

Keeping it in the Family: Alexander Carlyle, James Barrett, and the Fight for Carlyle's Reputation

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This essay is a revised version of a paper delivered at the Carlyle Conference in Edinburgh, 10 July 2012, to mark the completion and publication of volume 40 of the Duke-Edinburgh edition of the Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle (CL). The author is grateful to the National Library of Scotland (NLS) for permission to publish excerpts from the Barrett papers and books and to St. Andrew's University Library (SAUL) to publish excerpts from the Barrett-Thompson correspondence. Thanks are also due to Edinburgh University Library, Dundee City Libraries, University of Dundee Archives, both National Trusts, the curators of the Carlyle houses in Chelsea and Ecclefechan, and to the members of the Carlyle family, whose help has been, and continues to be, invaluable.

A VERY GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE SAD *diminuendo* of Carlyle's reputation after his death in 1881. Froude's precipitate publication of a deeply flawed edition of the *Reminiscences* and his splendid but incriminating four-volume *Life* (1882, 1884) produced a fierce disagreement between himself and Carlyle's niece Mary Aitken (1848–95), her husband (and Carlyle's nephew) Alexander Carlyle (1843–1931), their ally the Harvard professor Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908), and an ever-widening circle of indignant defenders.¹ Alexander Carlyle was to live on for many decades

¹ The most succinct summary of the controversy is K. J. Fielding's in the preface to the World's Classics edition of Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, ed. Fielding and

after his uncle's death, struggling to vindicate the Carlyles' reputation while outliving both his first and his second wife (Lilias MacVicar, d. 1929) and by waging an increasingly lonely battle in Newbattle Terrace in Edinburgh to collect, catalogue, publish, and preserve the Carlyle archive. Carlyle scholars can be grateful to him for the magnificent collection of his papers and letters that he donated to the National Library of Scotland (a portion of it was sold to the library to pay for the statue of Carlyle that commands the hilltop above Ecclefechan) and for the Sotheby's auction of 1932, which insured that additional material was gradually made available to interested readers.²

Two factors have made it possible to gain further knowledge of the efforts of Alexander Carlyle to defend his uncle's character and achievement. One is the increasing emergence of information about the Rev. J. A. S. Barrett of Peebles (d. 1937),³ a close confidant of Alexander's and an unswerving admirer of Thomas Carlyle. Like Alexander, Barrett was a meticulous and persistent seeker-out and cataloguer of facts, manuscripts, and errors. The second factor is the increasing accessibility of papers left behind at Alexander Carlyle's death that were not publicly auctioned. Some of these papers were already known in libraries, and more are now becoming available by kind permission of surviving relatives. They provide greater insight

myself, reprinted and updated in 2009 with a revised bibliography. For a defense of Froude, see W. H. Dunn and John Clubbe's abridgement of Froude's biography. See also my essays on Froude and Moncure Conway, and on Carlyle and Norton. For valuable new evidence drawn from the Isaac W. Dyer archive at Bowdoin College, Maine, see Kinser and Sorensen.

² See Sotheby's *Catalogue*. On the first day £275 was paid for a single copy of *Sartor* reprinted from *Fraser's* and inscribed, "To Jane W. Carlyle, this little book, a little milestone in a desolate, confused, yet not (as we hope) unblessed pilgrimage we make in common, is with heart's gratitude inscribed by her affection T.C., 2nd March 1836" (*Glasgow Herald*, 14 June 1932). The total raised was approximately £3,650. Other family generosity was noted in the *Montreal Gazette* for 14 January 1929, with the gift of Carlyle's letters to his niece Mary Carlyle Aitken presented by Miss Margaret Carlyle Aitken to the National Library of Scotland. She had kept these 700 letters in her home in Dumfries, and transferred them to the library with the assistance of her friend E. A. Hornel, who made the arrangements. The Hornel Library in Kirkcudbright remains a valuable archive.

³ For Barrett's obituary, see *The Scotsman*, 27 July 1837 and *University of Edinburgh Journal* 9 (1938): 77.

into the period of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when public feelings about Carlyle were at best muddled and at worst contemptuous, and feelings about Jane mixed and often ill-informed. In the midst of the turmoil and confusion, Alexander Carlyle battled tenaciously to protect his uncle's memory.

