LIFE AND CHARACTER OF RICHARD CARLILE

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LIFE AND CHARACTER OF RICHARD CARLILE

By

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LIFE AND CHARACTER OF RICHARD CARLILE

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PREFACE

WHEN I first entered London, one Saturday evening in 1842, I was not known personally to half a dozen persons in it. On reaching the office of the Oracle of Reason, I found an invitation (it was the first I received in the metropolis) from Richard Carlile to take tea with him on the next afternoon at the Hall of Science. There was no name known to me in London from whom an invitation could have come which I should have thought a greater honour. The conversation at table was directed to advising me as to my defence at my coming trial. He requested me to hear his evening lecture, which he devoted to the policy of sceptical defence which he thought most effectual. At the conclusion, he called upon me for my coincidence or dissent. I stated some objections which I entertained to his scientifico-religious views with diffidence but distinctness. The compliments which he paid me were the first words of praise which I remember to have trusted. Coming from a master in our Israel, they inspired me with a confidence new to me. I did not conceal my ambition to merit his approval. On my trial at Gloucester, he watched by my side fourteen hours, and handed me notes for my guidance. After my conviction, he brought me my first provisions with his own hand. He honoured me with a public letter during my imprisonment, and uttered generous words in my vindication, when those in whose ranks I had fought and fallen were silent. It was my destiny, on my liberation, to be able to pour my gratitude only over his grave. In his Life and Character, here attempted, I am proud to confess that 1 have written with affection for his memory, but I have also, written with impartiality—for he who encouraged me to maintain the truth at my own expense, would be quite willing, if need be, that I maintain it at his.

G. J. H.

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF RICHARD CARLILE

CHAPTER I. HIS PARENTAGE, APPRENTICESHIP, AND MARRIAGE

I HAVE accomplished the liberty of the press in England, and oral discussion is now free. Nothing remains to be reformed but the ignorance and vices of the people, whose ignorance cannot be removed, while their bodies are starved and their church remains a theatre of idolatry and superstition.' These were the proud and wise words uttered in the last periodical edited by Richard Carlile. They are the history of his life—the eulogy of his career—and the witnesses or his political and religious penetration.

Of Carlile's family, I can gather little beyond this, that his father had some reputation as an arithmetician. He published a collection of arithmetical, mathematical, and algebraical questions. His talent was individual though mediocre. He put his questions into verse and intermixed them with paradox. His career was various and brief: first a shoemaker, he aspired to be and became an exciseman. Like Burns, his habits suffered by his profession, and he often fell into intoxication. Of his own accord he retired from the Excise, became successively schoolmaster and soldier, and died at the age of 34, no person's enemy but his

own.(1) Carlile's mother was now left a widow, with three infant children. For several years she was in a flourishing business, but it began to decay with the pressure of the times, about 1800, and she was afflicted alternately with sickness and poverty. Thence to the time of her death, she was assisted by Carlile, who was her only son. As a woman she was virtuous, as a mother kind and indulgent. She died at the age of 60. It is an evidence of Carlile's honourable notions of duty, that out of thirty shillings per week, which he earned as a journeyman, he supported his wife and several children, and spared an offering for the support of his mother and sisters; and it deserves to be mentioned in his behalf, that the first dissatisfaction he experienced in married life arose from the opposition which he received in the discharge of these generous duties.

1. Carlile to Lord Brougham, Gauntlet, No. 8, p. 113. 1833.

Richard Carlile was born in Ashburton, Devonshire, December 8, 1790. He was but four years of age at the death of his father. He early felt his father's ambition. Before he was twelve years of age, he determined to be something in the world, and afterwards his unexpressed ideas were ever at work and accumulating. His dreams by night, and his thoughts by day, all worked one way, and vaguely contemplated some sort of purification of the church.(1) But how far he was from understanding the part he was to play is clear from the circumstance, that on the 5th of November, he used to gather faggots to burn 'Old Tom Paine,' instead of Guy Fawkes; and it was not till 1810, when he was twenty years old, that he first saw in the hands of an old man in Exeter, a copy of the Rights of Man.(2)

Carlile received all the education that village free schools could afford. The educational routine where his own Gifford had before been a scholar, was confined to writing, arithmetic, and sufficient Latin to read a physician's prescription. His first place seems to have been with Mr. Lee, chemist and druggist, in Exeter, but, being set to do things which he deemed derogatory to one who was able to read a physician's prescription, he left the shop after four months' service. Being too much of a man to go to school again, he lived idly three months, amusing himself with colouring pictures to sell in his mother's shop. His mother's principal wholesale customers were the firm of Gifford and Co., which consisted of the brothers of that Attorney-General who had such extensive dealings with the son afterwards, in a different line. At the pressing wish of Carlile's mother, he was apprenticed to a business which he never liked, that of tinplate working, and, like Bunyan, he became a tinman. He served seven years and three months to a Mr. Cummings, whom he has described as a hard master, as one who considered

five or six hours for sleep all the recreation necessary for his youths. Carlile had no knowledge then of the 'Rights of Man,' but he betrayed some knowledge of the rights of apprentices,(3) and his impatience under injustice was then manifested, as his term of service was one series of conspiracies, rebellions, and battles. On being relieved from this worse than seven years' imprisonment, he resolved to follow that business no longer than he should be compelled. His ambition then was to get his living by his pen.

1. Gauntlet, No. 8, p. 113.
2. Repub. vol. 5, p. 134.
3. Republican, vol. ii. pp. 226-7.

The office of an exciseman, which was offered him, he refused, remembering the fate of his father, and continued to follow his business, as journeyman tinman, in various parts of the country, and in London, where he first arrived in February, 1811. He returned to Exeter the same year. In 1813, we find him in London again, working at Benham and Sons, Blackfriars Road. A short sojourn in Gosport, in the previous year 1812, led to his acquaintance with the person who became, after two months' courtship, Mrs. Carlile. He was at that time twenty-three, and she thirty years of age. Mrs. Carlile was not without accomplishments as to personal appearance; and temper excepted, was not without most of the qualifications necessary to a good tradesman's wife.(1)

Mrs. Carlile had talents for business, which were of the greatest value to her husband in the course of his career. He, bent on propagandism, never paid that attention to the details of trade which was necessary to keep a business together. But their difference in education, in age, in intellectual aspiration and their opponency in disposition, early converted their union into an intimacy tolerated rather than prized, and entire separation ensued twenty years after. Peculiar conduct on the part of relatives was alleged as promotive of these results, but this conduct I do not particularise as the explanation of the parties concerned is not before me, and cannot now be obtained. Of personal causes, temper seems to have been a chief one. Writing to Mr. Hunt, in 1822, Carlile said, 'Knowing Mrs. C. to possess a *warm* temper, as I do, I wonder,' etc.(2) In 1819, the separation of Mr. and Mrs. Carlile was arranged to take place, so soon as he had the means of making a sufficient settlement for her comfort: it was not, however, till 1832, when the annuity of £50, bequeathed him by Mr. Morrison, of Chelsea, cleared itself of legacy duty, that he was able to provide for her. Then it was that they parted, she taking all the household furniture and £100 worth of books.

1. A Scourge, p. 18. 1834.

2. Rep. vol. vi. p. 15.

His elder sister remained a violent Methodist, and was never reconciled to his anti-religious labours. Mrs. Carlile, as well as his younger sister, who both incurred imprisonment on his account, did it rather from natural resentment at the injustice practised for his destruction, than from any sympathy with his opinions. But, in this respect, they behaved with a bravery worthy of their name; they resolutely refused to compromise—the sister the brother, or the wife the husband, at all risks to themselves. None of his family, save a first cousin, countenanced his proceeding; he stood alone on his own hearth, as he stood often alone in the world.

CHAPTER II. THE PUBLISHER AND THE PRISONER

It was in 1816, while employed as a tinplate worker, by the firm of Matthews and Masterman, of Union Court, Holbom Hill, that he first essayed public life. He was then twenty-six years of age. Before this time he had read no work of Paine's; but the distress of that year excited him to inquiry. Knowledge speedily prompted nim to action. He wrote scraps for the newspapers, (principally the *Independent Whig* and the *Newt*) which scraps were all condemned: 'A half-employed Mechanic is too violent;' this was the notice in answer to correspondents. He annoyed Mr. Cobbett by a foolish acrostic, on the name of Hunt. He wrote to Hunt himself, and paraded one night, two hours in front of his hotel, in Covent Garden, before he could muster courage sufficient to ask the waiter to take his effusion up. At this time he burned to see himself in print; although, as he afterwards confessed, he was not able to write a single sentence fit to meet the public eye.(2)

1. Repub. vol. xi. p. 101.

2. Repub. vol. xii. p. 2.

In 1817 *The Black Dwarf* made its appearance, which was much more to Carlile's taste than *Cobbett's Register*, but as the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and Sidmouth had sent forth his Circular, there was a damp among the newsvendors, and few would sell. This excited Carlile with a desire to become a bookseller. The story of Lackington beginning with a stall encouraged him. He resolved to set a good example in the trade of political pamphlets. Finding the sale of the *Black Dwarf* very low, he borrowed £1 from his employer, and invested it in one hundred *Dwarfs*, and on the 9th of March, 1817, he sallied forth from the manufactory, with his stock in his handkerchief, to commence the trade of bookselling. He traversed the metropolis in every direction to get newsvendors to sell the *Dwarf*, and called every day to see how they sold. He inquired also after *Cobbett's Register*, and Sherwin's *Republican*, but finding that they did not want pushing, he took none of those round. Indeed, he refused to avail himself of the profit he could have made by taking *Cobbett's Register* because it did not go far enough.(1) He carried the *Dwarf* round several weeks, walking thirty miles a day, for a profit of fifteen and eighteen pence. At length an information was lodged against the publisher, and Mr. Steill was arrested. Carlile at once offered to take his place.

