

# **Richard Carlile: His Battle for the Free Press**

**How Defiance Defeated Government Terrorism**

Guy A. Aldred

1912

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## Author's Note

The present biography is a growth, as all serious work of this description must be. In its present matured form it has been reprinted, with but slight corrections and additions from the editorial columns of the *Herald of Revolt*, for 1911. This accounts for its being written in the first-person plural instead of the singular. To a large extent, however, the form of this biography has been decided by the "life" of Carlile we contributed to the columns of the *Agnostic Journal* for 1905-6. At that time we did not know so much about Carlile's political outlook as we know now. Neither were our own political opinions matured. We were simply sure that a free press was a necessity to progress. This led to our interest in Carlile's career, and our A. J. biography, which was superstitiously anti-religious. With such modifications as our additional material and matured attitude towards religion and politics have necessitated, this is substantially the same as the "life" we published in the A. J. We have been at pains to secure this result, as we dislike "parodying" our own work. When we began this serial record in the 1911 volume of the *Herald of Revolt*, several critics in the Anarchist and Socialist movement condemned us for our antiquated tendencies. These same critics are hearkening back to Carlile and his work themselves to-day, in view of the "Mutiny Act" prosecutions. Our second chapter deals with this period and has already been reprinted by *Forward* on that account, in its issue for March 30<sup>th</sup> last. In conclusion, therefore, we commend this pamphlet to our readers not only as an essay of historical interest, but as alive, propagandist pamphlet. It is full of the eternal spirit of revolt, the fire of freedom and defiance. The tenth chapter—with its caustic criticisms of "law and order" methods of "revolt"—and the eleventh—with its delineation of the soldier's character—are of special import at the present time. ~ May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

WANTED—To buy or borrow—Richard Carlile's works, especially volumes of *The Lion*, *Gantlet*, *Republican*, etc. Particulars to Guy Aldred, 17, Richmond Gardens, Shepherds Bush, London, W.

"As the worth of a man, so the worth of his trade, or vice versa, As the worth of his trade, so the worth of the man."—DIDEROT.

"Who is the more honored to-day, Socrates or the magistrate who made him drink the hemlock? "—Ibid.

"The present is an age of revolution. To accelerate it is a virtue, to impede it a crime."—RICHARD CARLILE.

# Chapter 1

Richard Carlile was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1790, at Ashburton, in Devonshire: the son of a father much too talented to possess any business acumen, and of a mother, who worked hard and long in order to keep the family in food, clothes, and shelter.

Robert Hall, the celebrated Baptist divine and exponent of the academic principles of the Free Press, was then twenty-six years of age. William Cobbett, the erstwhile agricultural laborer who became the first grammarian in England, was two years Hall's senior. Erskine was forty, and had already played an important legal part in the Free Press agitation. And Thomas Paine, about whose writings the agitation chiefly centered, had but another nine-teen years to live. None of those persons dreamed of the destiny of the child that first saw the light on this cold November day. Paine did not even live to see how that child vindicated his nmmO1'Y and life's work. His posterity of a later date will rank Carlile's name higher than Paine's, no less for the part he played in the emancipation of the English Press and the enlightenment of the proletariat than for his personal firmness of character.

If Emerson was right when he declared that "He only is a well-made man who has a good determination," Carlile was a well-made man. No heart vibrated more strongly to the iron-key—"Trust thyself!"—than his.

If Beecher was right when he avowed that "He is rich or poor according to what he is, not according to what he has," no man of Carlile's generation was richer than he. Without money, and possessing no property beyond his firm resolve and his interest in the cause of Freedom, he vanquished an organized Terrorism, supported by property, put into operation by the Government and the Church, and loudly defended and extolled in a subsidized Press.

The hatred of the Governing Class of his day was lavished upon him. Contemporary with so many famous men who cringed before power, and compromised with despotism, he alone remained incorruptible.

This is no rhetoric. It is a literal truth. Always in the van-guard when liberty's defense was in the danger-zone, he endured privation and imprisonment—he experienced want from the cradle to the grave—"but he enriched the psychological records of the race: he added his own name to the list of heroes who had served humanity.

In the best and truest sense of the term, he was a successful man. He was himself. No man or woman could fall under the sway of his personality and remain a slave. They were immediately emancipated.

Many men have possessed more genius than Carlile. The world has known many greater orators. Carlile was not an orator. The sons and daughters of mother earth have included many greater thinkers' and writers. With a no-better early education, Cobbett certainly was a greater writer. But he did not possess the magnificent courage, the personal force, the self-generated libertarian impulses, of Carlile, the ex-tinker.

Than him, the world has never had—nor will it have—a nobler, bolder, more single-eyed prophet of liberty. Atheist and Red Republican-practical Anarchist in his outlook an social ordi-

nances —almost Communist in his recognition of the class war existent in society—he was above all things, and because of his qualities in these respects, a man. His like will be, must be, seen again ere the Social Revolution is accomplished. But the man will never be excelled.

## Chapter 2

Carlile spent the first twelve to thirteen years of his life at home, receiving his early education at a local chapel school. Subsequently placed with a chemist and druggist at Exeter, he only remained in his situation four months, as he could not stand the tyranny of his employment. The next four months were spent at home, at a small shop which his uncle had presented to his mother in 1795, six months after the death of his father. Here he employed his time in painting pictures, which were sold to his mother's customers. Returning to Exeter, he was apprenticed for seven years to a tin-smith, the work proving exceedingly hard and the hours excessively long.

During this period the battle for the Free Press was becoming more and more a matter of critical importance to the workers. The Government was pursuing its mendacious campaign of suppression without receiving anything like a calculated opposition of defiance. Carlile's genius was not yet awake. But the factors were at work that were destined to awaken it.

In the year 1792 Paine was indicted for publishing the second part of his famous *Rights of Man*; the work had previously been denounced in a Royal proclamation. Erskine was retained for the defense. He immediately became the victim of a calumnious clamor. A conspiracy was formed by the Crown and the Government to deprive Paine of Counsel. Erskine was told in plain terms he must not defend Paine. He was threatened with removal from his office of Attorney-General if he did. He did defend Paine! He did lose his office!

'Horne Tooke was indicted .for high treason because he appeared to be a friend of Paine, in opposition to the outrageous clamor roused by the interested but uninteresting defenders of property against him.

Everywhere, the Government encouraged informers and held out rewards to treachery. It sought to turn every man into a spy and every neighborhood into the seat of an inquisition. Its paid attorneys persistently referred to Paine as that wretched outcast. Its interested judges declared the conduct of all who read or circulated Paine to be peculiarly marked with the spirit of diabolical mischief.

Associations were formed in every part of the country for the purpose of suppressing all propaganda directed towards a reform of Parliament, and offering rewards for information leading to the conviction of those who circulated Paine's writings; Members of these Associations habitually served as jurors in all the cases that came before the Courts, where the prosecution had been proceeded with by the Government at the instance of the associations in question. In the event of objection being taken to the jury on this ground by the defense, the judges invariably decided that the objection was not valid because they (the judges) had also condemned the works of Paine.

This is what happened in the case of Thomas Muir, who was sentenced to transportation in August, 1798, for circulating Paine's works. Muir was a man of unblemished moral character, but, because of his zeal for a very mild Parliamentary Reform, he was convicted on the evidence of men who had publicly declared that they would do their best to hang him.

Similar treatment was meted out to the Rev. F. T. Palmer, an Unitarian minister of Dundee, who was sentenced to seven years' banishment at Perth, in September, 1793, for publishing a proclamation of *A Society of the Friends of Liberty*, written by George Mealmaker, a weaver. There was not a word of violence in the whole address, which reached its extreme demand in a request for universal suffrage! In the event of Palmer returning before the end of seven years, the authorities were to publish an official certification of his death. In a word, he was to be outlawed and anyone was entitled to murder him.

Muir and Palmer were subsequently conveyed on the same boat from their Scottish prisons to Woolwich, in order to be sent to different penal settlements on the other side of the world. They were loaded with irons and chained to men convicted of the worst moral offenses. They slept and worked with a gang of 300 convicts, damned to the filthiest occupations whilst on the way to Woolwich and during their sojourn there prior to transportation.

Muir and Palmer were but two of the many victims of that aristocratic arrogance and working-class ignorance which constituted the hemlock and night-shade the governing-class physicians pre-scribed for the health of the nation.

Pitt was the chief-prescriber of these remedies. He was in office. His administration witnessed the establishment of a confidential department unknown to the constitution, termed "the management of the House of Commons." In the public accounts it was immersed under the head of "Secret Service Money." It was usually given to the Secretary of State when that post was filled by a commoner. The business of the department was to distribute with art and policy among the members who had no ostensible places, sums of money for their support during the session. It was no uncommon circumstance, at the end of a session, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thousand pounds "for his services" !

