
Charles Richard Sanders
A Brief History of the


If a critical edition of the collected Carlyle letters seems to be rather late in coming out, no one can justifiably blame Carlyle. Throughout his career he read letters with a relish, praised the biographies like Boswell's Johnson, Lockhart's Scott, and Forster's Dickens that revealed character by quoting from letters freely, and called in and annotated his wife's letters soon after her death in 1866. With her letters he got back many of his own. Though he did not publish the letters, it would appear that he had done much of the future editor's work for him. Actually almost half of the letters were published in the eighty years following Carlyle's death in 1881, but these were almost never fully edited, often contained textual errors, and were in many instances incomplete. In this period the best editing of the letters was done by Carlyle's nephew Alexander Carlyle, and the worst by J.A. Froude.

Unfortunately, a great shadow hung over Carlyle's reputation almost from the time of his death up until recent years. This was caused, first, by Froude's publications soon after Carlyle's death that suggested somewhat shockingly at the time that there were serious flaws in Carlyle's character as a man and husband; second, by two World Wars in the twentieth century that caused many people to question Carlyle's great ad-
miration for Germany and heroes; and, third, by a pronounced change in the dominant spirit of the times appearing in the Tinsel Twenties as a cynicism reacting against idealism such as Woodrow Wilson's and reappearing in the sixties as student unrest, rebellion against loyalties, authority, and patriotism, and as general disillusionment. All of these was very far removed from the spirit of Carlyle.

Nevertheless, in the post-Froude period some important works on Carlyle appeared somewhat sporadically. Emery Neff produced an excellent study of *Carlyle and Mill* in 1924. D.A. Wilson began to bring out his six-volume biography of Carlyle volume by volume in 1923. Isaac W. Dyer published his valuable bibliography of Carlyle in 1928. Charles Frederick Harrold brought out his *Carlyle and German Thought* in 1934; and in the Thirties and Forties the light of Carlyle scholarship was kept burning mainly through books and articles that he and Will Shine published. It is against this historic context made up of a mixture of neglect, revulsion, and efforts to understand that the origin of *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* must be studied.

My own interest in Carlyle dates from the summer of 1927, when I took a course in Victorian prose taught by Professor George Fox, then a visiting professor at Emory from Princeton, later at the University of Florida. I was greatly impressed by Carlyle's intellectual strength and by his style, with its freshness, its richness of texture, its vitality, the evocative power of its metaphors, and its poetic cadences, which never degenerated into sing-song but were the moving cadences of human speech flowing like the great breakers of the sea. Carlyle's ideas interested me too, though I cannot say that then or later I accepted them entirely. However, when in the summer of 1928 I read all of George Bernard Shaw's plays and prefaces and even every word of his *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* and discovered that he had great admiration for Carlyle and repeatedly acknowledged his indebtedness to him, my own admiration for Carlyle was strengthened. My interest in Carlyle was widened and deepened by a seminar in Carlyle directed by Professor Robert Morss Lovett at the University of Chicago in 1933, in which I made a study of Carlyle's relation to Coleridge. This study was further developed and appeared later as a chapter in my book *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* (1942). Since then I have been unable to exclude Carlyle from any book that I wrote.

From 1942 to 1952 I worked on two books which later appeared as *The Strachey Family* (1888-1932): *Their Writings and Literary Relationships* (1953) and *Lytton Strachey: His Mind and Art* (1957). In working on these books, I discovered
that Lytton Strachey's grandparents, Edward and Julia Strachey, and his great-uncle and great-aunt, Charles and Isabella Buller, parents of Charles and Arthur Buller, tutored by the young Carlyle at Edinburgh, were all intimate friends and benefactors of Carlyle in his early years. I also discovered that two of Lytton Strachey's uncles, Sir Edward and George, and his grandmother's cousin, Kitty Kirkpatrick, as well as his grandmother herself, had all corresponded with Carlyle. I began to look for these letters and found most of them published in scattered magazine articles. Very few of them had appeared in the volumes of Carlyle's collected letters. Some had not been published at all. I also discovered the brilliant pen-portrait of Edward Strachey, "spiced by his bit of Chaucer," in the Reminiscences. Lytton Strachey, who was very much interested in his family's relation to Carlyle, had written an essay on Carlyle in which he expressed great admiration for Carlyle's power of description and particularly for his pen portraits of his contemporaries. In 1952 I began to wonder whether it would be possible to collect and edit these pen portraits, many of which were imbedded in letters. I decided to collect the letters.