1. Repub, vol. xi. p. 102.

Mr. Wooler, however, arranged the matter, and Carlile's offer was declined Mr. Sherwin, then a young man, (formerly keeper of South-well Bridewell, Nottinghamshire,) editing the *Republican*, perceived Carlile's value, and offered him the publishing of his paper, which he accepted. Carlile guaranteed Mr. Sherwin against arrest, which left him free to be bold without danger. The shop on which he now entered was 183, Fleet Street, which Mr. Cobbett afterwards occupied. Carlile's first ideas of politics were, that neither writers, printers, nor publishers were bold enough; and he now commenced to set the example he thought wanted. 'I did not then see,' he said, in the decline of his life, 'what my experience has since taught me that the greatest despotism ruling the press is the popular ignorance. I made the calculation, which has been an error embittering my whole public life, that the entire people would assist and applaud an attempt, however humble, to set the press free. I have found myself like our parliamentary reformers idolizing a virtue of the imagination not yet brought into existence. I

correctly made the calculation of having to pass through five or six years' imprisonment, to appease the angered authorities of having defied their will; but I had not calculated that, after having conquered the authorities, by self-sacrifice, the greater difficulty would remain, of having to conquer the ignorance and vice of the people, by still more painful sacrifices.'

His first step was a resistance to the attempt of the poet laureat, Southey, to suppress the sale of his early Poem, 'Wat Tyler.' He sold twenty-five thousand of that poem in 1817.

The second was a prosecution, defence, and imperfect verdict gained against Thomas Jonathan Wooller.

The third was the reprint of the political works of Thomas Paine, by himself and Mr. Sherwin.

The fourth was the trials and acquittals of William Hone, which Carlile forced on, by reprinting those suppressed political squibs called 'The Parodies on the Book of Common Prayer.'

The Parodies cost him eighteen weeks' imprisonment in the King's Bench Prison, from which he was liberated with out trial, on the acquittals of William Hone.

By the end of the year 1818 he had published the Theological Works of Thomas Paine. The prosecutions instituted induced him to go on printing other similar works, such as the 'Doubts of Infidels,' 'Watson Refuted,' 'Palmer's Principles of Nature,' 'The God of the Jews,' &c. &c. By the month of October, 1819, he had at least six indictments pending against him. Two of the indictments were tried from the 12th to the 16th of October, and verdicts obtained against him. He was committed to the King's Bench Prison, and on the 16th of November sentenced to fifteen hundred pounds fine, and three years imprisonment in Dorchester Goal. In the middle of the night he was handcuffed, and driven off between two armed officers to Dorchester, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles.

The first thing he did, at the close of his trial, was to print the 'Age of Reason,' in twopenny sheets, as part of the report of the trial, having taken care to read the whole in defence. Of these he sold more in a month than of the volumes in a-year. For this publication, a prosecution was instituted against Mrs. Carlile, but was dropped on her declining the sale. She was not however long unmolested.

Under pretence of seizing for Mr. Carlile's fines, the sheriff, with a writ of *levari facias*, from the Court of King's Bench, took possession of his house, furniture, stock in trade, and closed the shop. It was thus held, from the 16th of November to the 24th of December. Rent became due and it was then emptied.

Under Mr. C.'s desire Mrs. Carlile renewed a business, in January 1820, with what could be scraped together from the unseized wreck of their property.

In February she was arrested; but the first indictment failed through a flaw in the verdict. She was immediately proceeded against by the Attorney-General, and became her husband's fellow-prisoner in Dorchester Gaol in February 1821, after having done good service in the shop for a-year.

Carlile's sister Mary Ann succeeded Mrs. Carlile in the management of the business, but was also immediately prosecuted. The first indictment failed in this case, by the honesty of one of the jurymen. In the second the judge (Best) suppressed the defence. By the month of November, 1821, his sister was also a prisoner in Dorchester Gaol, and under a fine of five hundred pounds.

In the course of the year, 1821, a new association had been formed, called the "Constitutional Association." It asked for subscription to pay the expenses of prosecuting the assistants of his business. Six thousand pounds were subscribed, and the Duke of Wellington saw fit to put his name with his money, at the head of the list. Carlile's sister's trial was the first check the Association received. The unsuccessful prosecution of Thomas Dolby, the second. Then came a troop of assistants to the encounter: to wit, Susanna Wright, George Beer, John Barkley, Humphrey Boyle, Joseph Rhodes, William Holmes, and John Jones. All these, save Jones, sustained terms of imprisonment, from six months to two years; but they succeeded in breaking down the "Constitutional Association."

Then came James Watson and William Tunbridge, both meeting imprisonment.

In the month of February, 1822, Mrs. Wright being then in possession of the house, the very week that Mr. Peel had taken possession of the Home Office, a second seizure was made of the house and stock of 55, Fleet Street, and the house finally wrested from Carlile. This was done on the pretence of satisfying the fines; but neither from this nor the former seizure was a farthing allowed in the abatement of the fines, and Carlile was detained in Dorchester Gaol to the end of the sixth year, three years' imprisonment having been taken in lieu of the fines.

Joseph Trust was the only person prosecuted in 1823, and the Lord Chief Justice Abbott intimated that enough had been done; but in May, 1824, there came a new rage for prosecutions from the government, when Charles Sanderson, Thomas Jefferies, William Haley, William Campion, Richard Hassell. Michael O'Connor, William Cochrane, John Clarke, John Christopher, and Thomas Riley Perry, were severally arrested, and the last nine imprisoned, through various periods, from six months to three years.

Two years Mrs. Carlile was kept in Dorchester Gaol: so was his sister, a-year having been taken for her £500 fine. After this it was reported, that the Cabinet, had, in council acknowledged Carlile invincible in the course of moral resistance which he had taken, and no more persons were arrested from his shop,

while no one of his publications had been suppressed.

His imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol was in some respects, severe. The first magisterial order was that he should be led into the open air only as a caged animal, to be exhibited to the gaze of the passing curious, half an hour each day, or an hour every other day, or as the gaoler might be pleased. This, and similar orders caused him to pass two years and a-half in his chamber, without going into the open air.

When he came to trial in 1819, he had no clear understanding of the subject of his defence, it was compiled from the pleadings of others for toleration and free discussion. In this mental state he entered Dorchester Gaol. He had taken the impression from the hint of an aged political friend, that all the evils of mankind rooted in the superstition and the consequent priestcraft practised upon them, that he resolved to devote the solitude of his imprisonment to the study of religious mysteries, and fearlessly and faithfully to make the revelation for the common good of man. His defence, on his first three days' trial, alarmed the Emperor Alexander of Russia, who issued an Ukase, forbidding any printed report of it from being brought into his territory. His first defence was much interrupted; his second was entirely suppressed.

When he was liberated from Dorchester Gaol, in 1826, the freedom of the press was complete, as far as government or aristocratical societies were concerned. His shopmen were detained to complete their sentences of three years' imprisonment, not much to the political merit of Sir Robert Peel, who gave up not a day in either case, save that of a bad young man, who had unprincipledly intruded himself among them. To honest opposition he yielded nothing, but was, in every sense of the character, an inveterate persecutor.

Though the freedom of the press was accomplished in 1829, something more remained to be accomplished, which was the freedom of public oral discussion; and on this object Carlile set his thoughts.

When Mr. Taylor was prosecuted and imprisoned, in 1828, Carlile was called into action in his new character. He immediately converted a large room in his house, 62, Fleet Street, into a Sunday School of Free Discussion, and introduced a public debate on all useful political subjects on the Sabbath Day. This had not been done before by any one anywhere. By a subscription he got Mr. Taylor well supported in prison, and on his liberation accompanied him to Cambridge, as an infidel Missionary, to challenge the University to public discussion. They passed from Cambridge to Liverpool, presenting a printed circular of public challenge to every priest on the road. One only accepted it, the Rev. David Thom, of Liverpool, who quailed at the very onset, and withdrew. This was done in 1829.

In 1830 he sought a larger sphere of action for public meetings than his own dwelling-house, and engaged a series of buildings and theatres called the Rotunda, in Blackfriars Road. Soon after he gained possession of this building, the second French Revolution broke out, which gave a new impetus to political feeling in London. Giving to every man liberty of speech in his theatres, the Rotunda was attended bv all the public men of note out of parliament; and the public meetings there became so frequent and so large, that the government took alarm, and the prophecy of the day was, that the Rotunda would cause a Revolution in England. While the Tories remained in office, they did not molest him, but the Whigs no sooner took office, than they very foully made war on him, and caused him thirty-two months imprisonment in the Compter of the City of London.

The Rev. Robert Taylor was also prosecuted under the Whig Administration, and filled out two years in Horse-monger Lane Gaol, for his preaching in the Rotunda.