To express any disapprobation of this Parliamentary under-taking meant imprisonment in Newgate, transportation to a penal settlement, or banishment or outlawry. Even the prospect of being remanded in Newgate awaiting trial was sufficiently dismal to daunt the bravest hearts. The administration of what was termed "justice" was a somewhat slow process. This was to the advantage of the scum of society who acted as jailers. The fettering of prisoners, no matter whether they were convicted, awaiting trial, merely debtors, or "politicals," was part of the business of exnortion practiced by these gentlemen. Manacles were clapped on all comers unless a financial bargain had been struck before their arrival. These maacles were on both the hands and feet, and were heavily made. If it were known that the prisoner had control of money, they were kept on until "easement" had been bought.

In the year 1793, John Frost, an attorney, was indicted for saying at the Percy Street Coffee House, after dinner :-

"I am for equality. I see no reason why one man should not be upon a footing with another. It is every man's birthright. Yes. I am for equality and no king. I mean no king in England. The constitution of this country is a bad one in having a king."

He was kept in Newgate some time awaiting trial, and was submitted to the treatment I have described. He was finally convicted on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1793, and then kept in Newgate until June 20<sup>th</sup>, awaiting trial. He was then struck off the rolls, ordered to be imprisoned in Newgate another six months, and during this period to stand each day in and upon the pillory at Charing Cross

for one hour between the hours of \_ twelve and two—the busiest time of the day. He was also Ordered to find security and sureties for his good behavior for five years in £700, and to stay in prison until it was forthcoming.

A few months before Frost’s conviction and sentence, a young tallow chandler from Scotland, named Daniel Crichton, was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment for saying in casual conversation during a visit to the town:—

“Damn your king! Damn your George Rex! We have no king in Scotland, and we will have no king in England I”

Whilst on remand Crichton was confined in the worst part of Clerkenwell Prison, loaded with irons, among those convicted of the worst offenses.

For circulating, selling, or even lending *The Jockey Club*, Paine’s *Address to the Addressers*, and *The Rights of Man* (Part II.), booksellers and private individuals all over the country were sentenced to a minimum of four years’ imprisonment, ordered to pay fines of , £260, and to find sureties for good behavior in £1,000 for five years. It should be added, that these three books were often circulated together.

For posting up “An Address for the purpose of obtaining a reform in Parliament” bill-stickers received a minimum sentence of six months’ imprisonment, and were then kept in prison until they gave security and found sureties for their good behavior in £200.

In December, 1793, Thomas Briellat, a Hackney pump maker’ was sentenced to one year’s imprisonment, ordered to pay ‘£100 fines, and to find security and sureties for his good behavior for five years in , £1,000, for publicly saying :—

“A reformation in this country cannot be effected without a revolution. We have no occasion for any king.”

At Nottingham Assizes, Daniel Holt, the printer of the Newark Herald, was found guilty of selling Paine’s *Address to the Addressers* and of reprinting and publishing *An Address to the Manufacturers, etc., of Unrepresented Towns, on a Parliamentary Reform*. The latter was only a republication of a paper published by a Society in London for effecting a Parliamentary reform in the year 1783, of which Pitt and the Duke of Richmond were members. At that time in was printed in all the newspapers. The intervening decade had witnessed Pitt’s rise to power, and consequent total destruction of his former principles. For this Holt had to suffer. After being kept in prison for some months, awaiting sentence, he was damned to four years’ imprisonment, and ordered to find security. and sureties for good behavior in £500.

Publicans were told by magistrates that if they allowed discussions on politics in their houses—in the event of anything being said displeasing to the Government—they would lose their licenses. They were also asked what papers they took in and were told to take care there were no sedition in them, as they would be punished for distributing them to their customers.

Such was the state of affairs that Sheridan’s parliamentary eloquence, Erskine’s legal quibbling, Fox’s censures of Pitt, and Robert Hall’s academic defenses of the Free Press were to leave unaltered. Such was the system of oppression Carlile’s defiance was to destroy so effectively.



## Chapter 3

This brings us to the period which witnessed a great mental change in Carlile. The poverty and misery which became so prevalent among the masses in 1816 caused him to question his mother's faith, and to display an enthusiasm in the direction of Republicanism. Theologically, he inclined towards Atheism. But he did not definitely embrace it until a much later date.

All these factors, operating together, led to Carlile reading advanced Whig papers like Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, *The News*, Cobbett's *Twopenny Sheets*, and Hone's *Register*—all of which he came to regard as being too watery. His companions in the workshop were always talking and dreaming of revolution. He was dissatisfied with the tone of the papers he read. He craved for some means whereby he could get into the van of the fight. and he discovered his opportunity in the Government's inauguration of a new reign of terror. The incidents of 1793 seemed likely to be repeated. The mendacious persecution of that year threatened to be renewed with greater violence.

By the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1817, political writers were placed in an extremely difficult position; and political tract-sellers led to shrink from the sale of Hone's and Cobbett's compromising publications. In the face of this despotic fearfulness, Carlile publicly sold Hone's "Parodies of the Book of Common Prayer." He knew the consequences would be imprisonment, but he did not shrink from braving those consequences. Rather, he believed the cause of freedom warranted him in courting incarceration. The time had come for defiance—cool, calculated daring. Carlile felt this. He acted accordingly.

The result was as he anticipated. He was arrested and imprisoned for blasphemy, being incarcerated for eighteen weeks. This was from August 15<sup>th</sup> to December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1817, when he was released owing to Hone's three acquittals. He amused himself during this period by producing a parody of the Anglican Communion Service, which he published immediately on his release. The title page of this pamphlet—the text of which we have reproduced elsewhere—read as follows :—

"The Order for the Administration of the Loaves and Fishes; or, The Communion of Corruption's Host.—Translated from an Original Greek Manuscript, lately discovered in the Neighborhood of a certain Den of Thieves, in Westminster.—London: Printed and Published by R. Carlile, late of Law's Hold, in the County of Surrey, but now of 183, Fleet Street; and sold by those who are not afraid of incurring the displeasure of his Majesty's Ministers, their Spies or Informers. or public plunderers of any denomination.—1817."

Carlile now carried round *Sherwin's Register*, a publication commenced by William Sherwin, a youth of eighteen, to combat the official Terrorism. Sherwin had come under the influence of Paine's writings, and accordingly made his paper more extreme in tone than Cobbett's. He emphasized Paine's dictum that men must not petition for rights, but take them. His paper sounded the tocsin of revolt.

But Sherwin did not escape the terror that was the order of the day, the fear that was a portion of the atmosphere. No advanced bookseller or publisher escaped it. Hone and Cobbett were foremost in spreading it abroad. The former, after having been thrice acquitted, began to waver. Cobbett, who had suffered two years' imprisonment for condemning flogging in the Navy, fled to America. Sherwin caught "the dread of the consequences" disease. He decided to get married and settle down to family life. He preferred this to public service and certain imprisonment. He only consented, therefore, to continue his *Register* on condition that Carlile became publisher and editor, and took full responsibility for authorship.

Carlile jumped at this opportunity. He now stood forth, the one bold spirit of his time, surrounded by weaklings, and opposed to cowardly despots. The mantle of liberty had fallen on his shoulders. He had become its prophet. The honor of vindicating the freedom of the Press and of publication—of routing the forces of tyranny and property—was henceforth to be his. An incarnation of the Genius of Anarchy, the Spirit of Future Freedom, he was to assist most ably in the emancipation of mankind... from the evils of authority and property.

## Chapter 4

Present at the famous Peterloo meeting that was to have been addressed by Henry Hunt--- the Parliamentary Reformer and brother of Leigh Hunt--on 'Monday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1819, Carlile witnessed the massacre of defenseless women and children by the Yeomanry and police. No less than 300,000 people--men, women, and children--were assembled in and about the intended place of meeting, in a perfectly orderly and quiet manner. Mr. Hunt had begun his discourse, and made some ironical observations upon the conduct of the magistrates in attempting to forbid the meeting, when, says Carlile:--

“a cart, which evidently took its direction from that part of the field where the police and magistrates were assembled in a house, was moved through the middle of the field, to the great annoyance and danger of the assembled people, who quietly endeavored to make way for its procedure. The cart had no sooner made its way through, than the Yeomanry Cavalry made their appearance from the same quarter as the cart had gone out. They galloped furiously round the field, and, after a moment's pause, they received the cheers of the police as a signal for attack.... The Yeomanry Cavalry made their charge with the most infuriate frenzy ; they cut down women and children indiscriminately, and appeared to have commenced a premeditated attack with the most insatiable thirst for blood and destruction. They merit a medallion on the one side of which should be inscribed 'The Slaughtermen of Manchester,' and a reverse, bearing a "description of their slaughter of defenseless men, women, and children. Every" stone was gathered from the ground on the Friday and Saturday previous to the meeting, by the scavengers sent there by the express command of the magistrates, that the populace might be rendered more defenseless... The police were as expert in applying their clubs to the heads and shoulders of the people as the cavalry their sabers... One woman, who was near the spot where I stood and who held an infant in her arms, was sabered over the head, and her tender offspring drenched in its mother's blood. Another was actually stabbed in the neck with the point of the saber, which must have been a deliberate attempt on the part of the military assassin. Some were sabered in the breast--so inhuman and fiendlike was the conduct of the Manchester cavalry.”