J. A. S. Barrett is already a familiar name in Carlyle studies, thanks largely to his indispensable if outdated pamphlet, *The Principal Portraits and Statues of Thomas Carlyle* (1928), compiled with James Caw and Stanley Cursiter of the National Galleries of Scotland, and noted in Rodger L. Tarr's magisterial *Pittsburgh Bibliography*. Barrett's study was included in Isaac W. Dyer's *A Bibliography of Thomas Carlyle's Writings and Ana* (1928).⁴ My own copy of the separate offprint version of the portrait list is dedicated by Barrett himself to the Rev. William Marwick of Edinburgh, one of the pillars of the Carlyle Society in the 1920s and 1930s; it also includes Barrett's Latin inscription dated 8 December 1929. The *Commentary* is by Caw, but the labour of gathering the images was shared by Barrett and Alexander Carlyle. In his preface Barrett singled out Alexander, "who, as the intimate friend of Carlyle, and editor of the *New Letters, Love Letters*, and other volumes, has most kindly permitted quotations therefrom, and has also supplied information which no one else could have given" (1). The copy presented to Marwick bears Barrett's characteristic neat corrections and datings. Both he and Alexander were tidy annotators, though the latter frequently betrayed signs of his uncle's temper in marginalia, especially when he referred to Froude.

An Edinburgh graduate, Barrett was librarian of Dundee College and his responsibilities extended to loans made to such luminaries as Professor Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1860–1948) who had been since 1884 professor of Biology and later Natural History at University College, Dundee, a post he held for 32 years. In 1917, Thompson was appointed to the chair of Natural History at St. Andrews University, remaining there for the last 31 years of his life. He became a well-known and much loved figure in the town, walking its streets in gym

⁴ The list of portraits was a fairly late addition to Dyer's plans; see Kinser and Sorensen 97.

shoes with a parrot on his shoulder. An extensive correspondence between Barrett and Thompson survives in St. Andrews University Library, ranging from literary matters (a shared interest in Spenser and Milton) and questions regarding publication of papers, to a shared admiration for Thomas Carlyle. More prosaically, it was Barrett's unhappy duty to dun Thompson and the other professors for the return of library books, some of which were seriously overdue. The correspondence continued after Barrett's retirement in 1920 and his move to Peebles, from which most of the surviving letters date.⁵

Less well-known than his entry in Dyer's bibliography are two contributions he made to the *Scotsman* in 1933, "Statuette at Potsdam" (15 August) and "*Sartor Resartus*: A Centenary Tribute" (9 December). While the second is a solid article intended to revive interest in *Sartor Resartus* at a time when its earlier influence was largely forgotten, the first is an addendum to Barrett's work in compiling the list of likenesses of Carlyle. It includes illustrations of a copy of the well-known Boehm statue that had turned up in the Austrian Museum for Art in Vienna (where Boehm's father had been director of the Imperial Mint), and of a quite different, smaller bronze probably of 1874/5 by Boehm, unrecorded hitherto, in the Stadtschloss in Potsdam.⁶

What animated both Barrett and Alexander Carlyle was the desire to correct the aberration (as they saw it) of critical thinking that had followed Froude, who had prompted what one correspondent described in a letter to Mary Aitken Carlyle as the "revulsion of popular feeling which the unamiable utterances in the 'Reminiscences' have produced."⁷ Alexander had long been an admirer of his famous uncle in Scotland while growing up in Ontario (where his father Alexander had

⁵ For Wentworth Thompson's career, see his obituary in the *Scotsman*, 27 July 1937. He was particularly remembered for his work in the founding and running of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

⁶ Barrett noted in a letter to Wentworth Thompson, "The late Alex. Carlyle had 4 copies done quite recently & I believe it would not be impossible to obtain a further copy, if I have a minimum of health." Barrett was also thinking of a copy for Harvard, to which he also intended to send a corrected typescript of the *Journal* (SAUL MS 15226; 16 July 1936).