In 1834 and 1835, Carlile passed ten weeks in the same Compter, for resistance to the payment of Church Rates; making his total of imprisonment nine years and four months.

These church-rates were assessed upon his house, 62, Fleet Street. When his goods were seized, he retaliated by taking out the two front windows and placing therein two effigies—one of a bishop, and the other of a distraining officer. After a time, he added a devil, who was linked arm-in-arm with his Grace. Such crowds were attracted, that public business was impeded. Eventually, Mr. Carole was indicted for a nuisance. The court was less virulent than before: it was externally courteous. He defended himself in a speech of coherency and good sense, but was found guilty, and ultimately sentenced to pay a fine of 40s. to the King, and give sureties in £200 (himself in £100, and two others in £50 each), for good behaviour for three years. The spirit in which he met this award was characteristic of the veteran martyr.

'They have sentenced me' said he, 'to three years' imprisonment. So much for their leniency! It is a mockery to say that I may, if I please, purchase my liberty. I cannot do it. I shall have more liberty in prison than in walking the streets at the discretion of one set of men, and at the hazard of £100 penalty to two others. It is a case in which I will not interfere to abate one hour of the imprisonment. When the gates are open to me I will walk out, but I will not pay or do anything to procure release.'(1) And he wrote to Mr. Cope, keeper of Newgate, to desire that he would get him removed to the Compter, and he quietly announced next week that he had been removed to his old room.'

1. *A Scourge*, No. 12, pp. 89, 90.

Before sentence he made a deposition in court. As this was his last imprisonment, I quote the concluding words of this deposition. They show the temper in which the dying lion shook his mane.

'And deponent further saith, that in case the court should think a penalty necessary, this deponent has no other property from which he can pay a fine than printed books; and from the political business in which this deponent is involved, he cannot reasonably ask any other person to become his sureties, that his future proceedings may not be construed into political offence; not but that this deponent is anxious to live in peace and amity with all men, *but that there do exist many political and moral evils which this deponent will, through life, labour to abate.*'

This was the tone of his entire career. When in 1819, a law was proposed by Castlereagh, to inflict banishment upon him for a second offence, he wrote:—'In some cases, this power of banishment might amount to a deprivation of life; but for my own part, I think nothing of it, and hope to show, that it will not have the least tendency to change my course.'(2) 'Indictments and warrants have never affected me—they have been the life of my business.' He was present at the 'Manchester massacre,' and escaped narrowly falling a victim, first to the soldiers, and afterwards to the police, who let him pass, not knowing his name. The danger he ran on all hands was imminent. On the morning when the government chose to reveal the Thistlewood plot of their own concoction, they arranged that their agents of the vice society should arrest Mrs. Carlile,(3) to associate, as far as possible, his family in that proceeding. Not only were parties inculpated without fault, but tried without defence. The humble advocate was bullied into the abandonment of his political client, and the powerful one was bribed. Mr. Cooper was frowned into silence and threatened. Mr. Cross obtained a silk gown for his *defence* of Brandreth and Mr. Justice Best won the same distinction by his *defence* of Despard. So virulent were the rulers of that day that Peel refused to liberate Mrs. Carlile after thirteen months detention, though in daily expectation of accouchment which might occur at an hour when assistance could not be had.(4) In addressing Mrs. Gaunt, of Manchester, Mrs. Carlile observed in reference to the position in which she was placed, 'My spirits and strength are good, or I should have everything to dread in childbirth in such a place as this [Dorchester Gaol], where humanity is a marketable commodity, and where, what is still worse, I am one of those excluded from the market at any price.(5)

1. A Scourge, No. 12, p. 90.

2. Republican, vol. ii. p. 5. Idem. p. 60.

3. Republican, vol. ii. p 254.
4. Republican, vol. v. p. 301.
5. Republican, vol. v. p. 608.

Of the risks Carlile ran from espionage, he has detailed many instances. I quote one passage in his own words. He is speaking of Paine:—'I revere,' says he, 'the name of Thomas Paine; the image of his honest countenance is constantly before me. I have him in bust [now in possession of Mr. Watson], in whole length figure; for which I may thank the late government of Liverpool, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, who appointed Edwards the spy to this task, he, who when he failed to get me hanged, caused the death of Thistlewood, and others. Edwards occupied *six months* of 1819, in excuse of making this statute to keep at my heels. He followed me closely until I was in Dorchester Gaol. There I escaped him; and then, immediately, he was put on other game with which he succeeded. The very men that he hanged, he brought about me in the King's Bench Prison, offering me their lives, if I would use them for any purpose. I had then, a clear sighted purpose of my own, which these men did not understand. At that age I should have had no objection to a little physical force fighting; but I was sober enough to see its impracticability, and thus I frustrated the acquaintance, which Liverpool, Castlereagh, Sidmouth, and their spy Edwards, wished to bring me into with Jack Ketch. I found Edwards a tradesman in Fleet Street, as an artist, before I got there, and I so became his next door neighbour. He succeeded, in occupation, the shop which William Hone had, and where he published his famous Parodies. When I came to No. 55, in January, 1819, Edwards had been two years at No. 56, so I had little ground to suspect his spyship.

I had known him as a customer through that time. He pleaded that his father had been an old politician: nor was my suspicion excited by his having a brother in the Hatton Garden Police. When I entered upon No. 55, he pleaded what a great convenience it would be to him in business, if I would allow him to lodge in my house, as he had a shop next door without a dwelling-house. I had almost yielded; but the shrewd suspicions of Mrs. Carlile, re-acting upon his villainous countenance, put it aside. He was then placed in an upper story lodging of the opposite house, (where was born my statue of Paine) in the under part of which was placed a man of the name of John Carlisle, a bookseller, to oppose me, in conflict with another class of publications. This was the work of the government, superintended by their agent, John Reeve. Edwards did not scruple to talk to me about meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury in Windsor Castle; but left me to infer, that it was about his art as a modeller, not as a spy. I can

now see, that he was placed in Hone's old shop, to keep out a political publisher; and I have since divined a deep history of the spy system of that time, which I never feared, because I had nothing morally to fear in what I purposed to do. One, I have marked, as an old acquaintance, a man connected with the Stamp Office, very regularly at my lectures for years. From, or in the house of John Carlisle, by Edwards, was concocted the plot called the Cato Street Conspiracy. In beginning, middle, and end, that was wholly the work of Lords Castlereagh and Sidmouth, with Edwards as an agent. After the finish of that political tragedy, Edwards was provided for in one of the colonies, it has been said, the Cape of Good Hope. John Carlisle dwindled into great poverty in Fleet Street, was made permanent constable, and at last very strangely got his house burned down, just after I came triumphantly from six years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, and established myself *ruinously* in splendid No. 62.'(1)

Yet it was in such times and amid such dangers that Carlile formed the resolution, and adhered to it to the day of his death, never to cease any publication so long as any prosecution or intimidation menaced it.

Placing himself always where danger was to be braved, his position was from the first prominent, and attracted to him many leading political characters, who saw in him a vicarious sacrifice for that freedom they were willing to enjoy, if it could be done without paying so troublesome a price as the ministers of that day charged for it. But, as the danger grew imminent, they began to pull him back and condemn his open conduct.(2) Cobbett at first said, 'You have done your duty bravely, Mr. Carlile; if every one had done like you, it would have been all very well.'(3) But afterwards he censured him without measure. Wooler, whom Carlile offered to save, said that the publication of Paine's works would put a stop to all the political writings of the day. But whatever ground there appeared for these fears, a wise publicist should have given Carlile all possible support, since he *ought to have* triumphed in his course. Major Cartwright deprecated the republication of Paine's works as mischievous, to flying in the face of Juries; that when a jury had once declared these works to be libels, the very *errors* of that jury ought to be respected. Yet against this dictum of the influential veteran, Reformer, Carlile contended. He encountered greater obstacles among such friends than among his enemies. It requires more courage to fight against friends than against foes. Carlile illustrated the remark of Mr. Miall, that 'martyrdom in the past tense is madness in the present.' Then the Reformers Degan to call themselves 'Christian Reformers,' 'Religious Reformers,' and by other safe conventional names to distinguish themselves from 'Carlile and his party.'(4) No man should lightly compromise his party by a dangerous step. Carlile is not amenable to blame on this account. He took a necessary step for general progress, and his triumph justified his penetration. A weaker man than Carlile would not have

been justified in the course which he took, as a weaker man would have failed. But Carlile was a Buonarotti.