This account of the Peterloo massacre was not published some years after the event, but it was immediately issued in the form of an open letter to Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, whom Carlile used as a medium for supplying the public with the account of an eye-witness, at the same time calling upon him

“to cause the magistrates of Manchester, and the Yeomanry and Cavalry acting under their directions, to be brought to the Bar of Public justice, for the unprovoked slaughter of the peaceable and distressed inhabitants of that place and neighborhood, whilst legally exercising their rights in public meeting assembled.”

Carlile then proceeded to add with characteristic fearlessness, that

“in the event of the Government failing to give satisfaction to the full extent of their means and power to the mangled and suffering, and to the friends of the MURDERED INHABITANTS of Manchester, the people, not only of Manchester, but of the whole country, are in duty bound and by the laws of nature imperatively called upon to provide themselves against the attacks of similar assassins acting in the true Castlereaghan fashion.”

Thus did he anticipate Spencer’s watchword, of revolt: “Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable, but imperative.” In so doing, he had drawn the teeth of the cowardly cur of despotism by rousing public opinion against it. It could not face his impeachment. It was afraid to prosecute him. It could only treasure, up its will-will, and—snarl! The cowardly hound!

Meanwhile, Carlile continued to circulate his indictments. Beyond the challenge to Lord Sidmouth, and the advice to the oppressed workers we have already quoted, he had some straight things to say to the magistrates, the Yeomanry, and the police. In saying them, he calmly informed the authorities that whoever else succumbed he would not desert his post or leave the emancipator’s task.

His attitude roused the authorities to action. His *Open Letter* was carefully considered by the Home Secretary, to whom it was addressed; Sir John Silvester, Recorder of London, and John Atkins, Lord Mayor. This Council of Three, studied it for several days, to see whether they could not base a charge of High Treason upon it: but they decided that the state of public feeling forbade such a course. They feared to kindle the smoldering fires of revolt their oppressive and massacring *regimé* had called into being. They decided to let Carlile’s vigorous impeachment go unanswered.

## Chapter 5

Carlile now took over the absolute control of Sherwin's publishing business, and dropped the title of *Sherwin's Register* in favor of the *Republican*. In all, this journal ran into fourteen volumes, and was edited, for the most part, from Dorchester jail. We shall have occasion to refer to its contents in the course of the present biography. '

As we have seen, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, and Elihu Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, had already been condemned as blasphemous publications. This fact caused Carlile to feel it incumbent upon him to republish them in vindication of the absolute freedom of the Press. It is an evidence of Carlile's disinterestedness that not only did he not agree with Paine's theological opinions, but was even actively opposed to them. So much is clear from a letter that he wrote from Dorchester jail, dated June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1820, to the Rev. W. Wait, B.A., of King's Square, Bristol. In this letter Carlile declared :—

“Although I applaud the manner in which Paine has rescued the name and character of the deity from the groveling notions which the Jew and Christian hold of him, still, when I come to his notions of a future state, I consider Paine to be quite as much a fanatic in matters of-religion as yourself, sir. There is nothing in the Bible, in the Koran, or in the reveries of the late Johanna Southcote, more ridiculous or superstitious than that which may be found in Paine's Theological works, under the head of *My Private Thoughts of a Future State*. I should be very happy, for the honor of Paine, if this paragraph could be proved to have been an interpolation to degrade his other writings, but I fear that it is genuine. I am the disciple of Paine in politics only. I do not go far with him in his theological sentiments. I consider his *Age of Reason* to be a most important and useful book as a primer to true theology.”

Nevertheless, Carlile knew how to defend and explain some of Paine's vigorous attacks on that whited sepulcher of Christian phariseism, the Church. Paine, with an historical intuition that took the place of a more extended learning, applied the word “adultery” to the union of Church and State. Dr. James Rudge, a minister of Limehouse, addressed a letter to Carlile through the columns of the *Christian Champion*, in which he stated that he could not explain nor account for Paine's assertion. Carlile replied in a letter dated from Dorchester Jail, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1820, showing that Paine's figure was applicable and proper on the following grounds :—

“The Christian Church has ever been closely interwoven with every State in which it has existed ... sometimes the Church has ruled the State, and at other times the State has mastered the Church. For instance, the Christian Church grew up with the decline of the Roman State, and at length prevailed over it; and the offices of state were all continued with, and subservient to, the offices of the Church, till at length

the title of Sovereign or Emperor of the State sunk into the arms of holy mother Church.... Again, at the period called the Reformation, or more properly speaking, the deviation from a former course, several States became masters of the Roman Church... The act of adultery becomes applicable to the union of Church and State, because the Church professes to be a wife and a prude, and calls Jesus her spouse, her Lord and Master. The members of the Church affect to be negligent and not to be seeking after the emoluments of the State, whilst, like an unfaithful wife, they are continually running into this 'adulterous connection,' and suspiciously beguile the unwary observer with outward professions of purity and chastity. Each sister calls the other the 'Whore of Babylon,' and alternately prays for 'the fall of this great, this drunken whore, whose abominations pollute the earth.' This, you will say, is coarse and vulgar language. But recollect it is not the language of my mind. It is the language of what you call Scripture, and a just quotation and application."

From the situation of Carlile at the time that he wrote the letters containing the above remarks, it will be seen that we have anticipated what happened to him after his publication of Paine's and Palmer's writings. This action afforded the authorities an opportunity of preparing an action of blasphemy against him. Whilst they were thus employing their time, the Prince Regent, acting upon their advice, addressed a letter to the magistrates of Manchester, and all the officers and privates concerned in the Peterloo massacres, recording the Royal gratitude "to them" for having so promptly preserved the peace and tranquility of the County.

Carlile replied to this piece of monarchical, governing-class insolence in two further letters addressed to the Regent and to Lord Sidmouth respectively. In these replies he spared neither the throne nor the Government. He simply spoke his mind—the mind of a friend of Freedom.

## Chapter 6

(From January 12<sup>th</sup> to August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1819, five indictments were prepared against Carlile for blasphemy, based on his publication of Paine's and Palmer's writings. On the second date, Carlile was arrested for sedition on account of his further letters to the Regent and Lord Sidmouth on the Manchester massacre. He spent six days in the Giltspur Street Compter, and was then released on bail, the magistrate intimating that if he undertook to withdraw from circulation his accounts of the Manchester massacre no further proceedings would be taken against him. Carlile did not comply with this request. Thus defied, the Government was unwilling to answer Carlile's impeachment by further canvassing accounts of its tyranny by proceeding on the sedition charge. But it remembered that Carlile enjoyed his liberty, on bail, on the blasphemy charge. Hitherto it had shown no disposition to bring the indictments under this charge to a head. Now it proceeded with them in great haste.

Carlile's trial lasted from Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, to Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, inclusive. The prosecution and the court insisted that a man might, agreeably to the laws of England, doubt or disbelieve the divinity of the Christian religion. It was open to him to communicate these doubts or disbeliefs to others, always providing he did it privately, silently, and respectfully. The jury could see, therefore, that it was not a matter of the respective merits of two books that advocated different opinions. The truth or falsity of the ideas Carlile proclaimed did not matter. By publishing opinions publicly questioning the veracity of the Bible and Christianity, the defendant aimed at creating a breach of the peace. It was this quality that constituted the criminal matter or libel, which was an offense punishable under the rules and according to the usage of the common law of England.

This attitude of the court provided a convenient excuse for ruling out the whole of Carlile's defense, on the ground that it was but a reiteration of the same sort of calumny against the law of the land and the Bible as that which was contained in the books for the publication of which he was called on to answer;

He urged that *The Toleration Act, 53<sup>rd</sup> of George III.*, entitled---

AN ACT TO RELIEVE THOSE PERSONS WHO IMPUGN THE HOLY TRINITY---

made Deism the law of the land. This plea availed him nothing, since this act did not disestablish Christianity. Consequently, his publications aimed at destroying "the common people's" respect for the "religious" portion of the Government.

Similarly, had he urged---as he might have done---that the Ancient Common Law knew nothing of such an offense as libel, and being more ancient than Christianity, could not possibly have provided for its maintenance and legal establishment---he would have been met with the statement that the Ancient Common Law did provide for breaches of the peace, and that was what he was charged with. True, when Pope Gregory sent Augustine with his forty associates to England in A.D. 597, Ethelbert assigned him an habitation in the Isle of Thanet, and welcomed him in these words:

“Your words and promises are fair, but because they are new and uncertain I cannot entirely yield to them and relinquish the principles which I and my ancestors have so long maintained. You are welcome, however, to remain here in peace, and as you have undertaken so long a journey solely, as it appears, for what you believe to be our advantage, I will supply you with all necessaries and permit you to deliver your doctrine to my subjects.”