⁷ W. M. McCall to Mary Aitken Carlyle, 8 September 1881, published by permission of Butler Library, Columbia University.

emigrated in 1843). He was to visit Scotland in 1878 along with his brother Thomas to enjoy Carlyle's company in Dumfries and its neighborhood during the old man's summer holiday.⁸ When Alexander joined his cousin Mary Aitken in Chelsea to help look after the aged Carlyle in his last years (they even took him with them on their honeymoon), he assumed the role of a devout disciple to the "Prophet."

Barrett shared this fervor, and he manifested his support of Carlyle in a variety of ways. For example, in the introduction to his bibliography, Dyer writes that in addition to Archibald MacMechan, "I am greatly indebted to Mr. Barrett for furnishing me new material and for reading proofs, as well as for the section on portraits. . . . The work has been greatly improved by the valuable suggestions of both these eminent Carlyleans" (ix). Barrett's annotated copy of Dyer inscribed "with the grateful thanks of the Author/ Nov. 1928" is in the National Library of Scotland. This very interesting copy (noted by Tarr in his *Bibliography*) contains Barrett's characteristic annotations and corrections.⁹ Of *Last Words of Thomas Carlyle on Trades-Unions* (1892), Barrett writes that the preface was by "John C. A. the brother of Mary C. A." and he concludes with this crushing summary of the work that it was "printed from a copy made by John C. A., differing largely from the correct version, & wholly without value. Mrs. A. Carlyle took legal action & had the publication stopped, at a cost of about £30" (NLS MS 9852, 127). Barrett's copy of Dyer is full of pasted-in and marginalised annotations, indicative of the fact that he had access to Alexander Carlyle's notes when writing them. Supplementary notes about statues, painting, and illustrations abound. In one instance, Barrett notes the location of the terra-cotta statuette of Carlyle that today stands in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS 9852, 535). He shared with Alexander a desire to

⁸ For details of the visit, see E. W. Marrs, Jr.

⁹ Alexander Carlyle praised MacMechan's editorial work in a letter he wrote to Dyer on 5 April 1927: "I take it for a good omen that Prof. MacMechan approves so highly of the part (of your work) on Sartor; his opinion is of value as he is well up in that subject. Of course you know Mr. Barrett's Sartor, his annotated Edition is also capably done. I have known him for twenty years; and MacMechan and I are graduates of the same University (Toronto), but not of the same years" (Kinser and Sorensen 114).

correct what he saw as Froude's sloppy editing, though he was a balanced commentator. At one stage he even sets the record straight, contradicting those who claimed that Froude wrote in ignorance about the Carlyles' Scottish years. On the contrary, Barrett points out that in 1879 Froude visited Craigenputtoch in person as part of the preparation for writing his *Life*: "In Sept. 1879 he spent 3 hours at it & sent a description of its then state to Carlyle. A.C. showed me the letter in 1931" (NLS MS 9852, 348).

Barrett read and re-read Carlyle's works, and with a librarian's thoroughness tracked down allusions and quotations. In a typical comment he notes, "Carlyle's mind was saturated with the 'German Romance' which he had recently published. I had no difficulty in recognising more than thirty quotations from 'Goethe' and a number of 'Jean Paul.' Though the former is not once named in the essay, probably to avoid offending Jeffrey. This explains much. Carlyle threw the mantle of Goethe's ideal Poet over his beloved Burns, & it didn't fit, as Jeffrey & R. L. S. [Robert Louis Stevenson] pointed out, though neither of them knew why" (NLS MS 15227; 14 Oct. 1936). Perhaps most interestingly of all is Barrett's longer note in the *addenda* of his copy of *Sartor Resartus* in the NLS. It begins, trivially enough, with a possible identification of the duckpond Teufelsdröckh sat by in *Sartor's* pages, but it goes on: "Mr Alex. Carlyle told me that there was, in the recollection of last generation, a duckpond in Ecclefechan, some 50 feet from the road: the spot is now built over. Also that there was a high wall near a house which stood further up the street than the one in which C. was born: to it they had removed, & of it C. probably wrote concerning Teufelsdröckh watching the setting sun in *Sartor*. Also Mr. Carlyle has 2 typewritten copies of C's Journal, & says he will let me have one of them to read if a 2nd edit. of my book be required" (350). In November 1925 he adds, "I have been trying to persuade the Blacks (the publishers, Adam and Charles Black) to consider a new Edition of poor old 'Sartor.' But they won't hear of it, having issued too large a reprint a few years ago, and having thereafter done little or nothing to push it. My wish would be to offer it to Milford, who has already an annotated 'Past & Present'; but I hardly think I could do that in the circumstances. The annoying thing is that I have recently discovered a source which no other

