a university is established, the library is accessible to inhabitants, through the professors. Such towns as Frankfort, Hanover, and Dusseldorf, which have no universities, possess public libraries of their own. In Holland, there are lending libraries in Amsterdam, Leyden, and the Hague. In Sweden there was the royal library of Stockholm, and eleven provincial libraries as well. Copenhagen contained three public libraries, containing 535,000 volumes, and public lending libraries existed in the seven dioceses of Denmark. There is a public

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library, from which books may be taken out, in Iceland. "*Yet the British capital possesses no large public Library of this sort.*"

In Edinburgh there were three public libraries, with 270,000 volumes, from which books could be taken out ; in Glasgow there were two such libraries ; and there were adequate lending libraries in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Halifax, Bristol, Sheffield, Plymouth, Norwich, Newcastle, Bath, Hull. In London there is no lending library "capable of supplying the intellectual wants of its inhabitants." *

The pamphlet then cites Gibbon, in the sonorous passage from his *Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 591 : "The greatest city in the world is destitute of that useful institution, a public library ; and the writer who has undertaken to treat on any large historical

* The *Literary Gazette* of June 27, 1840, had said that, with "abundance of new trash," they were "strange old stores of bygone publications."

subject is reduced to the necessity of purchasing for his private use a numerous and valuable collection of the books which must form the basis of his work."

The pamphlet goes on to describe the libraries in London which lend out books, showing how small and inadequate they were for such purposes as Gibbon's. The object of an ordinary "circulating library" was to supply "new books in light literature." The object of the London Library was to supply "good books in all departments of knowledge." New light literature would not be excluded. But its essential purpose was to offer the best books for the general reader and to provide material for all engaged in research. With 5,000 subscribers and an annual income of £10,000 * the London Library "might raise its head among the libraries of Europe and

* This sanguine estimate has not yet been altogether reached.

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redeem London from its present deficiency and disgrace.”

A room was taken at 57 Pall Mall, and the Secretary, Mr. J. C. Cochrane, continued to act until 1852, when he was succeeded by William Bodham Donne. The Library was to contain books in all departments of literature and philosophy, and in all languages. By the beginning of the year 1841 about five hundred subscribers were entered on the books. Amongst them it is interesting to note the names of Mrs. John Austin, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, Erasmus Darwin, Charles Dickens, William Ewart, M.P., who carried the Public Libraries Act in 1850, Rowland Hill, W. C. Macready, Miss Martineau, Rev. F. D. Maurice, J. H. Merivale, Samuel Rogers, Lord John Russell, and many other members of both Houses of Parliament. It is plain that in the 'forties the Library was regarded as a social institution

of great utility which political leaders and writers felt it a public duty to support.

Eleven years later we again find Carlyle taking active part in the Committee of the Library. In the spring of 1852 Mr. J. G. Cochrane, the secretary, died at the age of seventy-three. Carlyle insisted on "a thorough examination and illumination of the Library's *condition*, from the very heart to the surface of it—whereby we might know what *kind* of Librarian might now be the best for us :— and that not till after that should any Election, or movement towards an Election, be made by any one of us." *

It appears that Gladstone was anxious to have appointed as Librarian an Italian scholar, then a refugee in London, James Lacaita.†

* *New Letters*, ii. 127. Letter to Dr. Carlyle.

† Sir James Philip Lacaita (1813–1895), a Neapolitan advocate, and legal adviser to the British Legation at Naples. He assisted Gladstone in the material for his famous letter on King Bomba's misgovernment, and was obliged to fly, and lived in London, 1852. From

Carlyle tells his brother that "Gladstone and his Helpers were stirring Heaven and Earth to bring about—the Election of Gladstone's Neapolitan"; and he fears that Milman, Lyttelton, Milnes, Hallam, &c., are "under the hammer of a Minister *in posse*." Carlyle was resolved to oppose this—on the ground, apparently, that the Italian gentleman was wholly unknown in England, and that his friends were supporting him more from desire to assist him than from their belief in his competence in English literature. Carlyle writes to his brother in his usual vehement

November 1853 until 1856 he was Professor of Italian at Queen's College, London. He acted as Secretary to Lord Minto, to Lord Lansdowne, and in 1858 was secretary to the mission of Gladstone to the Ionian Islands, when he was made K.C.M.G. He afterwards had a diplomatic mission from Cavour, and was Deputy in the Italian Parliament, and ultimately Senator. He was a contributor to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to Lord Vernon's *Dante*, and to Murray's *Handbook for South Italy*, and compiled the catalogue of the Chatsworth Library.

way: "Gladstone shall not do it without one man at least insisting on having Reason and common Honesty as well as Gladstone and Charity at other men's expense, satisfied in the matter; and protesting to a plainly audible extent against the *latter* amiable couple walking over the belly of the former. Of Gladstone's Neapolitan no man, Italian or other, has heard the name before: from Gladstone's own account to me, I figured him as some ingenious bookish young advocate, who probably had helped Gladstone in his Pamphlets under hand,—a useful service, but not done to the London Library particularly."*

It was no fault of Carlyle's that he could not know what high qualities, both literary and administrative, Lacaita possessed. In a

* *New Letters*, ii. 128. Lacaita only wanted one year short of forty, and would have made an admirable Librarian. He married a Scotch woman and settled in England, and performed important service both to English and to Italian Governments.

letter to J. Forster Carlyle insists, "this project of Gladstone's must be resisted à l'outrance." He tells Forster that a steward going to market to buy salmon would be bound to buy the best fish he could find at the price, and would rob his employer if he came back with a cut of "malodorous salmon" which was *extremely in need of being sola*, and brag of his charity, at his master's expense.