But then Ethelbert would *not* have “permitted” Augustine to preach Christianity had he thought it would lead to the breach of the peace. And the “Vice Society,” the judges, juries, statesmen, and clerics of Carlile’s time did not want the common people to be educated and emancipated from superstition. It could only lead to a “breach of the peace.” The ancient common law did *not* propound the principle of liberty, did not insist on economic equality without which for its basis, political equality cannot exist. It only preached up the right of the crown to practice *toleration*—if it wished. The ancient common law, like statute law, only availed the enemies of freedom, the upholders of class society. It offered no encouragement to the brave, to the rebels, or the pioneers. As Carlile himself said, in dealing with this subject :—

“The origin of Parliaments in this country, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, was no more the effect of common law than statute law; it was only the effect of an opinion of its necessity formed in the bosom of a man who had the power to enforce it; and experience teaches that there is no other means of obtaining beneficial changes in the political state of our country. As to penalties for misdemeanors, what has it to do with common law, or any other laws: it is a point of equity, resident in the bosom of the judge or a magistrate, and is as often guided by caprice and prudence as by the dictates of justice, particularly in the present day, when almost every judge and magistrate are partisans. Neither have judicial forms anything to do with the Common Law, as they change with the convenience of the court; and, as far as juries are concerned, they are packed on every occasion, where the Government and its party have any interest. With respect to the fundamental principles of the Constitution being supported by the Common Law, what is called the Constitution of England is a mere farce and byword; the fundamental principles of which are confined to the bosom or the breach of Lord Castlereagh. All lawyers will admit, that the definition of what is, and what is not, Common Law, is altogether confined to the bosoms of the judges, and each defines it, agreeable to his own disposition, view, and purpose. If we argue that a traditionary law existed in this country, before the use of letters, it appears that it should follow, as a matter of course, that the introduction of the use of letters, and consequently of statute and written law, should altogether supersede the necessity of an unwritten or Common Law, which is continually liable to be perverted and abused by corrupt judges, of whom we are never deficient... The Common Law in this country is merely retained as a trap for the unwary, when the Statute Law cannot be strained to answer the necessary political purposes of a corrupt system of Government.”

In a word, Carlile’s experience was convincing him of the truth of Paine’s dictum : “The trade of governing has always been monopolized by the most ignorant and the most rascally individuals



of mankind.” . Certainly, the sentence passed on him on the present occasion warranted him coming to this opinion of his talented predecessor. He was committed to Dorchester jail for three years, and mulcted in fines to the tune of £1,500. As he refused to pay these fines, he was actually imprisoned six years, from November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1819, to November 1825, the further three years being exacted for his stubbornness.

The sentence having been passed, the prisoner was immediately handcuffed and hurried away to Dorchester jail in the dead: of the night—some 130 miles from London—without being allowed to take a change of linen or to see his wife and children.

Shocked at the natural depravity of the victim of this persecution, the Czar of Russia and his advisers, apprehensive of “the people’s morals,” gave directions to the Russian police to prevent the introduction of all the English newspapers containing reports of Carlile’s trial. The Czar probably appreciated the retrograde social tendencies of religion. In its name the Russian peasants were bidden to humbly obey the dictates of the Czar and his Grand Dukes, lest they were visited with the vengeance of Almighty God. These threats might only have become empty sounds had the details, of Carlile’s trial been brought to the ears of the vile masses.

This opinion was strengthened by the effect produced by the result of the trial in England. At home the spirit of revolt, had been aroused. Money and letters of encouragement began to pour in upon the prisoner in Dorchester Jail from all parts of the country. This did not please the authorities, who no sooner had Carlile safely locked-up in jail than they descended upon his shop in Fleet Street and, having seized the entire stock, closed it. The officers also took every penny out of the till, although none of the money thus stolen was allowed in mitigation of the fine.

Carlile’s room in prison was large, light, and airy. It had a sink, water-pipe, and complete lavatory attached, the necessary outfit being provided for hot or cold water at pleasure. A sofa was also supplied. Every other consideration was shown as regards the prisoner’s physical comfort. In this respect, Dorchester jail was far superior to most of our “reformed prisons” of to-day, even as regards provisions for the comfort of political prisoners. He was not allowed to V make the acquaintance of any other of the inmates of the prison. To this end, he was closely confined to his room, the solitude causing him to lose the power of speech for some time. But it did not impair the vigor of his mind, nor yet the fearlessness of his pen.

## Chapter 7

Throughout these proceedings Carlile had been loyally supported by his wife, Jane Carlile. The latter was seven years Carlile's senior, and had made his acquaintance whilst he was on a visit to Gosport in 1813. They were married after a courtship of only two months' duration. Finding that their temperaments were incompatible, they had wisely agreed to separate early in the year 1819. But they postponed putting their determination into effect owing to Richard's imprisonment and the necessity of continuing the publishing business. At last the authorities—who had wasted a great deal of time in threatening, arresting, and then releasing Carlile—brought the various indictments against her to "a trial" in January, 1821, the result of which was a verdict of "Guilty" and immediate removal to Dorchester Jail, where she shared Richard's cell. During this united imprisonment the one theme of conversation between them was the question of separation. This was finally carried out in 1832.

Jane Carlile's place was taken in the shop by her sister-in-law, Mary Carlile. Being in her turn sent to jail, she was succeeded, in the order given below, by the following lovers of liberty, all of whom not only volunteered for the task, but defended themselves in order that their defense might evince their defiance :—

Name. Date of Conviction. Length of Sentence. Susannah Wright Nov. 14, 1822. Two years. James Watson April 23, 1823. Twelve months. Richard Hassell May 28, 1824. Two years. William Campion... June 8, 1824. Three years. John Clarke June 10, 1824. Three years.

Besides these, Joseph Harris and T. R. Perry toed the line, and were sent to prison for acting as Carlile's shopmen. In each case the charge was either based upon the sale of Paine's much dreaded writings, or Palmer's work, or a current issue of the *Republican*. Besides these shopmen and shopwomen there were booksellers up and down the country—making in all 150 persons—who were indicted for selling Carlile's publications.

Before Clarke had been sentenced Jane Carlile had been released, and was back at the post of danger. A year later—on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1825, to be exact—Carlile himself was suddenly freed. Without any compromise on his part his recognizances had been abrogated, and he had been swept out of jail bag and baggage. This quitting jail meant no more to him mentally than a change of lodging. He resolved that his course should be onward, and that he would continue the same disposition unimpaired, with which he began his pioneer career—a disposition to suffer fines, imprisonment, or banishment, rather than any man should hold the power and have the audacity to say or decide that any kind of public discussion was improper and publicly injurious. ' He confessed that, as he had touched on extremes in the past, he would do so in the future, since he thought it useful to habit the Government —and the people themselves—to all extremes of discussion of impropriety from the media which were most useful.

## Chapter 8

In March, 1819, the German student, Karl Sandt, killed the Russian police spy, German liberticide, and hired agent of the despots of Europe, Kotzbue, Sandt was executed over twelve months later. The latter event led Carlile to applaud the motive and deed in the columns of the Republican for June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1820. He also praised the firm manner in which Sandt had played the martyr. "Tyrants," he lamented, "are the last men to take lessons from example and history. Their ambition impels them to go on. They are actuated by feelings similar to the common robber, who has often felt himself enriched by his booty and doubts not but that he shall be equally successful in the next attempt. He thus goes on from time to time until the hand of justice and oppressed" innocence arrests his course, and he is only convinced of former misdeeds by the near and certain approach of death."

On the same date as these sentiments were published in" the Republican, Carlile was applauding the justice of political assassination in a letter he addressed to the Rev. W. Wait, A.B., of Bristol. This divine had written to Carlile deploring the tendency of his publications, and affirming that they were calculated to lead to violent conspiracies against the State, acts of assassination, and to the consequent destruction of the souls and bodies of many of Carlile's fellow-countrymen. Carlile grasped the class basis of this gentleman's hypocritical objection to murder, and immediately came to grips with him by propounding the following question: "What think you, sir, of those people who were slain at Manchester, innocent and unoffending ? Those murders have been trifled with in our courts of law."