Editor (so far as I know) has found;—& can make no use of it” (NLS MS 15208; 10 Nov. 1925).¹⁰

Carlyle was not Barrett’s sole focus of concern in the 1920s. His correspondence with Thompson touches on a wide range of concerns, including philology and poetry.¹¹ He remarks in a letter dated 26 February 1922 that “as it was through you that I first learned to take an interest in ‘deeficult’ passages, you may be glad to know that I have lately been reading ‘The Ring and the Book’” (SAUL MS 15202). A great deal of their correspondence concerns readings of crucial passages (above all in Milton) and Barrett’s attempts to find publication with his results. By 1925, for instance (now removed to his retirement address in Peebles), Barrett is writing to say he has finished a piece on Milton and is wondering where to offer it.

But his Carlyle research continued to absorb his attention, particularly as the Chelsea prophet’s prestige began to wane in the United States as well as in the United Kingdom. On 10 March 1929 Barrett reports to Thompson, “For over a year I have been attempting to help an American enthusiast [Dyer] who, after thirty years of collecting material, is now concluding an elaborate bibliography of Carlyle. It interested me greatly, and Mr. Caw was kind enough to continue an Introduction, or Commentary . . . merely because no one in America could be expected to ascertain details of objects located here. I was surprised to find, among other things, how some triflingly small circumstance may explain much in a portrait. Thus Watts painted his portrait at a time when artist & subject were both suffering from the excessive heat of an exceptional summer; Millais stopped, leaving the hands unfinished, because the remarks of some young lady had annoyed him; & Whistler’s repeated command was : ‘For God’s sake, don’t move!’ If you recollect the portraits, you will at once see the bearing of these incidental factors.” Thompson received a copy of the iconography, which survives in mint condition—apparently unread—among his papers. He adds, “My small task was

¹⁰ In 1934 Barrett also prepared corrections to the text of Carlyle’s *Two Note Books*, “having recently had occasion to collate [the text] with the corresponding parts of Carlyle’s MS Journal” (“Literary and Historical Notes” 164).

¹¹ See Campbell, “James Barrett and Carlyle’s ‘Journal.’”

undertaken only because Dyer in America could hardly have compiled a list of the portraits in this country, and also because Caw most kindly promised to write a commentary if I did the list" (SAUL MS 42738).

In 1931 Barrett was troubled by questions of judgement, (& perhaps of good taste) in the editing of the manuscript journal which he had in his study, "to be prepared for publication, & alas, I feel *so* inexperienced and inexpert for such a task" (Campbell, "Barrett and Carlyle's 'Journal'" 20). Barrett felt especially inferior to Alexander Carlyle, whom he regarded as "a walking repertory of his Uncle's writings" (SAUL MS 15212; 24 May 1929). Barrett later recalled that Alexander "was always (for some 35 years) very kind to me" (SAUL MS 15216; 27 December 1923), and it fell to Barrett to write the obituary in the *Scotsman* on 2 December 1931.

The D'Arcy Thompson papers make it clear that the friendship between the two men began in 1929. Barrett noted on 24 May, "I wrote to Mr Alex. Carlyle, now aged 87 . . . and, when I called on him last Wednesday, he showed me his book of clippings. . . . He used to live in Canada. . . . I have some notes for a Paper on 'Carlyle in Edinburgh' & shall there point out that he & Darwin were living not so far apart, both to become famous & friends in later life" (SAUL MS 15212; 24 May 1929). Regrettably, it appears that this paper was never published. But Carlyle's Journal certainly occupied his time, and obviously Alexander had carried out his intention of passing to Barrett both the original and a typescript that Alexander had laboriously compiled. Barrett doubted his own abilities as an editor: "I have in my little Safe, & in the desk at my hand, the MS., & also the typescript copy, of T. C.'s complete Journal, to be prepared for publication, & alas, I feel *so* inexperienced & inexpert for such a task. I'll certainly put some honest *work* into it; and am, indeed, fairly familiar with all the biographical, & at least some of the literary aspects" (SAUL MS 15215; 1 January 1931).