Froude had quoted freely from the letters in his four-volume biography of Carlyle and had published the Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle with Carlyle's notes in two volumes. Froude, however, was not merely a careless editor; he took liberties with the text and omitted passages without indicating what he had done. It almost seems as if Froude assumed that his handling of the Carlyles' text would be final and that no one else would ever discover what he had done. A much better editor, Charles Eliot Norton, with the permission of Carlyle's niece Mary, brought out several volumes of Carlyle's letters. Many of these letters were published incomplete, but the omissions were indicated by elipsis periods and the texts in general were accurate. Carlyle's nephew, Alexander Carlyle, had published the love letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle and in four other volumes had published additional letters of the two Carlies. He had also published other letters of the Carlies in various magazine articles. Some of the letters were published by him incomplete, but he was careful with the texts and indicated omissions. The letters in David G. Ritchie's Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle and in Leonard Huxley's Jane Welsh Carlyle: Letters to Her Family, 1859-1863 were well edited. There were many scattered letters in various books and magazine articles. Most of these had been listed by Dyer in his bibliography.

I knew that Carlyle in his will had left all his letters and papers to Froude to do what he thought best with them, but
that he had also stipulated that all the letters and papers were to be given by Froude to Carlyle's niece, Mary Aitken (later Mrs. Alexander Carlyle), as soon as Froude had finished his work with them. The big question in my mind concerned what had become of this big collection of letters made by Carlyle himself. With this question in mind, I went to Great Britain in 1952 and found most of these letters in the magnificent collection at the National Library of Scotland. Later I found other letters from this collection in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library and in the Beinecke Collection at Yale. The Edinburgh collection comprises about one-half of the extant Carlyle letters. While in Edinburgh on this visit, I was extremely fortunate to obtain the cooperation of Mr. James S. Ritchie, then an associate curator of manuscripts, now Keeper of Manuscripts. He made arrangements with a highly competent member of the staff, Miss Margaret Houston, by which she would make for me a complete list of the letters by the Carlyles in the National Library. Later on a list was made of all the letters to the Carlyles in this library. A little later I sent out letters to libraries all over the world requesting that they send me facsimiles of their Carlyle letters. I also sent the usual letter requesting information and help to the Times Literary Supplement, The Manchester Guardian, the New York Times, and several other newspapers. The co-operation and help that I received was truly remarkable. One of those most helpful and generous to me was Mr. Walter Leuba of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mr. Leuba had himself planned to collect and edit the Carlyle letters and with this purpose in mind had bought a considerable number of autograph letters. He had also bought the volumes and magazines containing most of the printed letters so that he could cut them out, paste them up on large sheets of paper, and file them chronologically. By the time my letter requesting help appeared in the New York Times he had abandoned the project because he had been unable to get some of the autograph letters in private collections. He very kindly wrote to me, offering me his whole collection of paste-ups and facsimiles of his autograph letters. When the paste-ups arrived and were unpacked, they made a stack four feet high. Later on Mr. Leuba gave his fine collection of Carlyle books to Duke University. Letters are his favorite reading, and he considers the Carlyle letters the best. It may be interesting to note that he is also an authority on Bach's music.