Carlile now proceeded to tell Mr. Wait more than he seemed to ask, so that it could not be said that he was evading the question, viz.:—

"I hold the destruction of tyrants by putting them to death suddenly and violently, or—if you should think me not sufficiently explicit—by assassinating them, to be an act just, moral, virtuous, and legal, agreeable to the law of nature which should be the foundation of all other law. A tyrant is the common destroyer of his species, and any member of that community in which he dwells and plays the tyrant ... may, in my opinion, meritoriously put him to death. The moralist, or a man with the most humane mind, will stand aloof, and ask himself the following questions:—Which would have been the greatest outrage on the laws, morals, and welfare of this society? That this man, who is an avowed and admitted tyrant, should fall by the hand of one whom he has injured, or that he should have lived to have made unhappy, miserable, and in continual fear for their lives and properties, every member of this society that should not feel disposed to flatter and applaud his wicked measures? "

Carlile demanded a frank and candid answer to this last query of his clerical questioner. But this request was never complied with. Courage is no part of the clerical habit. But it was of Carlile's, for he proceeded to add :—

“But as I consider that the majority of the present ministers are tyrants and enemies to the interest and welfare of the maple of this country. so also am I bold to confess that if an man. who has suffered unjustly under their administration should be so git indifferent about his own life as to slay any one or more of them, I would tune my lyre to sing his praises. I consider it to be a want of virtue and true courage that makes a man seek companions to perform such an act. It is a proof that he calls upon others to do that which he has not resolution enough to do single-handed ; and in seeking men that will co-operate with him, he is sure to fall in with the most vicious of mankind, and mar all the good he might have done as an individual. I condemn an association for such purposes.”

A few years later he addressed himself with equal energy to the task of encouraging the insurgent agricultural laborers to continue their career of revolt. He told them that they had more just and moral cause for wasting property and burning farm produce than ever king or faction that ever made war had for making war. In war all destruction of property was counted lawful. Upon the ground of that, which was called a law of nations, Carlile told them theirs was a state of war, and their quarrel was the want of the necessaries of life in the midst of abundance. Further, Governmental severity of repression would warrant their resistance even to death and to life for life. The issues Carlile impressed upon them in the following terms :—

“You see hoards, of food, and you are starving; you see a Government rioting in every sort of luxury and wasteful expenditure, and you, ever ready to labor, cannot find one of the comforts of life. Neither your silence nor your patience has obtained for you the least respectful attention from that Government. The more tame you have grown, the more you have been oppressed and despised, the more you have been trampled on; and it is only now that you begin to display your physical as well as your moral strength that your cruel tyrants treat with you and offer you terms of pacification.”

## Chapter 9

In May, 1821, Carlile completed his Address to Men of Science, which he immediately caused to be published as yet another of his Dorchester Bastile's contributions to proletarian literature. Classical scholarship was impeached in its pages as neither giving a polish to manners nor teaching morality. Indeed, the following excerpt reminds one of Spencer at his best in his famous essay on *Education*:—

“It fills the mind with a useless jargon, and enables the possessor now and then to make a tinsel and pompous declaration in half—a-dozen different languages; which, if it were to undergo a translation into one language, and that which we call native, would be found to be a mass of unintelligible and unmeaning trash—words of sound, to which it would be difficult to attach an idea and in which all correct notions are wanting. It makes a man a pedant only. Such men have been most aptly termed “spouters of froth.”

He now portrays in elegant language the principles of materialism. The priestly dogma of immortality he dismisses as a ridiculous idea. He adds :—

“Away with the contemptible notion that our bones, our muscles, and Our flesh shall be gathered together after they are rotted and evaporated for a resurrection to eternal life. Away with the idea that we have a sensible soul which lives distinct from and after the dissolution of the body. It is all a bugbear, all a priestly imposture. The chemist can analyze the body of man, and send it into its primitive gaseous state in a few minutes. His crucible and fire, or his galvanic battery, will cause it to evaporate so as not to leave a particle of substance or solid matter. And this chemical process is but an anticipation, or a hastening, of the workings of nature; for the whole universe might be aptly termed a great chemical apparatus, in which a chemical analysis and a chemical composition is continually and constantly going on. The same might be said of every organized body however large or however minute; its motions produce a constant chemical analysis and composition, a continual change; so that the smallest particle of matter is guided by the same laws, and performs the same duties as the great whole.”

Carlile proceeds to impeach the men of science for betraying the purpose of science in their anxiety to crouch to the established tyrannies of kingcraft and priestcraft. He accuses them of adopting the aristocratical distinctions of the day, and of supporting frauds upon mankind it should be their peculiar-duty to expose. He arraigns the servile cowardice of Bacon, and exposes the hypocrisy and stupidity of Sir Isaac Newton. The character of the latter he contrasts against that of the more honest Whiston :—

“Newton courted distinction and popularity by servilely succumbing to all the despotisms of the day. Whiston was a man of principle, and lived and died poor for the satisfaction of writing and speaking what he thought and believed. The one has been too much flattered and applauded; the other too much vilified and degraded; and the clamor by which both circumstances have been effected has been equally disgusting and disgraceful to the country.”

From these and other facts Carlile concludes that a “misery-begetting, splendor” must always be, in reality, opposed to “an advanced state, of science,” and declares that the ruling-class only make “partial pretensions to patronize the arts and sciences as a cloak for their enmity towards them.” Having proceeded to impeach the idle distinctions drawn by law makers, Carlile now adds : —

“It is the duty of. the man of science-to attack those distinctions, to attack all the established follies of the day, and endeavor to restore society to its natural state; to that state which just principles will point out; the mutual support, the comfort, the happiness, and the protection of each other. At present we are but so many beasts of prey, each strengthening himself by the destruction of his weaker fellow.”

He now sees the part played by the Free Press in bringing about this social regeneration, and hails it as the Messiah that “will go on to unite, under the name and title of *man and citizen*, the whole human race, or all those animals who have the gift of speech and its consequent—reason.”

Returning to his impeachment of men of science for their cowardice, he declares that he is determined to break down all attempts to treat knowledge as contraband goods, and announces his willingness to publish the sentiments of any scientific thinker without danger to the latter, by standing between him and persecution.

This brilliant essay then goes on to propound a system not merely of secular instruction, but a free school that really anticipates all the principles of Ferrer’s Modern School. Carlile has no faith in ancient geography, since it really inculcates Imperialism. He wished to abolish from the curriculum for the young all mythology and classical literature. Homer, Heriod, Horace, etc., he would have none of. But he wants children to be taught how to read and write their native tongue and trained in all the departments of mathematics, so that their reasons might be developed and strengthened. He also expresses his contempt for the interested gossip that passes muster for history. A striking contribution to the literature of freedom was this iconoclastic brochure composed inside the Dorchester bastille.

## Chapter 10

Throughout his incarceration Carlile's vigorous pen had continued to expose the abuses of our class society and its corrupt governmentalism in the columns of the *Republican*. "Justice," he declared, "is nowhere found in the country. Her painted figure only is visible in our courts of law and iniquity. We have the shadow to torment our eyes and senses, whilst the substance is sought in vain... The law cannot reach determined rogues, surpliced hypocrites, and flagitious ministers, nor their bribed supporters." From this he concluded that "the true definition of law... is the caprice of the ruling power." "Law, like religion," he says again, "is a mere word. They are words of sound without any confined application: they vary with circumstances. Hypocrites and tyrants say that both are necessary to bridle the multitude, therefore they may be considered as the forerunners of slavery: the one imposes an unequal and unjust restraint on the body, the other on the mind." He leads up to this conclusion by pointing out that "the law is omnipotent and also omnivorous: each party in power destroys its opponents according to law." We can only quote in part from his historical evidence for this assertion, viz. :--

"The law brought Charles Stuart to the block; and again, the law brought those to the gallows who brought this monarch to the block. The law provided a sumptuous funeral for Oliver Cromwell, and the law again enabled Charles Stuart the Second to dig up his putrid body and hang it on the gallows. But then it must be observed that the law which brought one party to the gallows, was the subversion of that law by which the other party were put to death."

Consequent upon this belief was his complaint :--

"Weak men are apt to listen to a judge with the same feelings as a Roman Catholic would listen to the Pope."

He had no idea that anything short of downright intimidation would have any effect on the governing-class, its kings, and their parasites. Deep-rooted corruptions could be removed only by revolutions. Only a few more of these were needed for the fear and dread of them to pass away. Each succeeding one would be effected with less bloodshed, and display to a greater extent its utility. And he was firmly of opinion that a formidable revolution would find the military ready to join it, since they could see themselves secure in doing so. In the interval he noted how appropriate was the epithet of "Famine Guards" for the military, since the greater the distress and danger to those who employed them, the more certain they were of being better fed and paid, and of having their favor and protection courted, until they felt a sense of importance.

In line with these observations are his following reflections :-

“To petition is to become frivolous and degrading, and to meet for the purpose dangerous. To complain is sedition ; and to say that this state of things is not a visitation of God is blasphemy. Therefore those who have neither labor nor food must perish quietly and be thankful; and those who have a little of either must be contented ; for the slightest murmur is now construed to be ‘against the peace of our Lord the King,’ and dissatisfaction and rebellion ‘against the dictates of heaven.’ To doubt this is impiety; and obstinate doubt, however virtuous, is punishable blasphemy! This state is decreed to continue until resistance to it shall be found practicable; and whenever practicable, it shall be decreed to be just.