1. Christian Warrior, pp. 27-28.
2. Repub. vol. ii. p. 257.
3. Repub. v. pp 283-4
4. Christian Warrior, p. 10

Such was the difficulty of obtaining the forbidden books, in which he set the example of dealing, that twelve guineas were offered for twelve copies of the Age of Reason,(1) and £5 for five suppressed twopenny Tracts.(2) In order to destroy a trade which they could not intimidate, the Government arrested his shopmen with a rapidity intended to exhaust them. To defeat this intention, books were sold through an aperture; so that the buyer was unable to identify the seller.(3) Afterwards they were sold by clockwork.(4) On a dial was written the name of every publication for sale. The purchaser entered, and turned the hand of the dial to the book he wanted, which, on depositing his money, dropped down before him without the necessity of any one speaking. The Vice and Constitutional Associations we both defied and defeated; notwithstanding that the honoured name of Wilberforce was found on the list of the members of one of the societies, and that of the Duke of Wellington headed the other. The circulation of Carlile's books were quadrupled, and a cheering crowd around his shop windows perpetually testified their approval of his courage, and at public dinners in the provinces, the health was drank of 'Carlile's invisible shopman.' Martyrdom, he said, was contagious, and could he keep it up, he should glory in a perpetual sessions at the Old Bailey. The result of his course he expresses with honourable exultation. 'In this country the Age of Reason was spellbound for twenty years, with the exception of a few copies put forth by Daniel Isaac Eaton. From December, 1818, to December, 1822, I had sent into circulation near 20,000 copies. Let corruption rub out that if she can, as Mr. Cobbett said his 40,000 Registers.' By the month of June, 1824, in the fifth year of his imprisonment, his calculation was verified; the press was freed, and the Government, who had beaten Napoleon in a physical conflict, was beaten by Carlile in a moral struggle—so impotent is power to overcome the right, when brave men champion the right.

1. Repub. vol. ii. p. 183.

2. Christian Warrior, p. 29.

3. Repub. vol. v. p. 56.

4. Repub. vol. v. p. 264.

Carlile was liberally supported, and found powerful friends. The third and fourth years of his imprisonment produced subscriptions to the amount of £500 per year, and for a long period his profits over the counter were £50 per week. An idea of his occasional business may be formed from the circumstance that once when a trial was pending, Mrs. Carlile took £600 in the shop in one week. When he came from Dorchester Gaol one friend lent him £1,000 to extend his business. But he got out of money as fast as it came, and his ambition leading him to give the greatest possible effect to his advocacy, he contracted liabilities at 62, Fleet Street, which embarrassed him. Indeed, continually torn from his home by government prosecutions, he had ill opportunities of maintaining business habits. The latter part of his life was passed in the vicissitudes and anxieties of fallen fortunes.

CHAPTER III. THE EDITOR AND THE ATHEIST

DURING Carlile's imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, he edited the *Republican*, a Weekly Journal, which he conducted through fourteen volumes. Its circulation reached at one time as high as 15,000. He saw that a work had to be done, and he prepared to do it; if he could not do it so well as he could wish, he resolved to do it as well as he was able. He offered his ardour in the public cause as an apology for the want of a grammatical education. Drawn into authorship by the force of events, he hardly knew in what grammatical accuracy consisted, till he felt his own deficiency through the criticisms of his correspondents, some of whom did not hesitate to tell him, that he was unfit for a public writer. This state of things continued till the fourth volume of the *Republican*, where he wisely resolved to put his prison hours to educational uses.(1) But his editorial duties were

his best education, and this he admitted; 'I give,' said he, in 1825, 'a receipt to the criticism of my friends upon my writings for the better part of the knowledge that I now possess.'(2) Some of Carlile's correspondents were men from whom it was an honour to receive direction. From Francis Place he gleaned all his ideas of Political Economy, and what Carlile called the 'all-surpassing question of the regulation of the numbers of the people.' It was from Jeremy Bentham, through Mr. Place, that he was instructed not to attempt the building of any system of his own, but to go on pulling down existing errors, every item of success in which, was in fact, so much good building.(3) In Carlile's last days he spoke of Francis Place as 'his old tutor who had a hard task to beat all the superstition out of him.'

1. See Repub. vol. iv. p. 191.

2. Lion, vol. i. p. 373.

4. Christian Warrior, p. 13.

While others were calling Carlile 'Atheist and Infidel,' Place was calling him 'the most, obstinately superstitious fellow alive;' but always paid him the compliment of admitting that he was worth the trouble, and that if he could be set right he would keep right.(1)

When Carlile's days of thinking began, he began with himself. He knew himself well, and this was the source of his strength. Like Cobbett he could write always well of himself. His first study was to form a mind of his own on the basis of the best known principles.(2) Carlile began to write a man. Nature made him for an agitator. He had an iron will and limitless self-reliance. I have been told by one who advised him frequently, that no man could control him. His first papers in the *Republican*, are thoughtful, manly, self-possessed, nervous, and resolute. Sherwin preceded Carlile in the publication of a work, called the *Republican*, but, after the fourth number, it was changed into '*Sherwin's Weekly Political Register*,' on the ground that people were afraid of its name. But Carlile resumed its title, and selected those articles only which had the real names and addresses of the author appended. He called upon the friends of his opinions to avow themselves, and declared himself ambitious of incurring martyrdom, if martyrdom was necessary to the cause of liberty.(3)

Carlile's political and religious prototype was Paine. Carlile always wrote with manifest purpose, and seems to have emulated the plain vigour of Cobbett and the invective of Junius.

Carlile's habits were marked by great abstemiousnesss. Seldom taking animal food,(4) he refused wine(5) when offered a dozen at Dorchester Gaol, preferring good milk. He was morally as well as physically particular. In the rules of the Deistical Society, he provided that only persons of good character should be eligible.(6) 'It is important to you, Republicans,' wrote he, from Dorchester Gaol, 'that however humble the advocates of your principles may be, they should exhibit a clear moral character to the world.'(7) He never sold a copy of any work which he would hesitate to read to his children.(8) He expressed a hope, when fairs were popular, that fairs would be put down all over the country. He was one of the first thus to oppose what the pious then approved.

1. Christian Warrior, p. 26.
2. Gauntlet, No. 8, p. 113.
3. Repub. No. 1, vol. i.
4. Repub. vol. ii. p. 148.
5. Repub. vol. ii. p. 234.
6. Repub. vol. v. ft. 31.
7. Repub. vol. vi. p. 3.
8. Repub. vol. vii. p. 36.

There was no intolerance in Carlile's habits. 'I have no wish,' these were his words, 'to force my opinions on any man—if he wishes to have them, he must either buy them or challenge me to defend them; and, in this last instance, it must be some one whom I consider worth contending with, before I would open my mouth.'(1) He was of a retiring turn, and utterly incapable of obtruding himself, where there was the possibility of his not being desired. It was a sense of duty alone that made him brave, his moral courage was great, but it was the courage of conviction. Carlile was an illustration of Bulwer's remark, that courage in one thing, is not to be mistaken for courage in everything. He who opposed himself without fear to the spies of Sidmouth, and the edicts of Castlereagh, who singly withstood public opinion on the questions of Marriage and Religion, when that opinion knew no reason and no mercy, he felt, through his whole life, a want of fair confidence in himself, when addressing a public audience. Large numbers, called together by his name, produced in him a sense of disturbing responsibility

and embarrassment.(2) When liberated from imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol—an ill discipline certainly for oratory—he trembled at committing his reputation to the lapses of an inexperienced tongue. His friends thought he would never make a speaker, but his perseverance prevailed. Still his efforts were irregular; sometimes he was as eloquent as the best, at others timidly hesitating. Probably his stolid nature wanted passion to excite it—some nature's, like deep waters, are only to put in motion by a storm. A paralytic stroke, in March 1841, affected the muscles of the mouth and tongue, and diminished his acquired power.

Hume has said that Christian sects manifest intolerance, which increases in intensity the nearer their valuing creeds coincide. This has been true of some classes of infidels, but Carlile wisely regarded with favour the approximation of sects to reason. He encouraged the Rev. Robert Taylor's Deistical friends, because, like the Unitarians, they would break up some part of the superstition of other sects. His impression was that, 'Though not themselves free from superstition, they would lessen the sum total among all the sects, and, in so doing, do a certain amount of good.'(3)

1. Repub. vol. iv. p. 33.
2. Gauntlet, No. 30 p. 385.
3. Repub. vol. xvi. p. 130.

Carlile's writings abound in instances of great political penetration: thus he placed on the title page of the second volume of the *Republican* these words—'Liberty is the property of man: a Republic only can protect it.' The same volume contained his qualification ot equality. 'Equality,' says he, 'means not an equality of riches, but of rights merely.'(1) Yet the contrary is asserted to this hour. 'Timidity,' wrote he in 1828, 'maybe seen sitting on the countenance of almost every Politician. He speaks and speculates with a trembling which generates a prejudice in others. As it is the slave who makes the tyrant, so it is timidity in the Politician which creates the prejudice of the persecutor.'(2) In words to this effect, he pourtrayed that conventional caution of the newspaper press, which is to this hour the bane of popular progress. He had a distincter conception of the part to be played by education in public reform, than any other agitator of his rank at that time. 'I have before advised your majesty,' said he, in dedicating vol. 12 of the *Republican* to George IV., 'to patronise Mechanics' Institutions, and you will become a greater monarch than Buonaparte. Kings must come to this, and he will be the wisest who does it first and voluntarily.' Republicanism was

not with Carlile, as with so many—politics in rags; he never divested it of efficiency and dignity. To one who said that his exacting £100 shares for his Book Company was aristocratic, he answered, 'Call it what you please, that is republican which is done well.'(3) Carlile took a view of the rationale and initiation of revolution in England as manly as it was sagacious. 'In the beginning of my political career,' he writes, 'I had those common notions which the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience produces, that all reforms must be the work of physical force. The heat of my imagination shewed me everything about to be done at once. I am now enthusiastic, but it is in *working* where I can work *practically* rather than theoretically; and though I would be the last to oppose a well-applied physical force, in the bringing about reforms or revolutions, I would be the last in advising others to rush into useless dangers that *I would shun, or where I would not lead.* I have long formed the idea that an insurrection against grievances in this country must, to be successful, be spontaneous and not plotted, and that all political conspiracies may be local and even individual evils. I challenge the omniscience of the Home Office to say whether I ever countenanced anything of the kind in word or deed. I will do nothing in a political point of view which cannot be done openly.'(4) There is a strong vein of political wisdom in all this, not yet appreciated by popular politicians, and this has the merit of having been written at a time, when (as indeed now) the maxim of English popular progressive politics is not to find how much can be done *within the law*, but how much can be done *without it* and *against it*: a policy which dooms Democracy to ceaseless antagonisms in the attainment of its claims, and will, if persisted in, fetter it with impotence when the victory is won.