In the month following the election took place, and Carlyle seems to have been working in the interval to good purpose. His own characteristic and amusing account of it is in a letter to his brother (June 14, 1852):

On Saturday we had a tough business, electing our Librarian. Gladstone, with Bunsen and Lyttelton and Lansdowne to back, made due appearance and had all along been very diligent and eager for his Neapolitan Signor of merit. There were twenty-two of us in all,—eleven candidates still left on the list, above two hundred had been thrown

over as a preliminary :—speeches were spoken, manœuvring went on ; finally I advised that we should go to vote, as “we were not convincing one another,” tho’ “all manner of real politeness, candour and delicate management was going on.” President Lord Devon, an accomplished old stager, took the written votes, counted them out amid considerable stillness : “For Donne 18, for Lacaita (the Signor of merit) 4” ; after which we departed, most of us with mutual congratulations. Donne a friend of Spedding, Milnes, &c., a scholar of distinction, capital “man of business” (they say) a small Norfolk Squire who,—even the Justices of the Peace, love him,—appears to be, if *testimony* can be credited, little short of an “admirable Crichton,” fit to be the envy of surrounding Libraries.*

**New Letters*, ii. 129. William Bodham Donne (1807–1882), of the family of William Cowper, the poet, was Librarian from 1852 until 1857, when he was appointed Examiner of Plays. “Testimony” was perhaps too kind to him as “a man of business” ; but he was a scholar, a fine critic, and an elegant writer. His *Life and Letters* appeared in 1905.

There is no further evidence that Carlyle took active part in the Committee after the election of Mr. Donne, which was entirely due to his efforts. Upon the death of the Earl of Clarendon in 1870 Carlyle was himself chosen as President. But he was then seventy-five years old, and was feeling the fatigues of his laborious life. He does not seem to have taken much active part in the Library, of which he had undoubtedly been the Founder and guide.

The Library removed to St. James' Square, to a house formerly known as Beauchamp House, in 1845; and in 1879 the freehold of the whole of these premises was purchased, largely owing to the advice of Mr. Gladstone, then a Trustee. In 1896 the buildings were reconstructed at a cost of nearly £20,000, giving shelf-room for some 350,000 volumes. The Presidents have been: The Earl of Clarendon (1841), Thomas Carlyle (1870), Lord Houghton (1881), Lord Tennyson

(1885), Sir Leslie Stephen (1893), and Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, M.P. (1904). The Librarians have been : J. G. Cochrane (1841), Mr. William Bodham Donne (1852), Mr. Robert Harrison (1857), and C. T. Hagberg Wright, LL.D. (1893). In their last Report, of June 14, 1906, the Committee had much pleasure in stating that "the Library continued its prosperous career." It now numbers nearly 3,000 members, with an income of about £8,000, and contains about 220,000 volumes. The scope, aims, and success of the Library, realising all Carlyle's anticipations, have been well described in the speech of the President at the last General Meeting, which will be found in Appendix I.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE LONDON LIBRARY

The Right Hon. ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR, M.P.,
President, in the Chair.

(From the *Times*, June 15, 1906.)

THE President, in moving the adoption of the Report, remarked that all who had read it must feel great satisfaction at the continued prosperity and the growing usefulness of the Institution. (Hear, hear.) He was not sure that there was a parallel to it in the rest of the world ; he was sure that there was no parallel to it in this country. The London Library did not pretend to rival, or indeed to occupy, any portion of the field which was so

well filled by the ordinary lending libraries. The work done by the latter was important and valuable, but it was not the work of their Institution, nor was it a work with which they could with advantage compete. They dealt with different interests and aimed at different objects, and they necessarily, therefore, had to adopt different methods. The London Library existed for all those who desired to have at their command the literature of all ages and countries, to have it easily accessible, and to have it in a shape in which they could use it, not merely in that building, but in their own homes. It was, in fact, an enormous and admirably organised private Library for those who belonged to it, with this advantage, which even small private libraries, according to his experience, did not always possess—that the books which it contained could always be found when they were wanted, and they were readily available to those who desired to obtain them. (Hear, hear.) But the utility of their Institution was not merely to be measured by its size or its contents, but by the fact that it was in the

hands of experts, who had in a most admirable way organised it for the purposes it was to serve. He was informed that, so far as foreign literature was concerned, there was really no Institution in the country in which the best foreign works were so well represented. (Hear, hear.) Even the British Museum, he believed, was in some departments behind the London Library ; and, of course, the convenience of dealing with these works was greater—it must be far greater—than the convenience which could be afforded even by such an Institution as the British Museum. That their Institution carried out the purpose for which it was brought into existence was conclusively shown by the character of the books which were taken out, and which certainly proved that they were not merely turned to the purpose of spending an idle hour agreeably, but that the resources of the Library were used in the most important works of historic, scientific, and philosophical research. He hoped that they would always keep before them the ideal which had animated them during the whole

