

**THE CORRESPONDENCE,
1834-1872,
VOL. I, PP. 1-87**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649427147

The Correspondence, 1834-1872, Vol. I, pp. 1-87 by Thomas Carlyle & Ralph Waldo Emerson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

THOMAS CARLYLE & RALPH WALDO EMERSON

**THE CORRESPONDENCE,
1834-1872,
VOL. I, PP. 1-87**

THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

THOMAS CARLYLE

AND

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1834—1872

"To my friend I write a letter, and from him I receive a letter. It is a spiritual gift, worthy of him to give, and of me to receive." — EMERSON

"What the writer did actually mean, the thing he then thought of, the thing he then was." — CARLYLE

VOLUME I

SECOND EDITION

BOSTON

JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY

1883

CORRESPONDENCE
or
CARLYLE AND EMERSON.

AT the beginning of his "English Traits," Mr. Emerson, writing of his visit to England in 1833, when he was thirty years old, says that it was mainly the attraction of three or four writers, of whom Carlyle was one, that had led him to Europe. Carlyle's name was not then generally known, and it illustrates Emerson's mental attitude that he should have thus early recognized his genius, and felt sympathy with it.

The decade from 1820 to 1830 was a period of unusual dulness in English thought and imagination. All the great literary reputations belonged to the beginning of the century. Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, had said their say. The intellectual life of the new generation had not yet found expression. But toward the end of this time a series of articles, mostly on

German literature, appearing in the Edinburgh and in the Foreign Quarterly Review, an essay on Burns, another on Voltaire, still more a paper entitled "Characteristics," displayed the hand of a master, and a spirit in full sympathy with the hitherto unexpressed tendencies and aspirations of its time, and capable of giving them expression. Here was a writer whose convictions were based upon principles, and whose words stood for realities. His power was slowly acknowledged. As yet Carlyle had received hardly a token of recognition from his contemporaries.

He was living solitary, poor, independent, in "desperate hope," at Craigenputtock. On August 24, 1833, he makes entry in his Journal as follows: "I am left here the solitariest, stranded, most helpless creature that I have been for many years. . . . Nobody asks me to work at articles. The thing I want to write is quite other than an article. . . . In *all* times there is a word which spoken to men, to the actual generation of men, would thrill their inmost soul. But the way to find that word? The way to speak it when found?" The next entry in his Journal shows that Carlyle had found the word. It is the name "Ralph Waldo Emerson,"—the record of Emerson's unexpected visit. "I shall

never forget the visitor," wrote Mrs. Carlyle, long afterwards, "who years ago, in the Desert, descended on us, out of the clouds as it were, and made one day there look like enchantment for us, and left me weeping that it was only one day."

At the time of this memorable visit Emerson was morally not less solitary than Carlyle; he was still less known; his name had been unheard by his host in the desert. But his voice was soon to become also the voice of a leader. With temperaments sharply contrasted, with traditions, inheritances, and circumstances radically different, with views of life and of the universe widely at variance, the souls of these two young men were yet in sympathy, for their characters were based upon the same foundation of principle. In their independence and their sincerity they were alike; they were united in their faith in spiritual truth, and in their reverence for it. Their modes of thought and of expression were not merely dissimilar, but even divergent, and yet, though parted by an ever-widening cleft of difference, they knew, as Carlyle said, that beneath it "the rock-strata, miles deep, united again, and their two souls were at one."

Two days after Emerson's visit Carlyle wrote to his mother:—

"Three little happinesses have befallen us: first, a piano-tuner, procured for five shillings and sixpence, has been here, entirely reforming the piano, so that I can hear a little music now, which does me no little good. Secondly, Major Irving, of Gribton, who used at this season of the year to live and shoot at Craigenvey, came in one day to us, and after some clatter offered us a rent of five pounds for the right to shoot here, and even tabled the cash that moment, and would not pocket it again. Money easilier won never sat in my pocket; money for delivering us from a great nuisance, for now I will tell every gunner applicant, 'I cannot, sir; it is let.' Our third happiness was the arrival of a certain young unknown friend, named Emerson, from Boston, in the United States, who turned aside so far from his British, French, and Italian travels to see me here! He had an introduction from Mill, and a Frenchman (Baron d'Eichthal's nephew) whom John knew at Rome. Of course we could do no other than welcome him; the rather as he seemed to be one of the most lovable creatures in himself we had ever looked on. He stayed till next day with us, and talked and heard talk to his heart's content, and left us all really sad to part with him. Jane says it is the first journey since Noah's Deluge undertaken to Craigenputtock for such a purpose. In any case, we had a cheerful day from it, and ought to be thankful."

On the next Sunday, a week after his visit, Emerson wrote the following account of it to his friend, Mr. Alexander Ireland.

"I found him one of the most simple and frank of men, and became acquainted with him at once. We walked over several miles of hills, and talked upon all the great questions that interest us most. The comfort of meeting a man is that he speaks sincerely; that he feels himself to be so rich, that he is above the meanness of pretending to knowledge which he has not, and Carlyle does not pretend to have solved the great problems, but rather to be an observer of their solution as it goes forward in the world. I asked him at what religious development the concluding passage in his piece in the *Edinburgh Review* upon German literature (say five years ago), and some passages in the piece called 'Characteristics,' pointed. He replied that he was not competent to state even to himself,—he waited rather to see. My own feeling was that I had met with men of far less power who had got greater insight into religious truth. He is, as you might guess from his papers, the most catholic of philosophers; he forgives and loves everybody, and wishes each to struggle on in his own place and arrive at his own ends. But his respect for eminent men, or rather his scale of eminence, is about the reverse of the popular scale. Scott, Mackintosh, Jeffrey, Gibbon,—even Bacon,—are no heroes of his; stranger yet, he hardly admires Socrates, the glory of the Greek world; but Burns, and Samuel Johnson, and Mirabeau, he said interested him, and I suppose whoever else has given himself with all his heart to a leading instinct, and has not *calculated* too much. But I cannot think of sketching even his opinions, or repeating his conversations here.

I will cheerfully do it when you visit me here in America. He talks finely, seems to love the broad Scotch, and I loved him very much at once. I am afraid he finds his entire solitude tedious, but I could not help congratulating him upon his treasure in his wife, and I hope he will not leave the moors; 't is so much better for a man of letters to nurse himself in seclusion than to be filed down to the common level by the compliances and imitations of city society."¹

Twenty-three years later, in his "English Traits," Emerson once more describes his visit, and tells of his impressions of Carlyle.

"From Edinburgh I went to the Highlands. On my return I came from Glasgow to Dumfries, and being intent on delivering a letter which I had brought from Rome, inquired for Craigenputtock. It was a farm in Nithsdale, in the parish of Dunscore, sixteen miles distant. No public coach passed near it, so I took a private carriage from the inn. I found the house amid desolate heathery hills, where the lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart. Carlyle was a man from his youth, an author who did not need to hide from his readers, and as absolute a man of the world, unknown and exiled on that hill-farm, as if holding on his own terms what is best in London. He was tall and gaunt, with a cliff-like brow, self-possessed and holding his extraordinary powers of

¹ *Ralph Waldo Emerson. Recollections of his Visits to England.* By Alexander Ireland. London, 1882, p. 53.