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Edited by Henry Duff Traill

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# The Works of Thomas Carlyle

VOLUME 20:  
LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS

EDITED BY HENRY DUFF TRAILL



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CENTENARY EDITION  
———  
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THOMAS CARLYLE  
IN THIRTY VOLUMES  
———  
VOL. XX  
LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS

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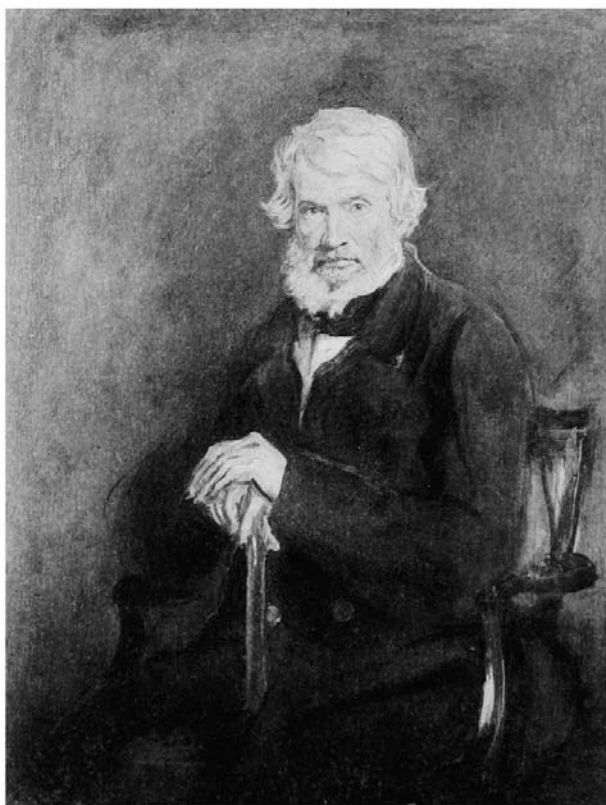
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*Thomas Carlyle.*  
*From the Millais portrait.*

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THOMAS CARLYLE

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LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS

But as yet struggles the twelfth hour of the Night.  
Birds of darkness are on the wing ; spectres uproar ;  
the dead walk ; the living dream. 'Thou, Eternal  
Providence, wilt make the Day dawn!—JEAN PAUL.

Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all!—  
'Nay, by God, Donald, we must help him to mend  
it!' said the other.—RUSHWORTH (*Sir David  
Ramsay and Lord Rea, in 1630.*)

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PORTRAIT OF THOMAS CARLYLE . . . . . *frontispiece*

After MILLAIS.

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## INTRODUCTION

OF all Carlyle's works the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* are the most 'occasional,' and for that reason, no doubt, they have suffered most from the hand of time. In truth they are journalism—that and nothing else: glorified journalism if we like, but bearing such traces of their originating spirit as no drapery of imagination or rhetoric or humour can altogether conceal. And what is more, the glorification of this journalism by the genius of the temporary journalist does not hide the fact that *as* journalism they are ineffective. They are too long, too discursive, too unpractical. They deal at once too much in generalities and too little; and though largely denunciatory of those tendencies, moral and intellectual, which seemed to Carlyle to make for misgovernment in the England of 1850, they do not confine themselves wholly to that safe philosophic region, but condescend upon particulars to such an extent as to keep the reader in continual expectancy of some definite recommendations of legislative or administrative policy — which never come. For the counsels contained in 'The New Downing Street' with its fantastic proposals of reduction in the Foreign Office, the War Office, and the exterior departments of the State in general, and its visionary scheme of setting the Home Office to work in 'regimenting Pauper Banditti into Soldiers of Industry,' could hardly even then, and certainly cannot now, be seriously considered.