Some of Carlyle's letters have not been found, including some of those to Edward Irving. The letters to Jeffrey have all been lost, reportedly destroyed by Mrs. William Empson.
after she had read Carlyle's criticism of herself and other members of Jeffrey's family in *Reminiscences* soon after Carlyle's death. Letters to Charles Buller and other members of the Buller family have never come to light. A considerable number of Carlyle's letters to the Brownings have been published, but T.J. Wise reported that he saw Browning burn some Carlyle letters. Possibly these were the ones in which Carlyle told Elizabeth Barrett that she should write prose, advice which he later withdrew.

Getting facsimiles of letters in private collections proved to be much less difficult than I had thought it would be. The largest private collections were those of Dr. Gordon N. Ray, the late Professor Frederick W. Hilles, and Mr. Norman H. Strouse. Mr. Strouse's collection, now in the University of California at Santa Cruz, is the largest collection of Carlyle letters in the United States. All three owners were friendly and generous in dealing with me.

At the beginning I planned to collect the pen portraits and set up a file of the letters for future editors to use. I did not intend to edit the letters myself since I realized that the undertaking was gigantic. I knew, too, that my time was limited and wished to save it for work on the pen portraits. Some excellent pen portraits were in Jane Carlyle's letters. Furthermore I decided in 1955 that her letters should by all means be edited and published with Carlyle's, and I sent out letters to libraries once again asking for facsimiles of her letters, together with any new letters by Carlyle or letters to the Carlysles that had come in since I had last written to them. I called these letters that had to be collected from sources other than Edinburgh the "fugitive letters." There were almost as many of them as there were of the big collection in Edinburgh. Even today letters continue to appear from time to time in various places. Even when the edition is "completed" ten or fifteen years from now, additional letters will come to light and eventually make a supplementary volume necessary.

In 1959 Dr. Gordon N. Ray was invited to come to Duke and evaluate the work of the English Department. He took a particular interest in the Carlyle project and seemed to be convinced that it was one of considerable importance. In conferences with him I told him of my purpose to collect and edit the pen portraits and to collect the letters for an edition to be brought out by other editors sometime in the future. He insisted that I edit the letters and begin bringing them out as soon as possible. He was soon to become head of the Guggenheim Foundation, and he promised that if I would undertake the editorship he would give me as much support as
possible. I agreed to take on the task of editing the letters, as formidable as it seemed, after first proposing that I merely publish a finding list of the letters. I promised to stay with the project long enough to establish and stabilize its editorial policies and to try to publish enough of the letters to get the Carlyles to their Chelsea home in London, where they arrived in 1834. Seven volumes, brought out by 1977, were required for this. I continued as Editor of the letters until 1981, when two more volumes going through the year 1837 were published. Dr. Ray has been as good as his word and through the years since 1959 has been steadfast in his support of the project.

When I agreed to edit the letters, I knew that I would need a considerable amount of help. I knew, too, that it was imperative that I have the complete co-operation of the National Library of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh. In 1960 I went to Edinburgh in order to have conferences with members of the staffs of these institutions. Attending these conferences were Mr. William Park, Keeper of Manuscripts of the National Library, Mr. James S. Ritchie, of the Manuscript Department of this library, and Professor John Butt, Regius Professor of English Literature of the University of Edinburgh. Together we laid the groundwork for the edition, of which Professor Butt agreed to be an editor. He had previous­ly been Editor of the distinguished Twickenham Edition of Alexander Pope's Letters. During the years after I returned to Duke and was getting the work on the letters under way, he wrote me helpful letters and gave me much wise advice. Mr. Park and Mr. Ritchie also continued to help me in every possible way. Mr. C.P. Finlayson, Keeper of Manuscripts of the University of Edinburgh, was also unreserved in giving help.