sixty-five years the Institution had been in existence, that they would never descend to cater for the legitimate but ephemeral tastes which were adequately dealt with by other institutions, but that they would feel that what they existed for, in the main, was to supply the student with all the tools he required for carrying on his work. There was one special branch in their sphere of activity from which he, at all events, anticipated the greatest possible advantage. Their Secretary was at that moment engaged in the herculean task of making a catalogue according to all the *subjects* of all the quarter of a million books in their possession. The value of such a catalogue was, he believed, quite incalculable. It was perfectly true that the expert student in any given department was, or ought to be, fairly acquainted, at all events, with the sources, if not with the contents, of the books which dealt with his subject, at least with their names and titles, so that he could refer to them in case of need. But what happened with even the most expert student in a particular depart-

ment was that he came across some side subject of investigation on which he required advice and assistance as to where he could collect all the available information. It was not always easy at a moment's notice to get the adequate advice which was thus required ; but when the catalogue referred to was completed there would be in print the best adviser that could possibly be desired. (Hear, hear.) They must all express to their Secretary the warm hopes they entertained that his efforts in this department would meet with the same full measure of success which they had in other departments. (Cheers.) The work done by the London Library in the past had been a great work and they were accumulating a store of knowledge in an available form for which every student within reach of the Institution had reason to be thankful. Great services had been rendered to them by the Committee, whose Report he therefore confidently asked the members to adopt unanimously.

APPENDIX II

It is curious that an attempt to found a good lending library in London was made towards the end of the eighteenth century, just before the long war. In the *Observer* of December 4, 1791, is an advertisement of a Society having for its principal object "to establish on a broad, liberal, and permanent basis, a PUBLIC LIBRARY for General Use, carefully avoiding the evils which the introduction of books, without discrimination, into families, is well known to give rise to, by selecting such publications only as shall be found to promote useful knowledge and virtuous dispositions."

This admirable end was to be obtained by securing the direction and approbation of

THE LONDON LIBRARY 109

a committee for every book bought. Subscribers were to pay three guineas annually, or ten guineas for a life membership. Subscribers could have books "to their own houses," and there was to be "a handsome and convenient Reading Room," where Books, Newspapers, Monthly Publications, and Foreign Journals might be perused. The Committee consisted of five Trustees and sixteen members, four retiring by rotation every year.

Amongst the Trustees were Sir George Leonard Staunton, Bart., M.D., F.R.S., D.C.L. (1737-1801), friend of Dr. Johnson and Burke, secretary to Lord Macartney's embassy to China, buried in Westminster Abbey—a well-known Civil Servant and diplomatist.

Another Trustee was Henry Beaufoy, M.P., F.R.S., a Whig politician and political writer; James Pettit Andrews (1736-1797), antiquary and historian, a police-court

magistrate; Thomas Christie (1761-1796), political writer and defender of the French Revolution, but apparently not of the family of W. D. Christie.

On the Committee were William Fitzgerald, Esq., apparently the "hoarse Fitzgerald" of Byron's *English Bards* (1759-1829). The Rev. Alexander Geddes, LL.D., was a famous Biblical critic and rationalist scholar. The Rev. Dr. Hussey, F.R.S., was the Catholic Bishop of Waterford, and President of Maynooth (1795). The Rev. Basil Woodd (1760-1831), hymn-writer, lecturer at St. Peter's, Cornhill, established schools, and was author of the *New Metrical Version of the Psalms*, 1821, and other works.

This excellent effort at founding a Public Library in 1791, undertaken by so many "men of light and leading" at their time, seems to have been overwhelmed, as so many other good things were, by the stirring events and the tremendous wars which ensued

Chelsea, 6 Nov^r, 1846

My dear Sir,

Here, according to your re-
-quest, is the Enclosure contained in your
first letter. My name stands in the
Committee - List of the London Library
but I do not take, and never took,
any share in the management; and
indeed in late years am rarely cited

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FACSIMILE OF LETTER OF NOVEMBER 6, 1846

to attend at all: I am very sorry you
find the performance of the hour Institution
so unsatisfactory. To me it falls on
the whole, tho' by no means what I
wished, yet some average approxima-
-tion to what I hoped. The Committee,
I believe, will readily listen to any prac-
-ticable suggestion; and the poor Librarian
with all his defects, is a most obli-
-ging good-natured man, eminent for his
-tenue, carefulness and bibliography, who

will rejoice to do for any member, still
more for any member like you, whose
-ever is really in his power.

Bethel, Mo,

My Dear Sir

Yours very sincerely

T. Carlyle

THE LONDON LIBRARY III

in the next twenty-five years. What the friends of Johnson and Burke had failed to secure was taken up by Carlyle and his political and literary friends after exactly fifty years had passed and another epoch of peace and freedom had been secured.