And even the safer Carlylean generalities—the tirades at large against Democracy, vigorous, eloquent, grimly comic as they often

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## viii      L A T T E R - D A Y P A M P H L E T S

are, impress one less than usual. The note is forced; the prophet is too wildly excited; there is a suggestion of panic in his utterances; and we could almost guess, without examining dates, that these warnings were uttered while the events of 1848 were still fresh in the writer's mind. One sees that Carlyle's nerves had not yet recovered from the shock of that 'Year of Revolutions,' with its cyclonic wave of European revolt; and small blame to him that he should have misread a phenomenon which remains imperfectly explained even at the present day. But misread it he clearly did. He evidently regarded it as the beginning of the end of Popular Rule, and inferred from it that Democracy—which those among us who still believe it to be bound for the abyss must at least admit, eight-and-forty years afterwards, to be descending the slope in a very leisurely and decorous fashion—had suddenly 'put on the pace' of the Gadarene swine. Yet, with all the pessimism of his outlook upon the domestic future of popularly governed countries, it is curious to note how undoubtingly Carlyle shared the international optimism which was so prevalent in the year before the great "Exhibition of the Arts and Industries of All Nations." 'As to foreign peace,' he writes, 'really all Europe now, especially with so many railroads, public journals, printed books, penny post, bills of exchange, and continual intercourse and mutual dependence, is more and more becoming (so to speak) one Parish.' 'So to speak' indeed! Carlyle goes on to admit that the Czar of Russia, in the 'Eastern part of the Parish' may have less peaceful notions than the rest of the world, but he knows too well he must keep them to himself. So that 'in spite of editorial prophecy, the Czar of Russia does not disturb our night's rest.' Carlyle, it is true, was thinking of and deriding the idea of a Russian attack on Western Democracy, and not of a Russian intrigue against an effete Eastern despotism. But what a desperately unhappy forecast to have taken of an Europe which, little more than four years afterwards, saw three Great Powers at war; and ere the next decade of the century had

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## INTRODUCTION

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run half its course, had entered—with the Austro-Prussian attack on Denmark — upon that long era of unrest which shows no prospect of closing with the century.

It is little to be wondered at that *Latter-Day Pamphlets* had a somewhat convulsive effect on Carlyle's Radical and revolutionary friends, and produced something like a positive estrangement between him and such men as Mazzini and Mill. Perhaps in the latter case, and in the intensely 'Little England' temper of the Radicalism of that day, the alienation was as much due to what was sound, sensible, and patriotic in the *Pamphlets* as to what was exaggerated and overstrained. Anyhow, it is pleasant for the Imperialist admirer of Carlyle in these days to be able to set-off against the melancholy prophetic failure just quoted a passage of such shrewdness and foresight and manly English spirit as that which I am about to quote :—

'And yet an instinct deeper than the Gospel of M'Croudy teaches all men that Colonies are worth something to a country! That if, under the present Colonial Office, they are a vexation to us and themselves, some other Colonial Office can and must be contrived which shall render them a blessing; and that the remedy will be to contrive such a Colonial Office or method of administration, and by no means to cut the Colonies loose. Colonies are not to be picked off the street every day; not a Colony of them but has been bought dear, well purchased by the toil and blood of those we have the honour to be sons of; and we cannot just afford to cut them away because M'Croudy finds the present management of them cost money. The present management will indeed require to be cut away;—but as for the Colonies, we purpose through Heaven's blessing to retain them a while yet! Shame on us for unworthy sons of brave fathers if we do not. Brave fathers, by valiant blood and sweat, purchased for us, from the bounty of Heaven, rich possessions in all zones; and we, wretched imbeciles, cannot do the function of administering them? And because the accounts do not stand well in the ledger, our remedy is, not to take shame to ourselves, and repent in sackcloth and ashes, and amend our beggarly imbecilities and insincerities in that as in other departments of our business, but to fling the business overboard, and declare the business itself to be bad? We are a hopeful set of heirs to a big fortune! It does not suit our Manton gunneries, grouse-shootings, mousings in the City; and like spirited young gentlemen we will give it up, and let the attorneys take it?'

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x            **LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS**

Strange language this for the year 1850, though it is familiar enough to-day, or rather it has only ceased to be so because the very success of its reproofs has now rendered them superfluous. It is not without a melancholy pleasure that one quotes it, if only as a relief from the general impression that the volume, with all its spirit and eloquence and caustic irony, leaves behind it—namely that the prophet's is one of the most perilous of all the professions, and that for turning the wisdom of the wise to foolishness there is nothing so disastrously effective as the attempt to predict the mysterious course of the future.

**H. D. TRAILL.**