1. Repub. vol. xiv. p. 105.
2. Lion, vol. i. p. 3.
3. Repub. vol. xii. p. 3.
4. Repub. vol. xiv. pp. 5, 6.

The progress of Carlile's convictions respecting religion is evident and honourable to his thoughtfulness. He was twenty-seven years old before he conceived any error in the article religion. His attention was first drawn to the fact by finding that the suppressed writings of his day chiefly related to religion. When the Attorney General first called him profane, for publishing Hone's Parodies, he was a very different man. Through several volumes of the *Republican* he was a

Deist only. But reflection led him onwards step by step. A first indication is in these words—'Paine, in his lifetime, appears to have been the advocate of a Deistical church, but such an attempt shall ever find my reprobation, as unnecessary and mischievous.'(1) The reason he assigned was, that science alone could lead to true devotion, and lectures on science were, therefore, the proper worship. In his first controversy with Cobbett, he avowed himself, as Mr. Owen always has, a believer in a great controlling power of Nature. But at this point, Carlile's belief had grown practical in its negation, as he wrote, 'I advocate the abolition of all religions, without setting up anything new of the kind.'(2) By this time he had become a confirmed materialist, and soon after, defined mind as a portion of the organization of the human body, acted upon by the atmosphere and the body jointly, and dependent upon a peculiarity in the organization, in the same manner as voice and life itself.(3) The definitions he gave, in 1822, of Religion and Morality were essentially the same as those since rendered more elegantly by Emerson. Carlile defined Morality as a rule of conduct relating to man and man—Religion as a rule of conduct, relating not to man, but to something which he fancies to be his Maker.(4) Next he observed, 'I may have said that the changes observed in phenomenon argue the existence of an active power in the universe, but I have again and again renounced the notion of that power being intelligent or designing.(5) 'It is not till since my imprisonment that I have avowed myself Atheist.'(6)

1. Repub. vol. iv. p. 220.
2. Repub. vol. v. p. 201.
3. Repub. vol. vi.
4. Repub. vol. vi. p. 249.
5. Repub. vol. vii. p. 26.
6. Repub. vol. vii. p. 397.

He reached the climax of his Atheism on the title page to his tenth volume of the *Republican*, where he declared 'There is no such a God in existence as any man has preached; nor any kind of God and this declaration was so far carried out in detail, as to exclude from the *Republican God, nature, mind, soul*, and *spirit*, as words without proto types.(1)

The two extremes of Carlile's career exhibit a coincidence of terms, but betray to the initiated observer a radical progress and distinction of opinion. In his first work, he wrote, 'Science is the Antichrist;'(2) in his last, 'Science is the Christ.'(3) When he wrote the first he was a Deist, when he wrote the last he was an Atheist.

We commonly find that extreme political enthusiasts in youth, pass, in old age, like Sir Francis Burdett, into extreme Conservatism: but it is a phenomenon in intellect, that Carlile, whose convictions, not his passions, led him to hold positive materialism, should lapse into a more than Swedenborgian mysticism. 'I have discovered,' said he, 'that the names of the Old Testament, either apparently of persons or places, are not such names as the religious mistakes have constructed, but names of states of mind manifested in the human race, and, in this sense, the Bible may be scientifically read as a treatise on spirit, soul, or mind, and not as a history of time, people, and place.'(4) To insist on the utility of such a theory, except as a mere theory of theological explanation (useful as explaining it away altogether), was very strange in Carlile. It seems like the artifice of a beaten man to conciliate an implacable enemy. But Carlile was no beaten man. A few months only before his death, he wrote to Sir Robert Peel, in reference to the imprisonment of Mr. Southwell and myself, avowing his determination to renew martyrdom, if Sir Robert persisted in reviving persecution. But Carlile did make the capital error of proposing to explain science under Christian terms, which was giving to science, which is universal, a sectarian character. Hence, he was found using the words God, soul, Christ, etc., with all the pertinacity of a divine, and scandalising his friends by taking out his diploma as a preacher. In this, he manifested his old courage. He was still true to himself, and was still an Atheist, but veiling his materialism under a Swedenborgian nomenclature.

1. Repub. vol. xiv. p, 770.
2. Preface, p. 14. to vol. i. of Repub.
3. Christian Warrior.
4. Christian Warrior, p. 30.

But the adoption of Swedenborgian terminology was a virtual recantation, and Carlile lost caste by it as did Lawrence. Lawrence gained no practice, and Carlile no influence. Indeed, I never knew any of these virtual recantations to be believed, or even respected by the world, who forced them on. A real recantation I

never knew beyond this, that Atheists have acceded to Pantheism, or perhaps, relapsed into Unitarianism. But they have always remained Rationalists. None that 1 have known and watched—not even the weakest, have fallen into Evangelism. Carlile, by his new course, exposed himself to be distrusted by his less observing but warm friends, and he conciliated no foe among the Christians. Carlile, however, was no hypocrite, nor did he take this new course for venal ends. He was as in all things else conscientious. Still his course was one of choice, not of necessity. He was free as ever to expound science, as science, or to expound it in the language of religion. He adopted the mystic course. This was his error of judgment, not an alteration of conviction. If I may explain the paradox of his conduct in a paradox of terms, this is the expression of it:—From being a Material Atheist, he became a Christian Atheist. His definition of a Christian at this stage, was 'a man purged from error.'(1) That this course was no more than a mode of inculcation of his favourite Atheism is evident, intrinsically, and also from the fact that he was so much a realist, as to still avow his detestation of fiction; and so coherently did he keep to this text, that he never ceased to make war on poetry, theatres, and romance, from the commencement of his career down to the last number of the *Christian Warrior*.

But the condemnation I pass upon the philosophy of his latter days shall not be exparte. I subjoin that passage in which he has most powerfully stated his own case.

'The first problem in human or social reform is *through what medium must it be made*. In what is called a religious state of society, that is, a state of idolatry and superstition, can reform be carried out through any other medium than its religion! My experience, added to the best advice I could find, is, that, with a religious people, religion is the only medium of reform. If I were opposed in that problem, I could successfully defend my side of it. The Charter shall change the constituency of the House of Commons, without improving the House. Socialism may create 20 Tytherlies, but it has still done nothing for the nation. But science thrown into the church as a substitute for superstition in the education of the people, begins at once to regenerate the people, the parliament, the institutions, and the throne. It is the substitution of the known for the unknown, the real for the unreal, the certain for the uncertain. Religion is the erroneous mind's chief direction. It must be corrected by and through the medium which it most respects. It rejects all other opposing conditions, and increases its tenacity for its errors. To reform religion by science, is to regenerate fallen man, and to save a sinking country.

1. Cheltenham Free Press, Any. 1842.

2. Christian Warrior, p. 31,

There is great wisdom in this language. The question is, *how* shall the problem be solved? In this Carlile erred, as he did with the theory of personalities, which he conceived with equal ability. I conceive that Science is independent of Theology in its essence and its terms. Religion may be brought to science by adroit interpretations, and improved in character and significance; but Science can never be brought to Religion without being 'paltered in a double sense,' and lowered in dignity and intelligibility.

CHAPTER IV. HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER

Carlile's death took place on this wise. He had come up from Enfield to Bouvene Street, Fleet Street, to live on the old field of war, and edit the *Christian Warrior.* While a van of goods were unpacking at the door, one of his boys strayed out and went away. Carlile was fond of his children, and he set out anxiously to seek his child. The excitement ended in death. On Carlile's return he was seized with a fatal illness. Bronchitus, which he was told by his medical advisers would soon destroy him, if he came to live in the city, set in, and the power of speech soon left him. Mr. Lawrence, the author of the famous 'Lectures on Man,' whom Carlile always preferred in his illnesses, was sent for. He promptly arrived, but pronounced recovery hopeless; and Richard Carlile expired February 10,1843, in his fifty-third year.

Wishing to be useful in death as in life, Carlile devoted his body to dissection. Always above superstition, in practice as well as in theory, his wish had long been—that his body, if he died first, should be given to Mr. Lawrence. At that time the prejudice against dissection was almost universal, and only superior persons rose above it. His wish was complied with by his family, and the post mortem examination was published in the *Lancet* of that year.