“Every attempt at insurrection will become more and more formidable until at last it will become effectual. They may hang or transport a few hundreds or thousands but the spirit will increase; and the more the people are inured to the shedding of blood, the less will be their scruples to retaliate. It is astonishing to see how the lessons and experience of history are lost on kings and rulers; they proceed with a blind infatuation, as if they were omnipotent ; and are not to be awakened to danger until they feel themselves in the vortex of destruction. Power has, most certainly, a tendency to bind and corrupt the mind, where it is not the offspring of knowledge.

“It is folly to talk of the weapons of reason, when they are met by those of a conscious and malignant ridicule. What does such a man as Castlereagh or Canning care about the weapons of reason? They will continue to smile securely, while the weapons of reason are hurled at them unsupported by some powerful arguments... They laugh at us. and shake the keys of the dungeon and the halter in our faces, and point to their standing army as their last resource... What effect had the reasoning of our Colonial brethren in the United States? They reasoned and they petitioned. and they were laughed at, and threatened with military execution. They prepared to meet the military execution, and what followed? Let the reasoner speak. Show me a state of oppression and despotism that was ever overthrown by the weapons of reason alone, and I, for one, will be forward to acquiesce in your pacific reasoning. Out late king had sufficient good sense to tell Bishop Watson, that the sharper a conflict was, the sooner it was over, and the less destructive it became. I am quite of his opinion, and therefore on the Score of humanity, I am for *pointed and urgent reasons*.

“Where a great portion of society live in luxury and idleness on the produce of the remaining portion, there is sure to be distress and wretchedness.

“Men who are ever ready to make themselves subservient to despotism on an extended scale, are always ready to display a local despotism within their own bounds of rule.

“Royalty is a ‘species of sacred mystery; where no one can rightly define but those who have access to it. And those may be considered a species-of priests, who will never open the eyes of the people to a true knowledge of that which supports themselves in luxury and idleness. It is a political *sanctum sanctorium* which has put to death the stranger who has drawn aside the veil.

“Four centuries have not yet elapsed since the invention of printing, and in no country in Europe has a free and unrestricted Press “yet existed; yet it has produced. with



all its shackles, a manifest and irrevocable change in society. The will and edict of tyrants are now printed and laughed at, and every despot finds it necessary to corrupt a great portion of the Press of the country in which he dwells to preserve his existence. They are now compelled to purchase that base adulation, which a great portion of the daily and other periodical portion of the Press abounds in, with caresses and gold. This, in a great measure, unarms the despot and renders him less destructive than formerly; he is compelled to put on a hollow and false outside, that his adulators may find some apparent excuse for his inhumanities. In fact, his whole despotic career is now necessarily performed by a sort of agency to hide its hideous features and screen the real actor.

“Literature and knowledge on all subjects may now be considered excisable articles throughout Europe, and the poor obtain but little more than might be said to be smuggled among them by word of mouth. The indolent and lazy read and tremble, lest the discoveries they daily make should extend among the poorer classes. The boldest warrior is now more “alarmed at paper shot than those of lead. The prostituted portion of the Press is become the basis of all European Governments, and war is declared against the portion that dares to be honest.

“He who sets himself up as an instructor to his fellowman should offer nothing but what is clear and intelligible to all who should read what he wrote. The fine figurative writer will, in future ages, be read with disdain and contempt. The daily avocations of those who labor for a livelihood are such that they have not time to unriddle figurative writings, such as the Bible and many other books abound in. They stand in need of that mental refreshment which is as simple as the diet they make use of.

“It is reason that endows man with the gift of speech ; “without reason he could not communicate an idea but by dumb show. ‘His voice would be of no further use to him than the power of barking to a dog or of braying to an ass. It is evident that without reason man would be a beast of the forest, and a prey to many a stronger animal. And yet this glorious light of reason becomes a dreadful eyesore to the priest! And for why? Because the priests of all ages, of all sects”, and of all doctrines, impose nothing but error and falsehood on the multitude, and they find” their doctrines rejected by those of the multitude who exercise their reason. This is an assertion that bids defiance to contradiction.”

In addition to these remarks, Carlile observed that “the priest who is about to take holy orders is necessitated to vow in the church, before the bishop, that he does not seek the office for the sake of lucre, but that he is impelled by the holy ghost!” After such a base perversion of his reason and sense of shame. it seemed to Carlile inevitable that the priest “should studiously endeavor to degrade every other person to the same level, as a cloak-and a safeguard against his own infamy, perjury, and villainy.”

A Carlile also pointed out that he could never hear ministers talk about providing for the splendor of the Crown without

“viewing it as the act of an insolvent tradesman who has driven a career of misconduct so far that he finds himself on the eve of dissolution, in point of business, and

endeavors to delay the evil day by seeking to obtain credit by a more splendid show in dress and manners. Any attempt to give pauperism a false and pretended splendor is only calculated to excite ridicule towards it ; and to attempt to attach splendor to a throne that is founded on pauperism makes the person who fills it but a splendid pauper, and exposes him to ridicule and contempt.”

We regard these observations as replete with courage, power, and good sense. Of the courage there can be no doubt. At the time at which they were written Carlile was incarcerated in the Dorchester Bastile, doomed to nearly another six years’ imprisonment. and with nearly twenty informations suspended over his head that were never brought to a trial. About six of them had been suspended for three years. In addition, two Press Acts had been passed mainly for his benefit. One exposed his house or premises to repeated ramsacking by the police, and empowered the authorities to destroy all the books thus seized. This Act also restored banishment, transportation, and incarceration in the hulks for the “offenses” of “blasphemy” and “sedition.” The other Act imposed the newspaper stamp upon all pamphlets of a republican, atheistic, or deistic tendency that were published at less price than sixpence and on so small a quantity as two sheets of paper. It exempted every pamphlet written in defense of Christianity and the Constitution. Thus the Christian and the Governmentalist could defend the powers that be in a fourpenny pamphlet. The rebel could not reply, in a pamphlet of the same size, under sixpence. Republican and atheist publishers were also required to find sureties before they could publish their educational tracts, and also to deposit original MSS. with the authorities, with name’ and address of the author written across them. Carlile knew how to deal with this terrorism. He found no sureties, paid no. tax, deposited no MSS., and informed on no authors. His policy he declared to be founded on the duty of resisting the “imposition of a duty on political information for the better preservation of ignorance among the laboring classes.” Watson, one of the shopmen who went to prison for selling Carlile’s publications, persuaded Henry Hetherington to ‘establish a workman’s newspaper in defiance of the Government, by emulating Carlile. Hetherington, who was two years Carlile’s junior, consequently established his *Poor Man’s Guardian and Poor Man’s Conservative*. They were both unstamped. This was in 1831. Within three years over 750 men and women went to jail for selling them. Some went several times, so that it can be seen that they sustained over this number of prosecutions. On the last prosecution of Hetherington, Lord Lyndhurst, a Tory judge, exhibited disgust with the prosecutions, and practically told the Jury to legalize the sale. This was done, and the stamp-tax persecution collapsed. Carlile has seen his defiance inspire 150 of his own shopmen and women, and 750 of Hetherington’s, to go to jail for the Free Press, and had witnessed the final discomfiture of the ruling-class. His policy had won the day. The stamp-tax imposition was killed for all time; whilst, after his day, the Guildhall—at which interested persons were continually proceeding against Carlile and his supporters for “sedition” and “blasphemy”—became ashamed of its notoriety in this respect. Four decades later, the Bow Street Court upheld a prosecution for sedition where the Guildhall refused to look at the repetition of the offense, the Guildhall refusal leading to the squashing of the Bow Street indictment. Of a truth, Carlile’s defiance had proven victorious.

# Chapter 11

Shortly after the two Press Acts, described in the last chapter, had come into force, Carlile assumed, from the Dorchester jail, the position of responsible publisher of four character studies from the pen of *Philanthropos*. The shopmen who sold them were liable to imprisonment for so doing, but Carlile was also liable to further detention for responsibility for their publication. It was open to his shopmen to plead that they were only “agents,” had they wanted to. Each of these character studies were published at two-pence. They were unstamped, and, admittedly, both “seditious” and “blasphemous.” The authorities never learned the real name of their author. In the first of these essays the latter impeaches the thronged congregation of rogues, slaves, and fools who worship at the shrine of avarice, and estimate merit in the terms of money. He adds :—

“The passions of distrust, revenge, fear, hatred, malice, and cruelty district the rich, that thrive by treachery, hypocrisy. tyranny. and rapacity. Conscious of turpitude, stung by remorse, alarmed for the safety of ill-gotten gains, the robbers and impostors are afraid the people will claim a restitution of rights and property.”

