

disappeared from the syllabus. This development is particularly surprising during a time of unprecedented major projects such as the Duke-Edinburgh *Collected Letters* or the University of California Strouse Edition of his works. The invigorating roundtable touched on several problems such as the length and density of Carlyle's works for modern college students; the initial stylistic challenge that students and colleagues encounter when reading his writing for the first time; the lack of warm embrace he has received from Scotland's otherwise active heritage industry; the recent deaths of major university professors who had been influential Carlyle scholars and advocates; and the frequently reductive and dismissive assessment of his politics when seen through the lenses of race, class, and gender. However, during the course of the discussion, it became evident that there is cause for hope, not least because of the emerging generation of scholars represented at the conference who find Carlyle stimulating even in (and perhaps because of) his difficulties. Suggestions for making Carlyle's works more accessible were exchanged, as were many concrete tips for pedagogical strategies.

Plans for a conference in Dumfries, Scotland are already underway, fueled in large part by the enthusiastic and supportive gathering at the Villanova conference.

Paul Kerry and Marylu Hill
2007 Conference Organizers

The Intellect of a Sick Rabbit

A DELICIOUS CARLYLEAN ANECDOTE, CIRCA 1860, HAS BEEN BROUGHT to the attention of the editors by Professor Owen Dudley Edwards of Edinburgh University. In the 17 March 1917 issue of *Notes & Queries* (12th ser. 3.64), Stapleton Martin, of The Firs, Norton, near Worcester, asks: "Is it true that Carlyle said of Newman that he had the intellect of 'a sick rabbit'? If true, when, and under what circumstances, was it said?" (211).

With the assistance of Google, one finds that Stapleton Martin (1846–1922) was a frequent submitter of queries to

N&Q, and from WorldCat (OCLC) one learns that Martin was the author of several books, among them *A Short Memoir of the Late Rev. Francis Martin, M.A., Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Worcester, 1901), *Izaak Walton and His Friends* (London, 1903), and *Anna Seward and Classic Lichfield* (Worcester, 1909). Of these, *Izaak Walton* was from the house of Chapman and Hall, Carlyle's publisher.

Martin's query was answered in the 14 April 1917 *N&Q* (12th ser. 3.67) by a pseudonymous informant who signed as "V.H.I.L.I.C.I.V." and who wrote:

Possibly it was F. W. Newman of whom Carlyle is alleged to have said that he had the intellect of "a sick rabbit." Carlyle met F. W. Newman some time in 1860 at one of James Martineau's Monday evening *salons*, at what was then numbered 10 Gordon Street (it was long after that Martineau moved to 23 Gordon Square). I had the honour of meeting them there (though not together) in 1861. Martineau told me this: When Carlyle and F. W. Newman met under his roof, there was a passage of arms between them, in which Carlyle employed his "browbeating" manner, Newman his "keen, insinuating logic." The next time Martineau met Carlyle, he asked his opinion of Newman. "Whining fool!" rapped out Carlyle. To a similar question about Carlyle, on a subsequent occasion, Newman calmly rejoined: "The man insulted me!" The above are the exact words as told me by Martineau in 1861. (277-78)

So far no corroborating testimonies have come to light that could put an exact date on this meeting. An extensive investigation of the Martineau – Newman correspondence is called for, and 57 letters from Newman to Martineau are at Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford University. Also wanting is more information about the Monday night salons at Gordon Street. The informant V.H.I.L.I.C.I.V. who answered Martin's query is found—asking *and* answering—in numerous issues of *Notes & Queries*, beginning in the early 1870s. Entering those initials on the *N&Q* website returns 90 hits.

Christopher A. Stray, Swansea University, has identified V.H.I.L.I.C.I.V. as Alexander Gordon (1841–1931; *ODNB*, *NRA*), Unitarian minister and historian of dissenting denominations. Further investigation reveals that Gordon, signing himself

“A. G.,” was the author of over 650 entries for the original *Dictionary of National Biography*. This enormous production of biographical sketches added to the 90 items for *N&Q* suggests that sheer exhaustion may have prevented Gordon from writing any books.

In 1860, when the Carlyle/Newman incident is said to have occurred, or better still in 1861, when Gordon recalls that Martineau related the anecdote, Gordon would have been only twenty years of age. Not that such relative youth would preclude a meeting of a bright student, brought up in the Unitarian faith, with the leading Unitarian voice, James Martineau, nor might it refute necessarily the possibility that Martineau entertained young Gordon with such a confidence about Carlyle and Newman. In 1861, Martineau was teaching at Manchester New College, then affiliated with the University of London. (In 1889, Manchester New College was moved to Oxford and was renamed Harris Manchester College.) According to Alan Ruston in the *ODNB*, Alexander Gordon prepared for the ministry at Manchester New College from 1859 to 1862.

It must be remembered that Carlyle regularly shunned social occasions during those years in “the valley of the shadow of Frederick,” limiting his outings severely while pleading the pressures of “endless Prussian sand.” Still, the lack of any mention of James Martineau among the Carlyles’ letters in 1860 and 1861 need not be taken as ultimate proof contradicting the occurrence of a meeting with Newman.

DS

The Massons

DAVID MASSON (1822–1907; *ODNB*) MET JANE CARLYLE IN 1843 AND then Thomas Carlyle a year later, as recounted in his wonderful reminiscence, *Memories of London in the Forties* (London: Blackwood, 1908). This brilliant Scots editor and educator—like Carlyle the son of a stonecutter—was a great favorite of both of the Carlyles and was a frequent guest at 5 Cheyne Row until 1865. In that year he returned to Scotland to succeed Professor