His plan to continue Alexander's work did not come to fruition, despite Barrett having the manuscript in his possession. In his will Alexander left the papers to be disposed of at the discretion of the trustees (of whom Barrett was one), but the manuscript did not reach the National Library of Scotland. This was partly due to Barrett's ill health: neuralgia had all but

disabled his left shoulder and for a time he dictated letters to his wife (see SAUL MS 15218; 30 July 1933). D'Arcy Thompson suggested that, given the lack of interest from UK publishers, Barrett might look abroad, but the latter's response suggests his skepticism: "Your advice about the Carnegie Trust, and printing in Vienna or Holland, will be carefully considered & its possibilities examined" (SAUL MS 15219; 4 September 1933). Barrett was unenthusiastic about overseas printing largely because he thought it might lead to many misprints: "To print abroad sounds attractive; but Professor MacKinnon assures me that printers' slips are very numerous in any volume printed in Holland or Vienna" (SAUL MS 15222; 10 December 1933).

He eventually decided to settle for corrected copies deposited in public hands: "The actual MS, of the complete Journal I wish to have deposited in the former [The National Library of Scotland]: Carlyle owed so much to it; and it was admittedly Mr. Alex. Carlyle's intention to present it to that Library as soon as I had finished studying the text. Though he wrote that to me, & orally informed Dr. Meikle & myself of his purpose, he most unfortunately did not state it in his Will. I hope to get over the financial difficulty that thus arises by charging the Library £400, or perhaps £500, for it, on behalf of the Carlyle grandchildren. That is for the future; but I mean to have the plan fixed provisionally as soon as possible" (SAUL MS 15220; 8 November 1933). At this point in the correspondence, information about the journal simply ceases. But his letters do indicate that Barrett was crushed by repeated refusal from "the Oxford & Cambridge Presses & by several other Publishers. Strange that the writing of so many men sh^d be eagerly read when Carlyle is rejected & despised!" By September 1933 he admitted to Thompson that "I begin to feel a certain staleness in the whole project, and a doubt whether one should continue to labour on a work which the public would most probably neglect. *If* the readers of today refuse to take Carlyle as a great Teacher, & prefer the Huxleys, Wells, & Bennett, then, of course, there is no more to be said. *Securus judicat!*" (SAUL MS 15218/9).

And what of Alexander Carlyle himself? Though he worked in a solitary study with his books and typescripts, he continued

to be preoccupied with his uncle's public reputation. Both Carlyle Houses in Chelsea and in Ecclefechan owe a great deal of their origins, furnishings, and early administration to him. His energy and his generosity were boundless. He helped in practical matters such as finding custodians to look after the Ecclefechan property (partly with the help of his doctor son Oliver), which his wife had bought in 1893, and which he conveyed to the Carlyle's House Memorial Trust' in 1910.¹² And throughout this period, he jealously oversaw the preservation, preparation, and publication of as much of his uncle's work as he could manage. Charles Richard Sanders, who initiated the great Duke-Edinburgh edition in the 1950s, summed up Alexander's work in the years following Carlyle's death: "In this period the best editing of the letters was done by Carlyle's nephew Alexander Carlyle, and the worst by J. A. Froude" (Sanders 1).