Unfortunately, on 22 November 1965, five years before we could bring out the first volumes of the edition, Professor Butt died. Soon afterward, however, Professor Kenneth J. Fielding, who had recently come to the University of Edinburgh as George Saintsbury Professor of English Literature, offered to help with the edition. The highly competent staff in Edinburgh included also two persons Professor Butt had brought in to work on the project, Ian Campbell, later Dr. Ian Campbell, and Janetta Houston, later Mrs. Taylor. At Duke Professor John Clubbe joined the editorial staff in the autumn of 1966. With his knowledge of French and German, with his great love of books and literature, and with his meticulously careful scholarship, he contributed much to the first volumes that were published. He continued to serve on the staff until autumn 1976, when he went to the University of Kentucky. Somewhat later Mrs. Taylor withdrew from the staff at Edin-
burgh and Miss Aileen Christianson joined it. She has done excellent work on the letters ever since. Mrs. Hilary Smith began to work with the Duke staff in 1970. She proved to be a very valuable editor and is continuing to work on the project at the present time.

About 12,000 letters by the Carlyles have now been collected. Of these roughly 8,000 were written by Thomas and 4,000 by Jane. For at least 90 per cent of the letters facsimiles of the originals have been found. All of this and the progress made so far in editing the letters has been very gratifying to the staff. Yet it would be a big mistake to assume that there have not been formidable difficulties.

Several libraries have insisted that microfilm or facsimiles sent to us be returned to them after six months, and we have had to plead the importance of keeping everything in our file for checking and rechecking as all sorts of questions arise. There are still a few holders of letters, moreover, even of letters written in the early nineteenth century, who feel strongly that all letters are strictly private and that the general public has no right to read them. One of the former curators of the Carlyle House, Chelsea, almost went into a state of shock when I told her that the National Trust had given me permission to put all the Carlyle letters kept there on microfilm. The Goethe-Carlyle correspondence, preserved in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv in Weimar behind the Iron Curtain was not at all easy to get in the 1960's. I wrote to the Archiv several times without getting any reply. Finally I spoke of my difficulty to Dr. Gordon Ray. He suggested that I write to Professor Wolfgang Arthur Leppmann, of the University of Oregon, who as a Guggenheim Fellow had worked on Goethe in Weimar and who had friends that worked in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv. I did so, and in a few weeks received a letter from Weimar stating that microfilm of the correspondence was being sent to me. It arrived in excellent condition. Another problem was posed by letters found too late to be put in their proper chronological order. Believing that they should be published as soon as possible, we have decided to put them at the end of the last volume of each set, where they can be indexed and await the time when the general index for the whole edition will indicate exactly where they are.

The index itself has posed problems. There has been some disagreement among members of the staff about how full and detailed it should be. The Carlyle letters are rich not only in references to events, persons, and places that can be designated by proper names but also in ideas, opinions, literary allusions, coterie speech, echoes from the Bible, and
other entities to which interest and value may be attached. It was finally decided that the index would be a full one. The result was that even though most of the topics had been indexed on cards referring to letters and dates before publication the final index referring to pages consumed a great deal of time and slowed down the publication process.

Probably the most bothersome thing that the editors have encountered is the way new notes, additions to notes, and changes in notes, many of them temptingly interesting and important, surface just before galley proofs are read, when the expense of inserting them is too great to be considered. Because of this expense, many good additions and alterations in the notes have had to be abandoned. Even so, the quality of the notes combined with the fullness and accuracy of the index has been a matter of considerable pride to the editors and has made all the trouble which it has cost us very much worth while. Within limits, the index to the Carlyle letters is a valuable index to history and literature. Likewise, as the editors of the letters have frequently remarked to one another, editing the Carlyle letters is an experience that really amounts to a second education.

The pleasures enjoyed in editing the letters have greatly outweighed the difficulties. The correspondence about the letters itself fills a whole drawer of a filing cabinet, and many of the component correspondences record friendships which the editors have formed or adventures which they have had. I have already mentioned the negotiation through which the Goethe correspondence came to us from Weimar. There were many other highly gratifying correspondences and almost no unpleasant ones. The travel associated with editing the letters was also very pleasant. The Duke editors enjoyed going to London, Manchester, and Edinburgh; and the Edinburgh editors enjoyed coming to North Carolina. All the editors have repeatedly enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. George Armour at Craigenputtoch, the sheep and cattle farm which the Carlyles owned and lived on from 1828 to 1834. Visits to Haddington, about twenty miles southeast of Edinburgh, where Jane Carlyle grew up and is now buried, have always been delightful.

