

## Carlyle Letters in the Montague Collection, New York Public Library

IN THE MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS OF CANVASSING AND GATHERING, transcribing and annotating, and editing and publishing that has wrought the Duke-Edinburgh edition of *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*—now at more than forty volumes—most of the individual pieces of correspondence have been harvested from extensive collections within a small number of national libraries and university libraries. In fact, the National Library of Scotland (NLS) holds by far the majority of the Carlyles' correspondence—many thousands of letters, too many to count with exacting confidence.

Within the NLS collections, and among smaller collections of other great libraries, some of the most interesting Carlyle documents are discovered in posthumous accessions from a singularly focused sort of collector, peculiarly compulsive and somewhat resembling a philatelist or numismatist. Isaac Watson Dyer, Walter Leuba, and Norman Strouse limited their collections almost entirely to Carlyleana. Gordon Ray, Frederick Hilles, and James and Marie-Louise Osborn collected Carlyle letters within a broad Victorian spectrum. And then there was a third sort of enthusiast who collected autographs of famous and significant figures inhabiting specific epochs, which may or may not contain Carlyle specimens. Of this latter species was the benefactor of the Montague Collection at New York Public Library (NYPL), with its nine random TC holographs (including an envelope that has lost its letter).

Gilbert Holland Montague (1880–1961) was a Harvard-educated attorney, an advocate of free-trade economics, an independent scholar, and a bibliophile of wide interests pertaining to nineteenth-century history and to the literature of the Victorian era. In 1950 he donated to Harvard's Houghton Library some nine hundred items related to his distant cousin Emily Dickinson, including manuscripts, paintings,

photographs, and a beautiful cherry writing table. In that same year he donated manuscripts and ephemera associated with the inventor Robert Fulton to the New York Public Library (NYPL). Upon Montague's death in 1961, the remainder of his eclectic manuscript collection went to NYPL.<sup>1</sup> Therein, one will find nine specimens of Carlyleana, including eight holograph letters and an empty envelope. We are grateful to the librarians of the Montague collection for making facsimiles of the letters available to the editors. At the same time, these librarians should not be held accountable for errors in the transcription or for the lack of more extensive annotation that will be added when these letters are incorporated into *The Carlyle Letters Online*.

David Southern



**TC to Richard Monckton Milnes, [29 May 1848].** Addr: R. M. Milnes Esq, M.P. &c / 26. Pall Mall. Hitherto unpublished. If correctly dated by its postmark, this letter should be inserted in *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle (CL)* before or after TC's 29 May letter to J. P. Eckermann (*CL* 23: 37–38).

Chelsea, Monday—

Dear Milnes,— That is a capital Article on Sterling; delicately yet decisively said, and right well seen and thought all very good; and finds complete assent here all of it, except perhaps some twaddle about “natural poetry of mysticism and superstitious nonsense” which amounts only to a sentence, or less, in one page: a small allowance of that universal Harvey's Sauce now current in literary cookery! Thank you sincerely for so good a word on that subject.

And furthermore, what indeed is the purpose of this Note, will you [??] be so generous as send another Copy of your Article to one who naturally likes it well, and wd like to possess it in convenient form,

<sup>1</sup> For a PDF of the container list, see <<http://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/montague.pdf>>.

Capt<sup>n</sup> Sterling

9. South Place  
Knightsbridge,

—and be a good boy till I see you again.

Yours always truly

T. Carlyle



**TC to John Forster, 9 August 1848.** Hitherto unpublished. This letter should be inserted after TC's 5 August letter to William Maccall (*CL* 23: 90).

Chelsea, 9 Aug<sup>t</sup>, 1848—

Dear Forster,

You appear to be advancing resolutely in your Waste-Lands Project, and speak as men that saw good omens ahead of them. I do very sincerely wish you good-speed in the operation. I know nothing a good citizen could turn himself to, at this time, of a more important and emphatically beneficent nature. More and more I grow to discover in this the first step towards a real "Organisation of Labour"; a step that can be taken even now, and the results and ulterior corollaries of which are literally immeasurable!

Much, almost all, will depend on your getting a good Manager: a man skilled completely in spade agriculture; and, what is rarer, in the art of commanding men: a wise, brave, and true-minded man! Such a man cannot be found in perfection; but doubtless you will carefully make the nearest possible approximation to such, and find him roadworthy more or less, and tolerable in some measure.

