

**THE GROWTH OF
SARTOR RESARTUS,
PP. 3 - 46**

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By D. L. MAULSBY

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D. L. MAULSBY.

THE GROWTH OF SARTOR RESARTUS.

The object of this essay is to show that the leading ideas of *Sartor Resartus*, the principal devices of its method, and even the equivalents of many of its phrases, are anticipated in Carlyle's earlier essays. In short, that the *Sartor*, instead of springing full-grown from the head of its author, and thus appearing to be little less than a miracle, is in fact a growth, an "epitome of all that Carlyle thought and felt in the course of the first thirty-five years of his residence on this planet."⁽¹⁾ In the collection of material for the demonstration of this thesis, the chief source for the text of the earlier essays has been the American reprint of 1838-1839. It has seemed best to include the essays published before August, 1834, the date of the appearance of the last instalment of *Sartor* as a magazine article, rather than to draw the line at August, 1831, when Carlyle was unsuccessfully hawking his completed manuscript among the London book-sellers. For, although he may have left his sheets unrevised upon the shelf, in the interim, it was hardly like him to do so, and there is abundant evidence that the essays which appeared nearest to the publication of *Sartor* were written with his greater work freshly before him. They, at least, profited by the juxtaposition of their elder brother. The date of first publication, then, is adopted, as furnishing a definite basis of reckoning. The hack-work done in earlier years for Brewster's Encyclo-

(1) MacMechan's *S. R.*, xxi.

pædia has been cursorily dismissed, because, on inspection, its value seemed small for the purpose in hand. So, too, the unfinished novel "Wotton Reinfred," and Carlyle's Diary, both used by Professor MacMechan, have not been here considered. A note at the close of the essay refers to one or two other books, consulted later.

The following essays have been examined in the preparation of this study: *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*, originally published in the London Magazine, October, 1823, to September, 1824, published in book form, London, 1825, reprinted in America in 1833, and in 1846, the last-named American edition being used herein; *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, first printed in the Edinburgh Review, June, 1827; *State of German Literature*, Edinburgh Review, October, 1827; *Life and Writings of Werner*, Foreign Review, January, 1828; *Goethe's Helena*, Foreign Review, April, 1828; *Goethe*, Foreign Review, July, 1828; *Burns*, Edinburgh Review, December, 1828; *The Life of Heyne*, Foreign Review, October, 1828; *German Playwrights*, Foreign Review, January, 1829; *Voltaire*, Foreign Review, April, 1829; *Novalis*, Foreign Review, July, 1829; *Signs of the Times*, Edinburgh Review, June, 1829; *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter Again*, Foreign Review, January, 1830; *On History*, Fraser's Magazine, November, 1830; *Luther's Psalm*, Fraser's Magazine, January, 1831; *Schiller*, Fraser's Magazine, March, 1831; *The Nibelungen Lied*, Westminster Review, July, 1831; *German Literature of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Foreign Quarterly Review, October, 1831; *Taylor's Historic Survey of German Poetry*, Edinburgh Review, March, 1831; *Characteristics*, Edinburgh Review, December, 1831; *Goethe's Portrait*, Fraser's Magazine, March, 1832; *Biography*, Fraser's Magazine, April, 1832; *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, Fraser's Magazine, May, 1832; *Death of Goethe*, New Monthly Magazine, June, 1832; *Goethe's Works*, Foreign Quarterly Review, August, 1832; *Corn-Law Rhymes*, Edinburgh Review, July, 1832; *Diderot*, Foreign Quarterly Review, April, 1833; *On History Again*, Fraser's Magazine, May, 1833; *Count Cagliostro*, Fraser's Magazine, July and August, 1833. In addition to the above-named, all of which appear in the American reprint, there is a translation in Fraser's Magazine, Febru-

ary and May, 1830, of *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter's Review of Madame de Staël's Allemagne*, which has been consulted, as also the brief paper on *Schiller, Goethe and Madame de Staël* in *Fraser*, March, 1832.

The text of *Sartor* used as the basis of reference is that of Professor MacMechan's edition of the work, Boston, 1896. Too much can hardly be said in praise of the path-finding of this pioneer among the underbrush of Carlyle's learning, and, if it is not here more frequently commended in detail, it is because a single hearty acknowledgment is left to bear the greater part of the burden of obligation. But, whenever an extract is used previously cited by Professor MacMechan, due credit is given, although, it is fair to say, the wealth of material at hand is so great that such repetition has been seldom necessary.

A natural order of procedure will be to consider first the matter and manner of *Sartor Resartus* as a whole, and, after these general considerations, to descend to an inspection of the work, chapter by chapter, in its relation to the earlier essays. It is true that the more salient resemblances concern the setting which Carlyle chose to give his thought, and that the details of this setting—as the use of the German professor as mouth-piece—appear full-grown in those essays nearly preceding the appearance of *Sartor* itself. But in the second if the more tedious portion of this study there is abundant evidence that the author had been nursing his thoughts for years before they found utterance in his most characteristic work.