One of my own most pleasant experiences came in 1960, when I toured Ireland, following the itinerary that Carlyle took in the summer of 1849, just after the great potato famine. Carlyle traveled around the edge of the island clockwise, from Dublin to Cork, then across to Kilarney and the west coast, then northward to Sligo and northern Ireland, then up to the northern coast and down to Belfast, and finally down to Dublin once more. I had become very much interested in
Yeats at the time and was able to enjoy seeing places associated with him, especially at Sligo, as well as the others that Carlyle had mentioned in his letters written during the tour. One of my most pleasant experiences came at Dublin. I had liked a review of my book on Lytton Strachey that had appeared in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, published by members of the faculty of University College, Dublin; and I wished to meet and thank the editor, Father Roland Burke Savage, S.J. Since I had very little time in Dublin, I boldly went to the editorial office of the journal at 35 Lower Leeson Street and, without preliminaries or letters of introduction, knocked on the door. It was opened by a tall, slender, clean-cut, princely-looking priest, who cordially invited me to come in but soon informed me that the editor was not there.

My host proved to be Father Aubrey de Vere Gwynn, son of the well-known journalist Stephen Gwynn, who had been an intimate friend of the poet Aubrey de Vere, a close friend of Tennison. Father Gwynn was Professor of Medieval History at University College. No one could have been kinder than he was to me.

After we had sat and talked for a few minutes, he took me on a walking tour of University College and Dublin, on which I saw the chapel which Cardinal Newman had built, the place where Gerard Manley Hopkins had lived, places associated with Swift, the Abbey Theater, and many other interesting places. When I told Father Gwynn that I had searched in vain for many years for a copy of Carlyle's *Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849*, he immediately carried me to a bookstore where a copy was found in a minute or two. We also visited the library of Trinity College, where are preserved the letters from Carlyle to Sir Charles Gavin Duffy, important in the history of the Young Ireland movement and also in the early history of Australia. After I returned to the United States, Father Gwynn voluntarily made a trip in his own car to a place about twenty miles away in the mountains south of Dublin to get for me several Carlyle letters which he knew about owned by an old lady. This was just one of many friendships which came into being through our work on the Carlyle letters.

Our procedure in editing the letters has been as follows. All the facsimiles and even references to letters not yet found are listed on 4x6 cards, a card for each letter. Carlyle's letters are listed on white cards, Jane's on green ones. We also put on the card all that we know about the letter: where the original letter is if we have found it, where it had been printed if it has, whether or not there are omissions in the printed text, whether we have the letter on microfilm or in a facsimile, and a topical analysis of par-
particularly interesting details in the letter. These cards, filed in chronological order, our guide to all the Carlyle letters that we know about in the world, are kept in a fire-proof filing cabinet. A similar card file is made for the letters to the Carlyles, again with color differentiation for the two Carlyles. Also kept in the fire-proof filing cabinet is an alphabetical index to all the letters, both from the Carlyles and to the Carlyles, in which the letters are referred to by their dates.

All facsimiles on typewriter-size paper are placed in a chronological file. Microfilm is printed by the xerox copy-flow process and the paper trimmed to the size of typewriter paper so that the letters from it can be placed in the file. Letters to the Carlyles, together with any other materials which may be of help in editing the letters, are placed chronologically in the same file with the letters from the Carlyles. Our object is to have everything relevant near at hand when we begin to edit a letter.