The next difficulty I anticipate for you, is that of wanting command over your Pauper workers: without command, analogous to that of a Captain over soldiers, I do not think the thing can completely succeed; and to that preliminary, especially in these mealy-mouthed days, you of course cannot in the least pretend! But you will carefully use what power you have, or can find to exist for you in the given circumstances;

you will discover also where the shoe pinches as you go along, and be able to make wise proposals, and get wise laws made (we shall hope), on the subject, one day.— Persist according to opportunity, and do your very best. And if you succeed, and if Trade succeeds and the finances will permit,— why shouldn't Bradford send you up as a member, next Palaver, to speak for it and the universe on that and such matters, and develope [*sic*] yourself in the Parliamentary-Eloquence way? There is an idea! But on the whole, No; it is a dreadful thing to become a tin horn, however loud, instead of a man!—

Meanwhile read this letter from an Excellent Country-gentleman, full of practical sense and of interest in this matter:— and if you know anybody in Paris or France at present from whom you could demand farther information on the point,— is there not some Bey or Pasha of these [???]ls, once a S<sup>t</sup> Simoneist?— a true word on it would be very welcome to me.

London is getting divinely quiet: in my present wearied humour, I find no comfort equal to that of sitting in dead silence, conversing with things and shapes now sunk into Eternity, most sad, most beautiful, or with the confused shadows of things that have not yet struggled out of Eternity, and come to dwell among us here. Adieu, dear Forster; be busy, be happy.

Yours always T. Carlyle



**TC to Unidentified Correspondents, 15 November 1851.** Hitherto unpublished. This letter should be inserted before TC's 17 November letter to François Buloz (*CL* 26: 233).

Chelsea, 15 Nov<sup>r</sup>, 1851

Gentlemen,

You do me great honour, and certainly I feel grateful for your kindness to me; but in regard to writing Review Articles, my hand is quite out, this long while; and I must not venture upon these, or any other such subjects, on that basis, at present.

The names of your Contributors, several of whom I have the happiness to know more or less, are abundantly promising; and I will wish and augur you all manner of success.— with many thanks I remain

Yours sincerely

T. Carlyle



**TC to James Marshall, 31 October 1853.** Hitherto unpublished. This letter should be inserted after TC's 30 October letter to C. H. Cooper (*CL* 28: 302).

Chelsea, 31 Oct<sup>r</sup>, 1853—

Dear Marshall,

I hope you are already in communication with Wilson; and fast bringing matters to a conclusion satisfactory to both parties. If you fail with W., I find there will be no want of others, after a sort,—but a sort far inferior to his. Indeed, as I said already, there is not, to my knowledge or surmise, any likelihood of another as desirable man for you in her Majesty's dominions. I believe the name of "Weimar" does a great deal for you in this matter, and encourages applicants, in spite of the poor salary and other realities. I ought to add that there has nobody yet applied who looks in the least like answering should Wilson fail. However, there are some two to whom I could apply in that unexpected case.

In my hurry last time, I forgot altogether to say anything of Eckermann; and this morning there has come a letter from him, in very abstruse cursiv-schrift, of which I have made out less than the fifth part (till evening with its leisure come); but I gather that you have been speaking to him upon economics, and perhaps about the "devout imagination" I had on that subject. I beg now that you would take some good way and speedy of letting him know without offence that said "imagination" was merely such, on my part; and that on reading your letter it melted instantly away out of the region of the practical, and ceased to be! God knows I have no appetite for begging; and there is a good deal of it to do nevertheless for English unfortunates whom very Hunger catches by the throat, and who apply to me in that sad circumstance!—if Eckermann has, as appears, about £75 a year of pension, he ought decidedly to be able to live upon it in Weimar; and I can tell no story for him here which ought to have the least weight with benevolent

rich persons. We will therefore entirely let that matter drop for the present. Such resources, sad and questionable at the best, ought to be reserved for cases of extremity; and to that pressing length with him it has yet by no means come. I imagined his pension had been some £25 a-year, and that some work and earning had still been required of him even for daily bread.

I beg you will manage this as well as you can; but manage it speedily withal; and let there be no mistake about it.

I am again in great haste, — indeed seldom out of it in this wild whirlpool of a place[.]

Yours ever truly T. Carlyle



**TC to Unidentified Correspondent, 9 December 1867.** Hitherto unpublished.

Chelsea, 9 dec<sup>r</sup>. 1867

Dear Sir,

I regret to ans<sup>r</sup> that I can do nothing with any Book on the late War in America; and that the Collections you have formed for an extensive book on it, w<sup>d</sup>, in my present circumstances, be of no use to me whatever. Indeed I much fear neither the Collect<sup>ns</sup> nor the work itself will ever be very saleable in Engl<sup>d</sup> or in Europe anywhere; and that America is the only Country where they are likely to find an eager public.