This benevolence towards the houses was to continue from the Carlyle family even after Alexander's death. On the second day of the Sotheby's sale of his posthumous effects, "Mrs Alexander Carlyle [a relative] frequently made bids when the auctioneer had reached that part in the catalogue devoted to those relics which, as distinct from manuscripts and letters, were intimately associated with Thomas Carlyle or with his wife in their home in Chelsea" (*Glasgow Herald*, 14 June 1932). These include items such as the cottage piano, the Goethe necklace, and other artefacts that can still be seen today. The value of Alexander Carlyle's long nights sitting with the sage, listening and writing, can also be seen in notes that he typed for the German historian and writer Friedrich Althaus (1829–97).¹³ The copy in the NLS is inscribed, "given by Mr. Alexander Carlyle to Mr. Barrett" in an unknown hand. He quotes in

¹² For Alexander's work on behalf of the Carlyle House in Chelsea, see my article "Carlyle House," 66–68. For Ecclefechan, see *Carlyle's Birthplace*, 7. Those items in the Ecclefechan House which had done service in Chelsea before entering the Arched House collection are listed in the catalogue with an asterisk. The Carlyle's House Memorial Trust assumed the management of the Arched House (now managed by the National Trust for Scotland) on 1 January 1911. Both the Chelsea and Ecclefechan properties were transferred to the respective National Trusts in 1936. For a detailed history of how the Chelsea house was purchased, see *Illustrated Memorial Volume*, 1–26. For illustrations of both houses, see Bertram Waldrom Matz.

¹³ For Althaus, see Clubbe.

one place from Carlyle's school teacher in Annan, one Morley, whom his student greatly admired. Morley had written to the youthful Carlyle on 4 July 1812, "You won the Prize in the First Class, and I hope in that in the course of the Second, you have given Mr Leslie reason to form as good an opinion of you as he could have had from your solutions of the prize questions. But Carlyle for reasons of his own could not be induced to compete for the prise [sic] in the Second Class.' So Morley adds, 'I am chagrined that you have not got prizes both in the First and Second, when you had so good an opportunity'" (NLS MS 739).¹⁴

Elsewhere in the same notes, his jottings flesh out our knowledge of Carlyle's early years—such as the comment that while Robert Jardine of Applegarth was known to have helped Carlyle learn German in the early stages, he "was of some use in teaching the pronunciation; Carlyle could by this time [1819] already translate German with the aid of a Dictionary" (NLS MS 739). Interestingly, Alexander quotes a letter from John Aitken Carlyle to his brother dated 20 February 1822: "I believe it is generally known in Annan that you had the offer of £150 a-year for taking care of the Yorkshire Squire's Brother." Alexander adds that Carlyle's refusal of this offer was for a long time the talk of the town. Carlyle's own account of the offer is published in *Collected Letters*, where he describes to his friend Robert Fergusson the visit he paid to his prospective employers: "I went, accordingly, and happy was it I went. From description, I was ready to accept the place; from inspection, all Earndale would not have hired me to accept it. . . . So I left the barbarous people—kindly, however, because they used me kindly" (22 Oct. 1820; *CL* 1: 284–6). Carlyle employs a Biblical quotation here from Acts 28.2 for his satirical picture of the English ("the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one"). His ambition for the ministry may have died by this time, but his childhood reading obviously had not.

In his lifetime Alexander Carlyle had a strong sense of the value of papers and illustrations. For example, his comments

¹⁴ For more details see Campbell and Tarr. For Jardine as a source of German help, see *CL* 1: 159–60.

on the Patrick photographs of Carlyle and Carlyle localities offered to the house in Chelsea show shrewd commercial sense. Alexander had known both Patricks, the father (who photographed Carlyle) and the son (who was to paint Carlyle, from his father's photographs). He saw the list of the elder Patrick's negatives, and wrote that "[h]is son has them for sale, and they would, I think, even at the price he asks for them, perhaps be a profitable investment for the Trustees to embark on. Young Patrick is, I imagine, rather hard up, and likely to accept a bit less than he asks" (Campbell, "Carlyle House" 76).

The Carlyle House in Chelsea has a number of other Alexander Carlyle letters, some of which offer insights into his various attempts to publish reputable editions of correspondence. The Carlyle-Mill correspondence occupied him for years and caused him much difficulty in dealing with Mill's descendants. Eventually, he made his selection for publication, 44 letters he considered to be the basis for a publishable account of their friendship, "and also a few Notes (or Notekins, as Carlyle would have called them), selected as well, because I thought them important enough for publication. . . . As to the Originals, I hardly would recommend the Trust [the Carlyle House Memorial Trust] to keep possession *of them all*; for they are costly and they are perishable no matter how well they may be taken care of—But we may talk of that by and by" (Campbell, "Carlyle House" 86). Alexander has even adopted his uncle's idiosyncratic habits of capitalization.