Our author then proceeds to defend human nature and the poor against’ the slanders of the interested defenders of despotism, the pampered and bloated hypocrites who riot upon the poor man’s industry, carouse upon the sweat of his brow, and sack the spoil of the criminal their rapacity has created. He concludes with the following advice to these gentlemen :—

“*Tyrants and impostors, remember you are splendid at the expense of honesty, pain. disease, and death!* Give the people justice and they will be laborious; if they are laborious they must have plenty, and if they have plenty they will be honest. Men are naturally innocent, passive, and pacific; false information and injustice are the sources of violence and crime. Remember this, you corporate impostors and tyrants, and correct your -own errors before you brand the innocent with infamy. Cast the “beams out of your own eyes before you shed acrimonious calumny upon the virtuous and the just.”

But *Philanthropos*’s best effort was the pamphlet in which he delineated the characteristics of a soldier. The latter defines as being a brute, a biped, an erect, unique, and horrible monster; the most cold-blooded animal; a bloody automaton or infernal machine having the power of locomotion and a great thirst for human blood. He denies it the name of man, and refuses to disgrace man by putting it by his side. It meditates “upon its work of destruction, of voracity, upon its sanguinary repast for years before its preternatural appetite is feasted with human gore,” and “hires itself out for a small sum to be the butcher of the human race”; “to slay men, to slaughter the innocent or the guilty, as it may be ordered”:

“to shed blood; to push its saber of death into the breast of innocent men, women, and children; to see the blood follow its blow; to withdraw the scythe reeking from the wound; to see the heart’s blood bubble up in crimson froth; to see the victim

fall, distorted, convulsed, agonized, and every pore pouring forth the cold, clammy sweat of death.”

All this is “ecstasy” to the “male animal that hires itself out to slaughter the human species ... wholesale or retail, in units or in thousands.” That is why “privileged rogues work with it.”

“It engages to cut any man’s throat when ordered; to level with cannon, to mow down with the sword or with musketry, unarmed or armed men. The more wounds and blood, and mutilations and deaths, the more honors; the more shrieks and screams, and widows and orphans, and gore, the more laurels, medals, and rejoicings. The heart of the soldier is as cold as lead, as callous as flint; all the finer energies and soothing sympathies of the human soul are frozen up; an exsiccated feeling, a phlegmatic apathy, obscures and eclipses the dignified sensations of man.”

*Philanthopos* hesitates to style this mechanism of murder a “ferocious, carnivorous brute,” only because of the tiger’s protest :--

“Stop, not so long, sir,” the tiger would say, “I have credit of bloody ferocity, of carrying devastation through the woods, of spreading terror in my way, of desolating my course. I scorn, I despise, I disown the parallel, and loathe the sanguinary automaton soldier. I am driven by my form, by my wants, to feed upon flesh, *but not the flesh of my species*. I never destroy what I do not want to eat. I never shed oceans of blood I cannot suck. I never commence a wholesale carnage upon the whelps of my kind, as was done at Manchester. I never hire myself out to others who want to carry on public devastations.”

The tiger is then made to point out that he “knows no such climax of infamy, cruelty, and villainy as the manslayer glories in. Neither age, nor sex, nor hunger, nor disease, nor extremes of temperature impel the tiger to attack wound or mutilate his species.” Even the lamb is sacred during satiety. Consequently, the tiger asks not to be disgraced by so unnatural a comparison. “There is less difference between a lamb and a tiger than between a soldier and a tiger.” The comparison covers the tiger with ignominy and shame. His very nature requires that he should be rescued “from such infamous imputations.”

Our author goes on to desire an ingenuity that shall “make manifest the terrific, the murderous workings of the soldier’s heart” ; a transparency that shall reveal “his servility, his sneaking sycophancy, and his mutual tyranny; his daily hope of slaughter for the sake of promotion and of gathering crimson-blooded laurels.” If only the soldier changed his person on the day he entered the ranks; if “but as great a metamorphosis took place in body as in mind ... he would be one of the most hideous objects that could be conceived or pictured”; if only his “breast was diaphanous, his ebony heart would show all those horrible, those base, those degrading passions.”

“He prays to see fields deluged, the earth fertilized with blood; the birds, and grass, and herbs fat and luxuriant from feeding upon human flesh and fluids; ... to hear the

winds loaded with the sighs, the sobs, and groans of helpless wives and orphans; ... to see the pearly eye bedewed with tears, swollen, red, and wild, in its watching and distraction; ... the cold, haggard, motionless, oblivious hand of death ... fall upon his companion, his superior, his commander.”

*Philanthropos* concludes with advocating the boycott and manifestation of contempt for the soldier :—

“What child can respect such a father? What father can respect such a son? What wife, possessing all the generous sympathy of human kindness, can caress such a husband? ... If the soldier should be so misled, so ignorant, so barbarous, so bloody-minded as to hire himself out as a man-killer to some regal impostor; if he is so foolish as to sacrifice his life, his health, or his family, other men should not countenance him, should not associate with him, should not in any manner be connected with a monster that has turned their enemy, the common destroyer of human life. The soldier should be scouted by every citizen, whose common enemy he is. A standing army is a legalized banditti, inasmuch as it “robs and murders under the name of law, and so evades the gibbet; the last may be extirpated and the body politic may be relieved of the nuisance, but the former is a cancer corroding the vitals of the country... *Regimental: are the livery of the licensed murderer of mankind.*”

If Carlile had done nothing beyond publishing this pamphlet he would have deserved our regard as an anti-militarist pioneer.

## Chapter 12

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1828, the Rev. Robert Taylor, B.A., M.R.C.S., was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for blasphemy.<sup>1</sup> He was also ordered to find recognizances for his good behavior for five years in £1,000. Up to this time, Taylor and Carlile had been working apart. But Taylor was now left with nothing but general desertion. This caused Carlile to interest himself in the case. He toured the country, lecturing on Taylor's behalf, and founded *The Lion* in order to rally sympathy to the reverend orator's side. In its columns the editor's versatile pen treated of a variety of subjects, although with unequal distinction. "There cannot be a superstitious civilization," was one of the maxims with which he familiarized his readers. Protestantism came under his lash in the following paragraphs :—

"The Protestant faith includes all that faith which protests against the Roman Catholic faith ; but reasons for that protest, which would not apply as forcibly to the Protestant faith, I have never met."

"The last fires in Smithfield were Protestant fires; the last religious murders in England were Protestant murders. All the religious persecutions of the last two centuries in England and Scotland—and they form the blackest period of England's ecclesiastical history—have been Protestant persecutions; not the persecution of Protestants by Catholics, but the persecution of Catholics, Protestants, and Infidels, by Protestants."

Youthful readers of *The Lion* were counseled by its editor not to misemploy their hours, or waste away their lives in the wretched manner so many young people did, "only existing as useless drones 'who crawl upon the surface of the earth to consume its produce.'" He insisted on the honor and profit accruing from an early and persistent attention to mental development. Method was his antidote for longing and trifling. Carlile also regarded the face as a certain index of the health of the body, and, in a great measure of the sanity, experience, or extent of the mind. He thought this judging from the face physiognomically was an instinctive, natural and rational compulsion. There was a rule and reason, difficult to define in the judgment. "Moral character," he concluded, "must have some relation to the human organization, as sure as, if we describe the variety of animal passions, the whole of which may be found concentrated in the human race, we refer inoffensiveness to the sheep and sporting lamb, ferocity to the wolf, fierceness to the tiger, and dignified courage to the lion; and we find the variance to be in the organization, for the principles of the mere animalization, or animal life, are the same in all animals."

Carlile also denounced oath-making as a vice, on the ground "that the principle induced is that of fear, and whatever is done through fear, which would have been done in the absence of fear,

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<sup>1</sup> A full account of this trial appears in our *Life of Robert Taylor*, published in the 1905 *Agnostic Journal*.

is viciously done. Thus, upon the highest pretension that has yet been made for the practice of oath-making—that of its being a necessary binding to a purpose, which binding is to be produced through the operation of fear—vice is exhibited; and oath-making is, in its best sense, a vice. It supposes vice in its presumed necessity, and proves it in its practice. It engenders the vice against which it would be presumed to guard us.” Carlile points out that the New Testament is the only religious book in the world that positively forbids oath-making as a vice; yet its so-called defenders are the most prone to practice it. Apart from its vicious encouragement of fear, Carlile urged that “the practice of oath-making is imperative, and is no more a pledge of truth or good in the believer than in the unbeliever. The good man of either party will do as well without it; the bad man of either party will do as ill with it; and cash alike, in not respecting that which he professed to respect... An idle charm is uttered, and a dirty book is lipped, with as little failing as any other animal may be brought to the practice. A trial cannot be witnessed at the Old Bailey without the perception that the swearing is superfluous, and not useful to guide or correct the evidence to be given. If the oath were valued as giving weight to the evidence, cross-examination would be a very great presumption; for it presumes that the oath has not given weight.. to the evidence, and that it cannot give it weight.” Carlile then declares that the history of oath-making shows it to have “been established upon the idolatry of mankind,” and only available where idolatry continues to exist. Idolatry, superstition, and oath-making must fall in company.