These are disappointing prophesies; and I w<sup>d</sup> gladly send a hopefuller ans<sup>r</sup> if I cd! I am very sorry for y<sup>r</sup> embarrassments, and especially y<sup>r</sup> spiritual distresses, and black imaginat<sup>ns</sup>—wh<sup>h</sup> latter, I believe, are utterly exaggerated, and in no way correspond to the fact. Courage, courage! You are still, I take it, in the vigour of y<sup>r</sup> years, have talent of the literary and perhaps better kinds; and the world is full of employ<sup>t</sup> as it never was before, for those who will discern what it wants and try to produce accordingly. Bestir y<sup>r</sup>self, stand up for y<sup>r</sup>self; cast despair utterly away! —I inclose a poor couple of sovereigns, with my best wishes; wh<sup>h</sup> unluckily is all the practical help I can lend.

Y<sup>rs</sup> sincerely

T. Carlyle

Y<sup>r</sup> letter is dated dec<sup>r</sup> 6 and correctly addressed, but did not arrive till this afternoon.



**TC to David Davidson, 7 April 1870.** Hitherto unpublished. Addr: (by Mary Aitken) Coll D. E. Davidson / &c &c / Woodcroft / Edinburgh. The letter was written by TC, likely using a blue, waxy pencil. Thomas Erskine of Linlathan died on 20 March 1870.

Chelsea, 7 April, 1870

My dear Sir,

Y<sup>r</sup> letter awakens many tho<sup>ts</sup> in me wh<sup>h</sup> are very mournful, yet also very beautiful, tender and solemn. Indeed y<sup>r</sup> mere signature, at any time, w<sup>d</sup> do that!

I much esteemed and loved the now departed Thomas Erskine for the pious, lucid and loving character wh<sup>h</sup> always shone in him; and for the ingenuous, simple, pure and cheerfully devout Life he led,— everpatient amid so many sufferings & impedim<sup>ts</sup>: tho a Nathaniel indeed, in whom there was found no guile!—

In a Note of Dr John Brown's to my Brother I observed, and ever since remember, that the last words he was heard to utter were "Lord Jesus." His end appears to have been perfectly peaceable; such as his kindest friends c<sup>d</sup> have wished for him, now that the great hour was come.

One of the most touching latter things to me in Mr Erskine the constant regard he had to poor "Old Betty," whom you may remember young as a Serv<sup>t</sup> at Haddington: the good Erskine seemed to have taken on him as a bequest the love that was felt for her here: he had a high and real respect for the character of Betty, and never long failed to drive out to her poor Cottage at Green End, and see the really venerable sister woman for a while. From Betty herself I got a poor old Edin<sup>r</sup> Newspaper with some obituary Notice of him in it; addressed in her poor old hands, one of the most pathetic things to me.

Adieu, dear Sir: I am surly much obliged by this Letter; by y<sup>r</sup> evidt<sup>ly</sup> kind feelings and intent<sup>ns</sup> towards me in sending it. I will beg you to remember me a little, & you are safe to do it kindly, always while I continue here. With you too may all things, temporal & eternal, go over well.

Y<sup>rs</sup> sincerely

T. Carlyle



**TC to David Davidson, 22 February 1872.** Hitherto unpublished. Letter dictated to Mary Aitken, written in her hand and signed by TC. David Davidson had written to TC on 19 February (MS: NLS 1770.122).

5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea

22 Feb. 1872

Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged indeed by the letter I received from you yesterday morning, right thankful that you were prompted to make that visit; and to write me such an account of it. Nor for many a long day have I read any letter so interesting and affecting to me;—a letter which I will carefully keep among my valuable records!—

Good old Betty is at this time the most venerable woman I know in the world. So much of loyalty, of piety, of patient endeavour,—in a word of noble noble human worth, and fine old Scotch practicality and simple wisdom [TC inserts “To be -----” (illegible)]. She belongs to me, also, as the last living link of scenes to me as no others are. She once told me something,—volunteered to tell me,—of that sad tragedy, which happened in your eighth year; a strange and solemn narrative on her part and on mine, to which I listened speechlessly attentive: but it was nothing like so minute as yours. Thank you, thank you for this true favour done me!

I hope you will again, as you purpose, go out and visit poor Betty; and keep me acquainted with anything that befalls her, so long as she and I live are spared alive. The late M<sup>r</sup> Erskine was a regular link between Betty and me as long as he lived; but since his death this is wanting to me, and a bright element in poor Betty’s good old reverential life as well.

Believe me, dear Sir, with

Yours always, with many thanks and regards,

T. Carlyle