Occasionally, a more aggressive tone creeps into the correspondence, for Alexander held strong opinions about Carlyle and did not brook opposition lightly. Writing to David Lumsden, who had done more than anyone to preserve Cheyne Row as a Carlyle museum, Alexander remarks that "I saw D. A. Wilson in the summer (He was in Edinburgh and paid us a call). His Book (Life of Carlyle) has met with no favour from Publishers, either here or in America. I am sorry for his disappointment, but privately there are some undeniable compensations—not evident to him indeed, but very much so to all who know the Biographer and the Biographee!" (Campbell, "Carlyle House" 88). In a letter to Dyer in 1927, Alexander brushed aside W. H. Dunn (with whom he had been in correspondence): "Dunn appears to me rather a vain, conceited and not over-courteous

young man; he has got a Glasgow Degree of 'Litt.D.,' which has entirely spoilt him. . . . He is out to try to rehabilitate Froude—a hopeless task" (Kinser and Sorensen 114–15).

The irritable Alexander Carlyle is very much on display in his own heavily annotated copy of the four volumes of Froude's *Life* that are preserved in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS 751–54). Alexander annotates freely, at different times in pencil, in blue pencil and in ink: at the end of each volume he lists errors and omissions, presumably intending at some point to compile a cumulative list. His attitude to Froude remains caustic throughout. When the latter writes, "my business is to supply what is left untold, rather than to give over again what has been told already," Alexander replies, "and which never happened!" (1: 43). In other instances he accuses Froude of perpetuating "a square lie" (1: 172). To Froude's suggestion that "Carlyle himself was not an inmate whom any mistress not directly connected with him would readily welcome into her household," Alexander retorts, "That's a lie!" (1: 240). It is apparent that Alexander is checking Froude at every step from the original manuscripts in his possession, above all the *Journal*, though these corrections thin out a little in the third and fourth volumes of Froude.

A common complaint is that Froude transcribes inaccurately. For example, he notes at one point, "Froude makes 19 errors in this citation" (2: 110). Elsewhere he catches Froude out in what he considers partial fact or inaccurate fact. When Froude says Dean Stanley "wrote to me" offering a funeral in Westminster Abbey, Alexander writes sharply, "Dean S. came in person & asked Mary & me. AC" (4: 470). In another annotation Alexander makes a remark that can only have come from discussions with his uncle in his lifetime. Some of the letters of July and August 1846 "were never seen by Froude,—Carlyle himself considered them too private. They are very self-accusing. AC" (3: 394). Many of Alexander's annotations are in the style of Thomas's one-word insults, such as "ass" (4: 240) or "Idiot!" (4: 236). In one passage Froude claims that he quotes from the *Journal* but Alexander (who is plainly reading pen in hand) says the statement is "not in *Journal* at all Some *Letter* probably" (3: 148). In the fourth volume Froude writes quite movingly of Jane's death: "I knew only how she had

suffered, and how heroically she had borne it. Geraldine knew everything,” to which Alexander replies in the margin, “and more!” (4: 313). Froude’s lack of rigor in both minor and major details irritates Alexander. For example, volume 2 has as its preface an engraving of the Macleay miniature of Jane Welsh, which is listed as being in the possession of Froude. Alexander contradicts this, saying it may be a copy “done by some London man.” And so it proves today: the original has a prominent place in the newly-refurbished magnificent Scottish National Portrait Gallery—itself something of a monument to Carlyle’s vision and persistence—donated, as it is there recorded, by Alexander Carlyle in 1930.

Much of what is known about Alexander’s later years comes from his autobiographical fragments that he passed to Barrett with uncharacteristically modest reservations:

18 Nov 1930 / Dear Barrett

Here is the rigmarole I have scribbled and badly typed.

You can take any portion of it you like—if you like any?

I am in a hurry to catch the post and so I can say no more now.