Carlile's burial took place at Kensal Green Cemetry. He was laid in the consecrated part of the ground—nearly opposite the Mausoleum of the Ducrow

family. At the interment, a clergyman appeared, and with the usual want of feeling and of delicacy, persisted in reading the Church service over him. His eldest son Richard, who represented his sentiments as well as his name, very properly protested against the proceeding, as an outrage upon the principles of his father and the wishes of the family. Of course the remonstrance was disregarded, and Richard, his brothers, and their friends left the ground. The clergyman then proceeded to call Carlile 'his dear departed brother,' and to declare that he 'had died in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.'

Carlile left six children—Richard, Alfred, and Thomas Paine, by his wife Mrs. Jane Carlile; and Julian, Theophila, and Hypatia, by 'Isis,' the lady to whom he united himself after his separation from his wife.

Mrs. Carlile survived him only four months. She died in the same house, No. 1, Bouverie Street, and was buried in the same grave. It is hoped that a suitable monument will soon mark the resting place of England's stoutest champion of free discussion, political and religious.

All stories about the recantation of Carlile, to which the pious have given currency, are necessarily false, as he was never able to recant. He lost his power of speaking long before death approached so near as to suggest recanting to him. But death had no power to make his strong spirit quail at ideal terror or to shake the firm convictions of his understanding. His dying words, therefore, are the last which he addressed to the public in his *Christian Warrior*, and they were these—'The enemy with whom I have to grapple is one with whom *no peace can be made. Idolatry will not parley. Superstition will not treat on covenant. They must be uprooted for public and individual safety.*'(1)

1. Christian Warrior, No. 4 p. 83.

These words which he published thirteen days only before his death, are those which he, doubtless, would have pronounced in his last hour, had consciousness and strength remained with him.

In the early portion of my imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, the Rev. Samuel Jones, in order to move me by fear to the retraction of my convictions, told me before a class of prisoners that 'the notorious Richard Carlile was dead, and had died horribly; but he had made what amends he could by recanting his dreadful principles on his death-bed—had denounced his infidel colleagues, and implored mercy of God. You see, therefore,' added the Rev. libeller to me, 'what you have to look forward to.' Great, however, was the Rev. Mr. Jones' astonishment and confusion, when a short time after, Mr. Carlile himself walked into

my cell, alive and well, to offer me his generous sympathy and advice to enable me the better to combat the old enemies of free thought and free speech. The usual stories told of infidel recantations are about as well founded as was this fabrication concerning Carlile, by the Rev. Samuel Jones, visiting magistrate of Gloucester Gaol.

But *why* should Carlile recant! Why should the unbeliever fear to die! There are four things on which Christians hang the terrors which usually haunt their death-beds. Let us examine them.

1. The story of the Fall.

2. The rejection of the offer of salvation.

3. The sin of unbelief.

4. The vengeance of God.

1. If man fell in the garden of Eden—who placed him there! God! Who placed the temptation there? God! Who gave him an imperfect nature—a nature of which it was foreknown it would fall! God! To what does this amount!

If a parent placed his poor child near a fire at which he knew it would be burnt to death, or near a well into which he knew it would fall and be drowned, would any power of custom prevent our giving speech to the indignation of the heart, and pronouncing such a parent a miscreant! And can we pretend to believe God has so acted, and at the same time be able *to trust* him! If God has so acted, he may so act again. This creed can afford no consolation in death. If he who disbelieves this dogma fears to die, he who believes it should fear death more.

2. Salvation, it is said, is offered to the fallen. But man is not fallen, except on the revolting hypothesis just discussed. And before man can be accepted by God, he must, according to Christians, own himself a degraded sinner. Is salvation worth this humiliation! But man is not degraded. No man can be degraded by the act of another. Dishonour can come only by his own hands: and depravity has not come thus. Man, therefore, needs not this salvation. And, if he needed it, he could not accept it. Debarred from purchasing it himself, he must accept it as an act of grace. But it is not well to go even to heaven on sufferance. We despise the poet who is not above a patron; we despise the citizen who crawls before the throne; and shall God be said to have less love of self-respect than man! He who will consent to be saved after this fashion hath most need to fear that he shall perish, for he deserves it.

3. Then, in what way can there be a *sin* of unbelief? Is not the understanding the subject of evidence? A man, with evidence before him, can no more help

seeing it or feeling its weight, than a man with his eyes or ears open can help seeing the house or tree before him, or hearing the sounds made around him. If a man disbelieve, it is because his conviction is true to his understanding. If I disbelieve a proposition, it is through lack of evidence; and the act is as virtuous (so far as virtue can belong to that which is inevitable), as the belief of it, when the evidence is perfect. If it is meant that a man is to believe, whether he sees evidence or not, it means that he is to believe certain things, whether true or false; in fine, that he may qualify himself for heaven by hypocrisy and lies. It is of no use that the unbeliever is told that he will be damned if he does not believe; what human frailty may do is another thing; but the judgment is clear, that a man *ought* not to believe, nor profess to believe, what seems to him to be false, although he should be damned. The believer, who seeks to propitiate heaven by this deceit, ought to fear its wrath, not the unbeliever who rejects the dishonourable terms and throws himself on its justice.

4. There is the *vengeance* of God. But is not the savage idea destroyed as soon as you name it? Can God have that which man ought not to have—*vengeance*. The jurisprudence of earth has reformed itself—we no longer *punish* absolutely; we seek the *reformation* of the offender. We leave retaliation to savages; and shall we cherish in heaven an idea we have chased from earth? But *what* has to be punished? Can the sins of man disturb the peace of God? If so, as men exist in myriads and action is incessant, then is God, as Jonathan Edwards has shown, the most miserable of beings and the *victim* of his meanest creatures. We, see, therefore, that sin against God is *impossible*. All sin is finite and relative—all sin is sin against man. Will God punish this, which punishes itself? If man errs, the bitter consequences are ever with him. Why should he err! Does he choose the ignorance, incapacity, passion, and blindness, through which he errs? Why is he precipitated, imperfectly natured into a chaos of crime! Is not his destiny made for him; and shall God punish that sin which is his misfortune rather than his fault? shall man be condemned to misery in eternity *because* he has been made wretched, and weak, and erring, in time.

But if man *has* fallen at his conscious peril—*has* thoughtlessly spurned salvation—*has* offended God—will God therefore take vengeance? Is God without dignity or magnanimity? If I do wrong to him, who does wrong to me, I come down (has not the ancient sage warned me) to the level of my enemy? Will God thus descend to the level of vindictive man! Who has not thrilled at the lofty question of Volumnia to Coriolanus:—

> 'Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
> Still to remember wrongs.'

Shall God be less honourable and remember the wrong done against him, not by his equals, but by his own frail creatures! To be unable to trust God is to degrade him. Those passages in the New Testament which give the narratives most interest and dignity, are the parables in which a servant is told to forgive a debt to one who had forgiven him; in which a brother is to be forgiven until seventy times seven (that is unlimitedly); and the prayer where men claim forgiveness as they have themselves forgiven others their trespasses. What was this but erecting a high moral argument against the relentlessness of future punishment of erring man? If, therefore, man is to forgive, shall God do less? Shall man be more just than God? Is there anything so grand in the life of Christ as his forgiving his enemies, as he expired on the cross? Was it God the Sufferer behaving more nobly than will God the Judge? Was this the magnificent teaching of fraternity to vengeful man, or is it to be regarded but as a sublime libel on the hereafter judgments of heaven? The Infidel is Infidel to error, but he believes in truth and humanity, and when he believes in God, he will prefer to believe that which is noble of him. He will be able to trust him. Holding by no conscious error, doing no dishonour in thought and offering, his homage to love and truth, why should the unbeliever fear to die! Carlile saw not less clearly than this, nor felt less strongly, and he knew that only those fear death who have never thought about it at all, or thought about it wrongly.

Carlile's early career gave evidence of that iron hauteur which characterised him. In dedicating from Dorchester Gaol, his second volume of the *Republican*, to Sir Robert Gifford, the Attorney General of that day, (1820) he wrote, 'Gratitude being one of the noblest traits in the character of animals, both rational and irrational, *to which ever you may deem me allied*, I feel that I owe it to you.' Carlile taunted the Society for the Suppression of Vice, or as he most correctly styled it the Vice Society, saying that, 'next to their secretary, Pritchard, the lawyer, he had gained most by their existence,(1) and had sold more Deistical volumes in one year through their exertions than he should in seven, in the ordinary course of business.'(2) Carlile's cheerful disposition resisted the sombre influence of the dungeon, and he declared when Wedderbum arrived at Dorchester Gaol that he would 'endeavour to get him chaplain, as the officiating one was so extremely fat that he could hardly get up to the pulpit, and when there, he was so long in recovering from the exertion, that he could not read the prayers with sufficient solemnity.(3)

