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**G. B. Tennyson. A Carlyle Reader. Selections from the Writings of Thomas Carlyle. New York and Toronto. Random House. 1969. 497 pp. \$1.75.**

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G. B. Tennyson. *A Carlyle Reader. Selections from the Writings of Thomas Carlyle*. New York and Toronto. Random House. 1969. 497 pp. \$1.75.

Thomas Carlyle was the most influential author of his day, a claim confirmed by his contemporaries. Mill, a reputed genius, said of Carlyle that "he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but . . . it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out." With similar respect, Emerson inscribed on the fly-leaf of a book given to Carlyle: "To the General-in-Chief from his lieutenant." In 1866 Carlyle was elected as Rector of the University of Edinburgh by more than a two to one vote over Benjamin Disraeli, who later as Prime Minister was to offer Carlyle both a pension and baronetcy for distinguished literary merit. Ruskin considered Carlyle the master. Dickens dedicated *Hard Times* to Carlyle, and on one festive occasion, according to biographer David Wilson, spent the evening entertaining guests while straining his ear toward Carlyle's conversation. Alfred Lord Tennyson, too, displayed often in his works the mark left by Carlyle upon the protégé. Yet despite such adoration, no anthology fully representative of Carlyle's diversity has ever, to our chagrin and incredulity, been printed — until G. B. Tennyson's.

Tennyson's collection, then, is unique. Its generous twenty-six page introduction focuses on Carlyle's reputation, biography, thought, and technique, and provides an up-to-date (1968) selected bibliography and chronology. The selections are arranged chronologically from 1823 (age 27) to 1876 (age 80), reflecting Carlyle's development while also revealing him as epistler, historian, biographer, essayist, literary and social critic, portraitist, and novelist. The contents include selected early letters and essays, selections from Carlyle's journals, poems, the complete text of *Sartor Resartus*, selections from *The French Revolution*, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, *Past and Present*, *The Life of John Sterling*, *Frederick the Great*, *The Early Kings of Norway*, the complete "The Present Time" from *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, selections from *Reminiscences*, and selected mid and late letters. With each selection is a brief explanatory introduction.

Omissions from a canon of thirty volumes are necessarily many, but a few are to be questioned. In view of Tennyson's own interest in the development of Carlyle's mind and mode, and in view of his singular inclusion of the entire text of *Sartor Resartus*, some of the forerunners

of this work could be represented. *Cruthers and Jonson*, *Illudo Chartis*, and *Wotton Reinfred* by Tennyson's own report in his critical book *Sartor Called Resartus* were prophetic exercises forming to a large measure the genesis of the 1831 tour de force. *Sartor*, notes Tennyson in the chapter "Apprenticeship," emerges as "the balance" of *Wotton* and *Illudo Chartis*, though "Illudo Chartis" is closer to Carlyle's proper direction." This latter fragment of an unfinished novel of 1825 or early 1826 (only recently discovered by Marjorie P. King in Carlyle's garret in Chelsea and available in print only within her article in *Modern Language Review*, XLIX, 1954) reveals Carlyle's early but indelible temperament for levity, satire, and irony. It especially provides insight into the generic nature of Carlyle's humor, either in the form of satiric or ironic levity for the sake of instruction or frivolity for the sake of amusement. Carlyle's range of humor was broader than many realize, and it never abated. In his later period it evolved as a means of tempering his ultra-serious exhortations and rendering them more palatable, and as a vehicle for rancour and satire.

Tennyson omits to advantage the oft-anthologized *Shooting Niagara: and After?*, an essay generally acknowledged as Carlyle's most resolute polemic against democracy. Yet Tennyson's collection does include enough selections to cover Carlyle's attitude toward this subject. As Emerson said, Carlyle "says over and over, for months, for years, the same thing"; Tennyson wisely saw no need to be redundant.

Of some significance might be the omission of representative letters prior to 1823, available in Charles Eliot Norton's *Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1814-1826*. Carlyle was, as Froude reports, an incredibly voluminous reader with a "tenacious memory," whose readings before 1823, his twenty-seventh year, had already left their imprint. Of importance here is the fact that Carlyle did not commence his study of the Germans until 1819 and that letters prior to this date enable us to observe that Carlylese was in fact in operation before the outset of his German study. Archibald MacMechan (whose definitive edition of *Sartor Resartus* preceded C. F. Harrold's) argues vigorously and with ample evidence that Carlyle's allegedly "German" style was in use long before he could even read German. Abundant evidence is available to substantiate that even Carlyle's praise of Jean Paul Richter's style derived from revelation of a technique which was co-incidentally his own, a style he became aware of *after* his own for the most part had developed. Carlyle, incidentally, upon several occasions also criticized resolutely and disfavorably Richter's technique. As the German influence on Carlyle, particularly in regard to style, has been and continues to be appreciably overestimated, Tennyson's inclusion of representative letters prior to

1819 would support this and pre-empt the progress of error or oversimplification which imputes Carlyle's mode primarily to German example.

Tennyson might also have chosen to include the passages from the 1827 essay "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter" in which Carlyle most succinctly defines humor, its employment in multifarious ways one of his most distinguishing features. Of a different nature, footnotes, so necessary for understanding Carlyle's esoteric allusiveness, are missed. No index is appended. Nor, apparently, did Tennyson's early-1969 *Reader* have at its disposal the mid-1968 edition of Edwin W. Marris, Jr. *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to His Brother Alexander*, Harvard University Press, of which 126 are letters never before printed and 97 never before printed in full.

One remembers, finally, that Professor Tennyson was faced with the perhaps insurmountable handicap of condensing Carlyle's thirty volumes into one, a problem further compounded by the countless perspectives from which a scholar may elect to pursue Carlyle. Any omissions then, even if they be shortcomings, are small in comparison with Tennyson's major accomplishment. His anthology should serve to present Carlyle as he was: not as a calloused misanthrope who spent most of his life railing, but as a philanthropist whose invective, springing from profound sympathy, served the cause of amelioration. His bitterness, says Elizabeth Barrett Browning, was "love with the point reversed"; what Tennyson's representation of the man can achieve in these times is the dispelling of the absurdity which likens Carlyle to Hitler or his aims to those of the fascist.

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