Yours with all sincerity

A. Carlyle¹⁵

A second extract was probably written later in Alexander’s life, but it still written in a vigorous style:

10 Jan 1931 / Dear Barrett

Here is carbon copy of the amended “jottings” which I fear need much more “amending” before it can pass your critical eye! I forgot to hand it to you yesterday. I am just about as you saw me yesterday. I had the D^f today; and he found I have no high temperature, and he thinks it not serious, or likely to become so, if I take care & stay in the house. I hope you got home safe and that you will continue well.

¹⁵ This, and the following quotations from Alexander, come from letters in private hands, kindly made available for this essay. The autobiographical piece is published as “Jottings on Alexander Carlyle’s Life and Work by Himself.”

Ever sinc^{ly} yours,

A Carlyle

Pardon the Pencil

The carbon copy of the jottings carries also Barrett's pencil addenda to the list of publications that Alexander had made in his "jottings"—a formidable enough list for one man. Barrett adds to the tally: "New Letters of Tho^s Carlyle The Nemesis of Froude The Carlyle Myth refuted Letter on Charles Lamb Letter on Horseshoe Letter on Errors in Encycl. Brit. Letter to Times on Lord Cushenden's review of Burns vol. 1930 Carlyle's House Memorial Trust vols. by Alex. Carlyle, 3 items in Dyer, p. 312 Also the Early Lett., Lett., Corr. Between Goethe & C., & Two Notebooks, were all prepared for Norton by Alex. Carlyle." That last fact, slipped in without comment, shows the substantial extent of Alexander Carlyle's help—acknowledged in many prefaces. Another detail, which Norton adds to the introduction of *Two Note Books*, is revealing: "Some lines, in two or three places, not amounting to a page in all, have been omitted. The manuscript used for the press was a copy of the originals made some years since, but the proof-sheets have been carefully compared with the original Notebooks by Mr. Alexander Carlyle of Edinburgh, their present possessor (1898)" (x).

The family papers from which these notes come offer further evidence of Alexander's generosity to the fledgling Carlyle House. For example, he refers to a bookcase which, "though it was not Carlyle's personal property, it was a marriage gift from one of his oldest and best-loved friends (E. Darwin) to his Niece, the one of all others to whom he was most indebted for more than common filial love and devotion for many years, when he was growing old and feeble and almost entirely dependent on her alone." Of course Mary Aitken Carlyle was not entirely alone in caring for her uncle, for in the last years Alexander was there, too. He adds, "Carlyle left practically everything in his house to his Niece; and at her decease all became mine. She died, alas, before the House was opening in 1895; but she had promised to give certain articles; these, and much more, I gave in her and my name; in fact all I could conveniently spare, and more. Most of the things shown at the opening of the Carlyle's House and also in the Birthplace came from me."

Since then, of course, the contents have grown steadily to their present exceptional richness.¹⁶ Over the decades, Alexander's legacy has become enormous. It includes the manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland, the continuing Carlyle houses in Scotland and England, the editions he produced in his lifetime, and the statue of Carlyle that he arranged for Ecclefechan. It is clear from the notes that he jotted down in the lonely last years in Newbattle Terrace that he lost none of his fierce devotion to the Carlyle memory: "I have been busy for over a year preparing and giving Carlyle's original Papers to the National Library, and very glad to have them deposited in such security. I am now again mostly alone and in my eighty-eighth year, but am fairly well and not *very* unhappy: keeping myself interested in the world's affairs, doing my daily day's work and waiting patiently for the End appointed to all mortals" ("Jottings" 73). With Barrett's help the work was to continue, and indeed papers are still coming to light which may further illuminate the story of the Carlyles' reputation after their deaths, through the controversy of publication and biography, and their recognition now as the century's most brilliant correspondents.

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¹⁶ For this history of this process, see my article, "Carlyle House." The catalogue of the present contents of Chelsea is in print, and continuously updated. Details of the contents at Ecclefechan are available in the birthplace itself. The 1954 edition of Carlyle's House, 24 Cheyne Row Chelsea helpfully lists the very wide range of subsequent donors and lenders.

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