1. Repub. vol. ii. p. 183.

2. Repub. vol. ii. p. 185.

3. Repub. vol. iii. p. 112.

The fourth volume of the *Republican* Carlile also dedicated to Gifford, the Attorney General, beginning, 'My constant and learned friend, between you and the Vice Society I am at loss how to pay my courtesies, so as to avoid jealousy. You acted nobly with my first volume. My second you neglected; and I had resolved to stop when I heard of your renewed prosecutions. I am sorry we did not understand each other better before.' A paragraph in the Dedication of his sixth volume to George IV. was in these words, 'You are not only the head of the State but of the Church too, and as I am an intermeddler with the matters of both, I, your Banishment Act notwithstanding, dedicate my volume to both heads at once, with the most profound hope and prayer that neither of them may ache after reading it.' When Carlile took notice of Mease, he thus addressed him—'To Mr. Thomas Mease, grocer, draper, and methodist.' The letter to Mease, was dated 'Dorchester Gaol, December 18, year 1822; of the God that was born of a woman, who was his own father, and who was killed to please himself. The *immortal* god that died.' The letter commenced thus,—'Sir Saint and Savage.' To Mr. Dronsfield he wrote—'I am not humble; civility to all; servility to none is the becoming characteristic of manhood.'(1) Alluding to the extensive sale of Wat Tyler, which had such an influence on his early fortunes, Carlile exclaimed, 'Glory to thee, O Southey! Happy mayst thou be in singing hexameters to thy old Royal Master, when thou hast passed the *reality* as well as the *vision* of judgment! Yes, my patron! to that best of thy productions, "Wat Tyler," do I owe the encouragement I first found to persevere.(2)

Of his own Every Woman's Book, Carlile said, 'It had sustained Mr. Cobbett's malignity—one of the most powerful venoms which the animal world had produced.'(3) Carlile characterised the weak point in his own character with severe felicity, when speaking of others. 'Conceit,' said he, 'is a malady of humanity, of which some people die.'(4) These words might stand as the epitaph of his own public influence. The following passage occurred in that letter to me, alluded to in the preface. 'You, Southwell and others,' said he, 'are now where I once was, resting upon the mere flippant vulgarisms of what you and the world consent to call Atheistic infidelity, regulating your amount of wisdom by a critical contrast with other people's folly.(5) I hope we were never amenable to the censure with which this sentence opens: the concluding words are shrewd and instructive, which I repeat for the sake of those young gentlemen who take up infidelity as a pastime, instead as a principle.

1. Repub. vol. vii. p. 868.

2. Repub. vol. vii. p. 674.
3. Lion, vol. ii. p. 450.
4. Oracle of Reason, vol. i. p. 366.
5. Oracle of Reason, vol. i. p. 366.

It is due to Carlile to observe that the annoyance he marshalled against authority was chiefly retaliative. He disowned a placard put in his window, which said, 'This is the Mart for Sedition and Blasphemy,' as he deemed it an admission that he did vend something of the kind. 'I sell,' said he, 'only truth and right reason.'(1) (In parenthesis it maybe observed, that he denied that any human tribunal was competent to declare what was blasphemy.) How much farther Carlile was impartial than are Christians, is evidenced by the fact that he published Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, in conjunction with Paine's Age of Reason.(2) In another respect he behaved as Christians never behave, he never questioned the youths he employed, nor any of his dependents as to their opinions, nor did he use any means to induce them to comprehend or adopt his.(3) He held his opinions too proudly to intrigue or supplicate others to accept them.

In candour, in independency of judgment, in perfect moral fearlessness of character, I believe Carlile cannot be paralleled among the public men of his time. Lovel writes:

> He is a slave who dare not be,
> In the right with two or three.

Carlile was no slave. He was able to stand in the right by himself against the world. One forgives his errors, his vanity, and his egotism, for the bravery of his bearing and his speech. Though Paine was his great prototype, he was prompt, both in his early enthusiasm and in his latter days, to acknowledge Paine's defects as a theologian. 'About "God" Paine,' said he, 'was not altogether wise, but less unwise than the world at large.(4) In his earliest attachments, Carlile discriminated, 'I neither look,' wrote he 'on Mr. Gibbon nor Mr. Hume, as standards of infidelity to the Christian religion.'(5) He hesitated at Shelley's views of marriage, deeming them crude.(6) Carlile was able to take anything up or put anything down at the bidding of his judgment. He said to Mr. Searlett, 'At present I am not a tinman, but I should never feel ashamed to return to it to earn an honest livelihood, if circumstances should render it necessary in this or any other country,'(7)

1. Repub. vol. v.r. 12.
2. Repub. vol. v. p. 89
3. Repub. vi. p. 778.
4. Scourge, p. 110.
5. Repub. vol. ii. p. 168.
6. Repub. vol. v. p. 148.
7. Repub. vol. ii. p. 403.

He began a periodical or ended it at will. No taunt deterred him, no threat intimidated him, no smile seduced him. Carlile was perfectly able to stand alone. He avowed himself an Atheist when no one else did. When he understood that arbitrary checks to population were necessary he said so and distinguishing the particular kinds of checks, disguisedly hinted at by Political Economists, or anonymously broached in handbills, he specified them and added these words, 'I think these plans tor the prevention of conception good, and publicly say it.'(1) Although that saying involved his own reputation and that of his cause. If Carlile had the querulousness, which condemned others, he had also the rarer courage which condemned himself. If he called others fools he called himself one, when his judgment convinced him that he had been in error. To those whom he found he had wronged, he made no dubious acknowledgment. Disdaining deceit always he openly made the amplest apology frank words could express. 'I ask Mr. Cobbett's pardon, and make the due apology,' said he, on finding that he had made an erroneous attribution to him.(2) To Dr. Olinthus Gregory he was more emphatic still.(3) Carlile proclaimed the excellence of Cobbett's Grammar, and the superiority of Hunt's Roasted Corn,(4) at the same time that he roasted the authors of both. Major Cartwright's 'English Constitution Produced and Illustrated,' he praised in some parts, while he mercilessly assailed it in others.(5) He acknowledged the kindness of his prosecutors, where they were kind, with the same fullness with which he execrated them when brutal.(6) To his bitterest enemy he was constantly thus just, and his own faults he confessed with as little reserve as he pointed out those or his enemies. His intellect was rude, but most robust. He had a passion for truth and did not care whether it went against him or for him; he told it with equal zest. He not only as many do, professed to love free speaking; he could *bear it* of himself. He held, as a public man should do, his reputation in his hand, and he would toss it up as one would a ball.

1. Repub. No. 18, vol. ii. pp. 566-6. 1825.
2. Repub. vol. xii. p. 29.
3. Repub. vol. xii. p. 727.
4. Repub. vol. vi. p. 12.
5. Repub. vol. viii. p. 18.
6. Repub. vol. x. pp. 63-4.

Carlile had a just notion of the relation of personalities to principles. 'Human nature,' said he, 'through whatever improved modifications it may pass, will still have its frailties, and those frailties have no relation to the social principles that may be advocated, nor do they emanate from newly advocated social principles, but from the frailty of that nature,... and any exhibition of such frailty belongs to the individual, and not to the principles constituting the public cause.'... But it is one thing to perceive the tenor of personalties, and another and very different thing to be able to conduct them. Mr. Carlile was utterly unable to conduct them usefully. They must be entered upon, not on personal, but upon public grounds; or they lose all moral effect. If undertaken from spleen, or vanity, they belong to the class of 'quarrels,' and damage both the writer and nis cause. If entered upon to preserve the integrity of a public question, such intention must be made very evident and the *improvement* alone, and not the mortification of the party criticised, must be steadily kept in view. This Mr. Carlile never understood: he wounded, he disparaged, he recriminated. He did not weigh character through its entire extent. He mistook a part for the whole. It was in this erroneous way, that he condemned Cobbett and Hunt, was querulous to his friends in Parliament, and most unjust to his most important and devoted allies. Ricardo, Hume, Brougham, Burdett, who presented petitions for him, seem to me to have treated him much better than he treated them.

Richard Carlile's reputation was founded on the joint profession of Republicanism, and ultimately of Deism and Atheism. He owed much to the *time* when he made these professions, and not a little to the talent with which he maintained them. But did his services rest exclusively on the conditions under which they were rendered, their value would still stand high in the opinion of those capable of estimating the steps of public progress. He had to incur an obnoxious singularity, and brave imminent danger in order to purchase a field of action for others. This is a work which the world does not applaud like the manifestation of genius and talent, but it is a work which requires a courage and a sentiment

of self-sacrifice, which the world's favourites rarely display. The work of the pioneer of thought is a work done for men of genius and talent; a work they are seldom able to do for themselves—for talent is prudent, and genius is timid; it is a work, however, which must be done by some one, or freedom languishes, invention is dumb, talent is misdirected, and philosophy creeps stealthily along starting at the sound of its own footsteps.

1. Sherwin*s Republican, No. 2, p. 21.

No adequate estimate or the merits of Carlile, and no tolerant judgment of his faults can be formed without taking into account the aspects of the times when he struggled, and the unscrupulous and powerful enemies against which he contended. *Then* the most hateful types of Toryism and Christianity were rampant—*Then* Castlereagh declared in Parliament that it was necessary that 'the last spark of the spirit of the French Revolution should be extinguished.'(1) Malignant and servile Attorney-Generals and vindictive Judges left no man's liberty or life safe if he professed liberal opinions. The press was intimidated, and public meetings, who complained, butchered. It was under these formidable circumstances that Carlile undertook to free the press, and to make the famous works of the 'rebellious needleman' household books in England, and to oppose himself singly to crown and mitre, ana brave whatever political and priestly vengeance could inflict, when political and priestly power were unchecked by public opinion.

1. The apparent offensiveness of some of his addresses was created by Christians themselves, an Instance occurs in his letter to 'Old William Wilberforce,' to whom he said 'sinner,' instead of 'sir,' but this was because Wilberforce was a self-styled sinner.—Repub. vol. ii. p. 388

It is in reference to the same public circumstances that Carlile's faults are to be judged.

