

## A Newly Discovered Account of the Death of Jane Welsh Carlyle

THE CHRONOLOGICAL PROGRESSION OF *THE COLLECTED LETTERS of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* has reached the decade of the 1860s. Volume 37, now in preparation, will bring the sequence of letters through October 1861, less than five years prior to the sudden death of JWC in Hyde Park, 21 April 1866. Until now, the clearest account of this sad event has come from a letter written thirty-five years later by JWC's last maid Jesse Broadfoot, née Hiddleston. She wrote her memorial at the request of Reginald Blunt, Chelsea historian, author, and son of the Reverend Gerald Blunt, rector of Saint Luke's. The younger Blunt had grown up in the Rectory, a mere stone's throw from Cheyne Row, and he was one of the primary organizers of the project to preserve the Carlyles' House. He collected much written testimony toward that end, including several reminiscences from Charlotte Southam and Jessie Hiddleston concerning their service there. At least two of Blunt's books contain sections with details concerning the death of Mrs. Carlyle: *Memoirs of Gerald Blunt of Chelsea, his Family and Forebears* (1911; 90–93) and *In Cheyne Walk and Thereabout* (1914; 302–09). The latter account begins with these lines: "The story of the sudden death of Mrs. Carlyle in her carriage on that fateful afternoon of Saturday, April 21, 1866, as told by Mr. Froude, is in several particulars incomplete, and in others inaccurate. Unfortunately, as those who have read Mr. David Wilson's book on this subject are aware, the same must be said of too many of Mr. Froude's records."

The Library of Congress possesses a significant collection of papers of the American actor Charlotte Cushman, six volumes of incoming correspondence and eight volumes of drafts of her replies, assembled and bound in 1930, to which has been added loose files of subsequent acquisitions: <[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/faidfrquery/F?faidfr:2:./temp/~faid\\_XSM0](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/faidfrquery/F?faidfr:2:./temp/~faid_XSM0)>.

Among the loose letters is the following to Cushman and her companion Emma Stebbins from the actor Sarah Dilberoglue, née Coxon, but known as Sarah Anderton when she was a protégée of Miss Cushman. She had married in 1859 the merchant Stavros, or Stauros, Dilberoglue, “Greek of Chios” as TC noted on his photograph that is found in one of JWC’s albums. Sarah and Stavros made their home, which their friends called the “Temple of Concord,” at 13 Barnsbury Park in Islington, and it was there that JWC famously met Cushman in September 1861.

DS

Sunday April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1866

My dear friends, you will be surprized [sic] to hear from me again so soon, and you will be very sorry for the news I have to send you— On Thursday, ten days after I wrote to you, I went to see Mrs Carlyle as I had promised her I would do during this week.— She was going out to Richmond to see an Aunt there, and I went with her— and we took with us a little dog that was left to her care by Mrs Frederick Chapman, who died some <little> short time ago. Once or twice on our way she put the little dog down to run by the carriage as she did not know how to give it exercercise [sic], and she found this answer so well she said she should sometimes drive in the park and let it run there— She was as well as I have seen her for many months—very feeble, of course, and complaining of suffering from the warmer weather— but just herself. She was interesting herself about a nephew of Mr Carlyle who has come up to London. She wanted Stauros to know him, and it was arranged that he and I should have tea with her to-night and meet this nephew before Mr Carlyle’s return (who is to be here tomorrow) as in his uncle’s presence the young man is over awed, and it is difficult to know anything about him. [two illegible words] matters—well—last night I had gone to bed between 11 & 12 & Stauros was still up reading, when I heard a loud strange rapp at the door & a talking—and Lizzie rushed up to tell me it was a nephew of Mrs Carlyle’s who brought us the news that she was dead. I have just come in from Chelsea where Geraldine Jewsbury & the nephew are [--]pping in the house— And poor Mr Carlyle is looked for at ½ past 4

or ~~ten~~ 10 o'clock in the morning—as his arrangements stood he was to return home by a train to-night[.] Yesterday it seems she lunched at Mr Forster's and in her return home drove in the Park to give that hapless little dog a run—it got hurt by a carriage and she had to get out and take it in with her, & was flurried and excited by this— The old coachman says that for a time he heard the crying of the dog as she was turning it about to find where it was hurt—then there was stillness, & he kept driving up and down as ordered— Wondering at last she did not tell him to go home as it was getting late, he looked into the carriage, and seeing there was something wrong asked a lady who was passing to look in— She did and said “I dare not open this door, for I am afraid the lady is dead”—then a gentleman got into the carriage and ordered the coachman to drive to St George Hospital— She was taken in and found to be quite dead—the coachman said also she was, and of course all care was taken— Dr Quain was either there or was sent for,—and late last night she was removed home—

Monday morning.— I went to Chelsea again last night— through the exertions of John Forster the pain of an inquest will be spared. Dr Quain has called the cause of death paralysis—but we all believe it was an apoplexy— To me this change from Thursday to last night when I saw her lying in her bed in that mournful house has been a great shock— We are to hear from the nephew to-day how Mr Carlyle is— He will feel as if life were <illegible> indeed ended—his work done, its acknowledgment received, and his wife gone from him—and may talk now of that “rest for Evermore” I once heard him speak of— We feel unspeakably sorry for him— I must finish, for Stauros will take my letter with him to put in the city, that you may hear as soon as possible— Dear love from all to you both

Ever yours affectionately

Sarah Dilberoglue

Monday morning    April 23<sup>rd</sup>