The fundamental assertion of Carlyle's treatise on clothes is that spirit is the central reality. Characteristically, more space is given in the earlier essays to upbraiding the present age for its materialistic tendencies than to the enforcement of the essential nature of spirit. But, as early as 1827, in defending the Germans against the charge of mysticism, Carlyle said: "In the field of human investigation, there are objects of two sorts: First, the *visible*, including not only such as are material and may be seen by the bodily eye; but all such, likewise, as may be represented in a *shape*, before the mind's eye, or in any way pictured there: And, secondly, the *invisible*, or such as are not only unseen by human eyes, but as cannot be seen by

any eye; not objects of sense at all; not capable, in short, of being *pictured* or imaged in the mind, or in any way represented by a *shape* either without the mind or within it. If any man shall here turn upon us, and assert that there are no such invisible objects; that whatever cannot be so pictured or imagined (meaning *imaged*) is nothing, and the science that relates to it is nothing; we shall regret the circumstance. We shall request him, however, to consider seriously and deeply within himself what he means simply by these two words, GOD and his own SOUL; and whether he finds that visible shape and true existence are here also one and the same? If he still persist in denial, we have nothing for it but to wish him good speed on his own separate path of inquiry; and he and we will agree to differ on this subject of mysticism, as on so many more important ones."⁽¹⁾ The Kantian philosophy is, in continuance, stoutly defended, although Carlyle does not pretend to mastery of the subject. The passage quoted may stand as an indication of the writer's growing regard for the transcendental philosophy, although this passage does not stand alone. Besides the parallels to particular portions of *Sartor*, to be cited later, we find Carlyle, on two occasions, showing his position as regards the great fact of spirit by assailing those who hold opposite views.⁽²⁾ It was in the early literature of Germany that he found an acceptance of spiritual realities which was lacking among his contemporaries, and he looked forward to the return of a national literature in England that should grow out of spiritual life.⁽³⁾ Other citations may be made,⁽⁴⁾ but perhaps it will suffice here to call attention to a potent remark of Richter's, translated by Carlyle, referring to "this material world, whose life, foundation, and essence is Spirit!"⁽⁵⁾

That his age is materialistic, "mechanical", utilitarian, is to Carlyle an ever-depressing fact, not to be blinked nor palliated. In the essay *Characteristics*, religion, literature, and philosophy are found to be tainted with the current mechanical

(1) G L 76 and 77. (2) TS 30; D 375. (3) R G L 448. (4) As Ch 58, ll. 29-31; R G L 400, l. 32; N L 342, l. 24. (5) J A 182.

tendency, and elsewhere the father of the movement is called by name: "From Locke's time downwards, our whole Metaphysics have been physical; not a spiritual Philosophy, but a material one. The singular estimation in which his essay was so long held as a scientific work, (for the character of the man entitled all he said to veneration,) will one day be thought a curious indication of the spirit of these times. His whole doctrine is mechanical, in its aim and origin, in its methods and its results. It is a mere discussion concerning the origin of our consciousness, or ideas, or whatever else they are called; a genetic history of what we see *in* the mind. But the grand secrets of Necessity and Free-will, of the mind's vital or non-vital dependence on matter, of our mysterious relations to Time and Space, to God, to the universe, are not, in the faintest degree, touched on in these inquiries; and seem not to have the smallest connection with them."⁽¹⁾ Time and again Carlyle rails at "our new Tower-of-Babel era,"⁽²⁾ in which politics, like all the rest, proves man's faith in mechanism.⁽³⁾ It is worth noting that here too Richter had preceded Carlyle, saying, as translated by the latter: "Our present time . . . is indeed a criticising and critical time, hovering between the wish and the inability to believe."⁽⁴⁾

As corollary to faith in spiritual truth is the proposition that the understanding is powerless to reach and to grasp such truth. In Carlyle's own words: "To him, for whom '*intellect*, or the power of knowing and believing is still synonymous with *logic*, or the mere power of arranging and communicating,' there is absolutely no proof discoverable of a Divinity."⁽⁵⁾ And again, in another application: "For if the Poet, or Priest, or by whatever title the inspired thinker may be named, is the sign of vigor and well-being; so likewise is the Logician, or uninspired thinker, the sign of disease, probably of decrepitude and decay."⁽⁶⁾ This doctrine is derived from the Kantian philosophy, as is made clear more than once.⁽⁷⁾ Carlyle makes no room for "the mere logician",⁽⁸⁾ but consistently holds: "Of

(1) S T 152. (2) G W 268. (3) S T 154, 157; V 1; H 257, L 16; Ch 69, 90; Bo 145, 11. 9. 10; D 359, L 24. (4) N 142. (5) D 362. (6) Ch 62. (7) G L 89, Ch. 89. (8) C C 26.