Those who in these days shall peruse the pages of Carlile's periodicals will be startled at the fierce invective and measureless denunciation which abound there. But let those who affect to pass over his name on this account, call to recollection the deadly arena of antagonism in which he had to fight the battle of freedom. The course he took is indeed not to be imitated now. We exist in better times, when the conflict of reason has succeeded to the strife of passion. We have better arts, because we have a fairer field, and we owe that fairer field to

such men as Carlile. Let us not impose our modes of warfare on men who fought with savages, and demand of the actors of other times that virtue which belongs exclusively to our opportunities. Men who are patriotic in easy chairs and by the fire-side only, who never incur damped feet in the public cause, and essay the reform of society in kid gloves and white waistcoats, know nothing, and can allow nothing for that strife of spirit in which men live, who take up the dice box of oppression to play for liberty, and whose stakes are their lives. Let the Christian whose altar is protected by law, whose arrogance over infidels is part and parcel of the statutes, and is applauded by public opinion; let the sleek and unruffled saint beware how he judges one on whose head was every day poured out the phials of holy malignity, whom the highest authorities stooped to defame, whose name was sacked at the instigation of every miserable deacon or venal informer, whose household gods were strewn in the streets by policemen selected for their ferocity—whose wife was consigned to a gaol, and himself doomed to spend nine years and a half in the endurance of the unceasing indignity of vindictive imprisonment. Where the Christian in ermine has been brutal, vituperative, and malignant, let him not exact a perennial delicacy of sentiment from his victim, writhing under his provocations. Taking these circumstances into account he is little acquainted with human nature, who will wonder that Carlile, in the sixth year of an imprisonment caused by Lords Castlereagh, Liverpool, Sidmouth, and Eldon, should from Dorchester Gaol, dedicate the volume of the Trials of his Wife, Sister, and Shopmen in these words—'To the Memory of Robert Stewart, Marquis of Londonderry, Viscount Castlereagh, etc., who eventually did that for himself which millions wished some noble mind would do for him—*Cut his throat.*'

The strait-laced moralist of this generation may turn to the volumes of the Carlile's Trials, and find that Mrs. Carlile was indicted for publishing a paragraph justifying assassination of tyrants. I have no sympathy with this doctrine. I deem it far nobler and more useful to society, to submit to be the victim than to victimize others. But Carlile acted on a resolute sense of self-defence. He was a believer in Brutus and Colonel Titus, and he lived in darker times when the policy of moral resistance was less clear and less practicable than now.

The Society for the Suppression of Vice distinguished him in 1820, as 'that most audacious offender, Carlile.'(1) The *Age* called him 'a miscreant tinker.'(2) The *Sunday Times* described him as 'a wretched man in the very kennel of contempt, from whom his proselytes fled as if he were emerged from a pest-house, and advised that he should rot in oblivion.'? And in this way papers and pulpits rang fascinating changes on such adjectives as fiend, monster, wretch, execrable, hideous, obscene, abandoned, infamous, etc., etc., till when he took a tour through the country in 1828, the idea of Carlile current among the pious was that of a black griffin with red glaring eyes—a tail with forked end, talons instead of

fingers, and hoofs instead of toes.'(3)

1. Repub. vol. ii. p. 182.
2. Repub. vol. xii. p. 121
3. Repub. vol. xii. p. 151.

Yet this man whom the Government, the Pulpit, and the Press co-operated thus to describe, was human, and not devoid of generous filial affection. When in Dorchester Gaol, in 1820, a letter came sealed with black wax, which, Carlile suspecting to announce the death of his mother, he threw it aside for four hours—not finding resolution to open it. 'I had hoped,' said he, 'that her life would have been extended a few years, that she might have witnessed the result of my present career. But it affords me pleasure to think that she sunk calmly to sleep, neither tortured by priests nor superstitious notions. It affords me pleasure,' cried he, exultingly, 'that in spite of the efforts of the Society for the Suppression of vice, the Priests, and the Attorney-General of a wicked administration, I have still retained a roof to shelter her, and under which she died.'(1) The department of progress in which Carlile worked has not yet received recognition by society. Society only remembers the genius which is creative, not that which is practical—though it profits in its ulterior stages more by the practical than the creative. The world has been rich in theory ages ago, and would have realised universal happiness by this time had it encouraged those who reduce its theories to practice. When a great truth is proclaimed, it produces no fruit till society is ploughed and sown with it. The pioneer, the orator, and the journalist, are they who practicalise truth: and he who re-asserts it, who insists upon it, and re-echoes it by all the arts of repetition—he it is who really advances society. He is the worker; yet society accords him no distinction, no posthumous memory. Hence it requires more generosity of sentiment to be useful than to be great. He who seeks distinction may advance society as he achieves distinction: but the advancement of society is secondary with him—the advancement of himself is the primary consideration, and he is often careless whether society advances or retrogrades provided he lays hold of its renown and keeps it. Hence he who seeks fame is selfish—he who seeks utility is generous, because he is certain that society will neglect him, as it pays its honours to those who serve it least. The theorist provides for the future, but it is the worker who makes the future by realising the fulness of the present. It was in this department that Carlile laboured. He left no distinct book, he bequeathed no invention, he is the author of no famous theory; but his life

was a poem of heroic and voluntary sacrifice, by which new freedom was won and secured to posterity; and men are now benefited through his exertions who remember him not, who know him not, and who would disown him or revile him if they did. Attorney-Generals delight to prate about the danger to society of dissemminating new opinions—the danger is to him alone who undertakes the task. Let him who thinks that mankind are to be set on change too rapidly, read the Life of Carlile. The deadly opposition by which he was assailed is the answer to their fears. Society loves its opinions, and clings to them, whether they be error or truth. It hates him who teaches it to alter its course, however the change may be for its benefit. It is the destiny of the Reformer to serve mankind, and to be cursed by them for his pains. He who is not prepared for this has no business to be a Reformer. Then has he no reward? His proud reward is the satisfaction of contemplating the benefit he confers upon men who are not to be conciliated by good intentions, nor penetrated by favours bestowed. To give happiness to a friend is but a common place delight, but the pride of conferring pleasure upon an enemy is a noble passion, of which only exalted natures are susceptible. This is the passion of the true Reformer, and this is his reward.

1. Repub vol. ii. pp. 376-7.

Of Carlile's errors it may be said that they were fostered, if not developed by the position in which he was placed. In the autumn of his career, he grew to think better of himself than of other men, but it was in a great measure because he had done more and dared more. He was impatient of a rival, because his rivals as political or anti-religious leaders wanted the proper qualification. Carlile had suffered so much, and so long, that he not unnaturally became convinced that suffering was the sole qualification of a public teacher. He confounded endurance with ability, and doubted the integrity or the courage of those who had dared nothing. He was tolerant of rivals in proportion as they had suffered any thing. His great imprisonments were so many wounds which he had received in the service of freedom, and he was proud of them as a Spartan hero of scars. He graduated, as *a patriot*, in dungeons, and he suspected the qualifications of every man who had not taken out a diploma from the Attorney-General. Carlile was one of those men who are tattooed by the enemy into whose hands they fall, and who are dyed by the influences against which they struggle. He was like a man who fights all day in the front rank; who is discoloured by the powder expended in the battle, and never after wears the hue of peace. Cobbett and O'Connell manifested the same peculiarity. They outlived their day. They were

living memorials of themselves and of the times which *they* had changed. He who judges any of these men impartially, will recognize their virtues as arising in the greatness of their natures and their faults, but as the accidents of their local positions. So posterity will judge Richard Carlile.

ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL

EXAMINATION of the body of Mr. Richard Carlile.

The well-known Mr. Richard Carlile, bookseller, late of Fleet Street, bequeathed his body for the purpose of anatomical dissection. By permission of the governors of St. Thomas's Hospital, his remains were removed from his residence in Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, to that Institution; and, on Tuesday last, there was a numerous assemblage of the friends of the deceased and members of the medical profession, to witness his post mortem examination. The chest and abdomen only were opened, and the necessity that existed for the knowledge of anatomy, not only to the surgeon, but to the physician, was shown. Mr. Grainger delivered a short address on the occasion, thinking that the object of the deceased would be obtained by this proceeding in public, and by a statement of the motives which, had actuated him in giving his remains for dissection.

The illustrious Bentham, actuated by the same benevolent feeling, had at the close of the last century, left his body for dissection, and that at a time when the prejudice against anatomical examinations was so great that bodies were procured with the utmost difficulty. That prejudice was perhaps less at the present time, but still sufficiently strong to interfere very materially with that due supply of subjects, so essential to the proper education of the medical student, and of such vital importance to the community at large. Such difficulties existed that no lecturer in this country had ever yet been able to complete a course of operative surgery, properly so called. Mr. Carlile deserved the approbation of all the friends of humanity for attempting to remove this prejudice by leaving his remains for anatomical purposes.

Mr. Grainger vindicated medical men from the charge of irreligion, and contended that medical and anatomical studies, if *properly* pursued, served to

demonstrate the truth, not only of natural, but of revealed religion. *The Lancet,* No. 1,016, p. 774, February 18, 1843.

J. Watson, Printer, 3, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row.

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