The editorial process with each letter begins at Duke, where the master-file of microfilm and facsimiles is kept. After a typewritten transcript with a carbon copy has been made, the transcript is carefully proofread against the facsimile. It is then ready for the Duke editor to write draft notes. When draft notes are required but for one reason or another cannot be written by the editor in the Carlyle office, queries concerning the information needed are typed into the draft-note sheets. Research assistants carry carbon copies of the letter and draft-note sheets to the library at Duke and do their best to find answers to the queries. From time to time collections of the carbon copies are sent to the editors in Edinburgh. There the text of the letter is carefully read against the original manuscript of the letter if it is in Edinburgh. The editors then work through the draft-note sheets carefully, altering, adding, and answering queries so far as possible. The notes are then re-typed and returned to Duke with the carbon copies of the text and the draft notes. After the Duke editors have gone through the notes one more time, they are sent to Duke University Press, where Mrs. Joanne Ferguson, Mrs. Myrna Jackson, and sometimes other copy-editors work with the text and notes before they are ready for the printer. In spite of all efforts to provide the printer with perfect copy, it is unfortunately true, as I have noted, that new findings appear by the time the letters are in galley proof that would require expensive changes and additions. Most of these have to be given up. To make sure that nothing is lost through fire or otherwise, both Duke and Edinburgh keep copies of the edited texts and notes.
A question that has arisen from time to time is whether the letters should be published volume by volume, with each volume having its own index, or in sets made up of two or more volumes. The editors have decided in favor of sets for two reasons: first, it is a great nuisance to try to use the indexes of a large, multi-volumed edition when they are in separate volumes; and, second, seeing the letters through the press always slows down the editorial process greatly, and we have found that we can index and see three volumes through the press in a much shorter time than would have been required for three separate volumes.

Each volume is provided with a chronology and a key to abbreviated references. We do not provide editorial commentary on the letters at the beginning of each volume because general commentary has been provided at considerable length at the beginning of the first volume and because commentary that is required for details in the letters can be best provided in the footnotes, close to the matters in the text that are being commented on. The editors try to make their comments as objective as possible and, furthermore, not to provide interpretations that intelligent readers can provide for themselves.

In September 1980 I gave up the Editorship of the letters after reading galley and page proof on volumes 8 and 9, which carry the correspondence through 1837, and after writing draft notes on the letters through 1848. Professor Clyde Ryals, assisted by Mrs. Hilary Smith, has assumed responsibility as Duke Editor. I am sure that I am leaving the edition in capable hands. My own work on the pen portraits will continue. I cannot predict how many volumes will be required to complete the edition or when it will be completed. A rough guess would be that it would require a total of thirty volumes which would be completed in 1995. Since my work collecting the letters began in 1952, it is clear that the project is requiring an enormous expenditure of time, effort, and money. Sales have been gratifying, but the volumes are expensive and the Duke University Press has not yet managed to get the project out of the red. Perhaps my final word here should be one in which I attempt to justify the project.

Certainly the Carlyle letters will not help us to get rid of inflation, reduce unemployment, taxes, or money spent for welfare, or cure the ills being suffered by the automobile business in the United States. They will not help us to solve the energy problem. But neither would Vergil's poetry or Shakespeare's plays. We must think of the values inherent in the Carlyle letters in terms not directly related to the problems which cause us great concern today. Our problems are
in the main concerned with technology, with discovering the means by which ends may be achieved. The Carlyles were chiefly concerned with the ends themselves, with the values that make life worth living and that raise the level of human life as high as possible above that of the beast. I have already discussed the marked literary merits of the Carlyle letters and their high degree of readability in the Introduction to the Duke-Edinburgh Edition. It is not necessary to repeat here what I asserted there. But the profound and continuing interest that the Carlyles had for the quality of human life is of great importance. Like one of Carlyle's heroes, Dr. Samuel Johnson, they led lives and made statements that were commentaries on the art of living. Though they did not perfect this art, they experienced many hours of a very rare quality as recorded in the letters; and fortified and illumined by extensive reading, they observed the lives of those around them and evaluated their own experiences from day to day while at the same time they were writing letters which recorded their conclusions. Hence it is possible for us to read the letters not merely for the pleasure that they bring to us but also for what they may teach us about the most difficult and the greatest of the arts.

*Duke University*