Readers of *The Lion* were also presented with the appended editorial arguments against “belief” :-—

“Tell me that there is a peculiar kind of animal or vegetable in China, of which I have not seen the like in this country. and I can credit your tale; because I see a variety of animals and vegetables the products of this country. But tell me of heaven and hell, of gods, devils, and angels, of future states of existence to continued or reproduced identities, and I cannot credit your tale; because I have no analogy, in the literal sense, whereupon to proceed to conjecture; and because I do not see material identities, so composed and decomposed, as to leave me any idea of other existence for those identities. The earth is all sufficient to produce and sustain them as compositions, and to receive them as decompositions.

“All faith is in danger, because faith has no relation to the knowledge of mankind. All faith is in danger, because faith has no relation to the welfare of mankind. All faith is in danger, because it injures and disorders mankind. All faith is in danger, because it is a cheat upon mankind. All faith is in danger, because it is openly and ably assailed by infidelity. All faith is in danger, because truth exhibited must triumph over it.”

With these extracts, we all but bring our quotations from the columns of *The Lion* to a conclusion. Following the practice that he had pursued in the columns of *The Republican*, Carlile several times openly addressed himself to the King and the leading ministers of State through the medium of *The Lion*. The following pungent extract from his second letter to the King is typical of the fearlessness of expression that distinguished all Carlile’s writings :-

“Henry the VIII. found dissensions of 400 years standing on doctrinal points in the English part of the Church of Rome. He determined that those dissensions should

cease. He wrote; disputed; burnt opponents; obtained from the Pope—for his zeal—the title of defender of the (Popish) faith; immediately destroyed the faith and lessened the Pope's authority; and retained and has handed down to you most inviolately the contradictory title! He did everything religiously, *but that which he royally determined and pledged himself to do*. Whatever he determined to do in promise broke away under him, and his effected determination ended in doing something contrary to the promised determination. He promised to defend the uniformity of the faith of the Romish Church, which he irrevocably drove from the country. All his children were placed in similar dilemmas. The Stuarts, from the first to the last, played a similar game, with worse consequences to themselves. Your family of the Guelphs has been whirled about in a similar religious vortex, until you find all establishment, and even all sects, breaking away from your grasp; and the man would be rash that should attempt to predict what will be the last point of faith your majesty shall defend. Faith is not a thing or principle to be established or defended. I hold by far the better and more dignified title, as the assailant of all and every faith... Your priests cannot support you, nor you them. You are as chaff before free discussion. Enveloped in the mantle of free discussion, I feel and exhibit more moral power than the royally-robed defender of faith can exhibit. I am the greater man."



## Chapter 13

In 1829 Carlile celebrated Taylor's release from prison by establishing Sunday morning adult school Bible discussions, thus anticipating the modern Quaker adult school movement in much the same way as his colleague anticipated the orthodox Christian Evidence Society. Three months later Carlile and Taylor entered upon an infidel and republican mission through the north of England. On their return to London they opened-up, on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1830, the Rotunda—the one-time famous music-hall in Blackfriars Road, or Great Surrey Street as it was called—as a Freethought Coliseum. The Rotunda had been, in turn, a natural history museum, a literary "Surrey Institute," a music-hall, a circus, and a home of panorama. Coleridge had delivered his lectures on Shakespeare from its platform; and Hazlitt had delighted audiences therefrom with his lectures on *The Comic Writers of England*. It now became the home of Robert Taylor's interesting extravaganzas, more scholastically known as astronomico-theological orations. Taylor possessed an eloquence and wit, not uncoupled with a power of research, that made a little truth go a long way. His orations at the Rotunda were published weekly under the title of *The Devil's Pulpit*. Their author thought this pulpit "a bonny one," and thus styled his performances owing to Henry Hunt having bestowed on him the dignity of The Devil's Chaplain. Local circumstances led Taylor to make capital out of this fact. The Rotunda was less than 200 yards distant from the old Surrey Chapel, which the Rev. Rowland Hill—uncle of Postmaster-General Rowland Hill, of penny-postage fame—founded and opened in 1783. He had the chapel built circular in shape so that the devil should not find a corner in it! Taylor held it desirable that His Satanic Majesty's chaplain should found his pulpit in close approximation to the chapel. Hence the title of his orations.

The Rowland Hill family probably regarded the Rotunda platform as of the devil for quite other reasons than its religious teachings, for it rapidly became a capitol of public virtue and palladium of social liberty. From its pulpit the genius of contemporary revolt attacked the shams and shibboleths of a civilization diseased to putrefaction. The less virtuous talent of mere revisionism also sent its representatives to plead for the acceptance of their ameliorative measures. Defiance had nothing to fear from free discussion. The economic oppressions were freely canvassed; and their causes and cure vigorously considered. The proletarian audiences were invited to discuss the savage mummeries of monarchism as a mimicry of ancient folly, A self-seeking, self-state-subsidizing, religiously hypocritical family, such as that of the Rowland-Hill, could hardly view the principles publicly propagated at the Rotunda meetings with other than a disdain that only concealed its alarm. Truly, the devil had been reincarnated!

Seven months after he opened the Rotunda, Carlile established his Prompter, because he thought the nation needed a prompter! This was on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1830. Three days before, the Government attempted to raise a tumult at the Rotunda and surrounded it with military. Its plans miscarried, and Carlile's coolness reduced the whole affair to a farce. Military surrounded the place at 10 p.m., and Carlile was called on to lead a revolution by the officer commanding. Carlile refused to stir or to open the doors of the Rotunda to the military when ordered. The result

was that, after two hours' incitement to riot, the Government's conspiracy fizzled out without harming any of the Advanced Guard of Revolt!

Not so the Governmental vendetta! On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1831, Carlile was further incarcerated for a period of thirty-two months for sedition. This charge was based on the advice to agricultural laborers which we quoted in the eighth section of this biography. Six months later Robert Taylor was imprisoned a second time for blasphemy.

Taylor, during his incarceration, was treated very badly, with the result that, being of a highly nervous temperament, he indulged in several outbursts of passion and resorted to some very ill-conceived methods of protest, which greatly troubled his friends. Richard Carlile was strongly opposed to such exhibitions of weakness. He accordingly addressed a long letter of sympathy and protest to his reverend colleague, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1831, from his own place of incarceration, the Compter. This letter throws an interesting light upon the characters of the two men.

Reminding Taylor that assault was one thing but that insult was another, Carlile stated that if the jailer insulted him it was Taylor's own fault, since it was not in the power of man to insult except where there was a disposition to court it. Human nature was capable of a dignity that would not leave room for the word—insult. Unfortunately, Taylor had a temperament that encouraged villains to be insolent. To him, at the moment, this disorder was as bad and dangerous a plague as cholera morbus. It was no time for poetry, rhapsody, or jest. Taylor had a serious game to play. His was a glorious situation if he would but fight his battle well. He had in him the spirit of a divinity that was invincible, and of a humanity—that was weak and to be conquered. His jail enemies would beat him at any game that was wrong, whereas they would be powerless if he would but avail himself of his best and fairest means of warfare. Taylor had everything to conquer, and first of all, he had to conquer his self-command. He wanted coolness, composure, dignity, patience, fortitude, for his situation. He needed to reason with himself. Carlile wished he could pour an opiate over his colleague's irritability, and say, "be composed."

In the same determined spirit of dignified composure, Carlile wrote, about this time, a note to Julian Hibbert, counseling him not to pay any fine on behalf of any of the imprisoned shopmen, as it would do mischief to the struggles for the liberty of Press and Speech. He also assured Hibbert that he found in his retirement a joy and peace unknown to kings.

This was in November, 1831, some time after he had virtually separated from Jane Carlile, upon whom he settled in 1832 an annuity of £50 a year for life, and to whom he had previously given sufficient books to start in business for herself, and also the furniture belonging to them mutually, leaving himself "the debts and the business." She accordingly opened a publishing office opposite to that of Richard Carlile's, remaining at the same time on terms of absolute friendship with the latter. Friendliness was possible where constant amicable contact was not. For thus nobly and sensibly terminating a union for which neither were suited, the Carliles are entitled to great credit. Their indomitable courage, frankness, and force of character deserve this amount of tribute, at least. Of the three children which had resulted from this union, Richard, Alfred, and Thomas Paine were the names.

"Those," says the *Prayer Book*, "whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." So be it. But I would add and this is a no less important clause—let no law bind together those whom nature hath not joined together, for if ever there was an offense against the well-being of the community and the happiness of the individual it is the forcing to live together, *in a purely sensual union*, human beings not suited to each other by any mutual harmony of temperament and of being. Recognizing this, Jane and Richard Carlile had ceased to cohabit for some years previous

to their final separation. This mode of separation was no less to the honor of the greatness and invincible courage of Richard and Jane than what the later free-love union was to the purity and daring of Carlile and Eliza Sharples.

The latter was the daughter of Richard Sharples, a well-to-do Bolton manufacturer of quilts and counterpanes. She was kept at college until well over twenty years of age, and had three sisters and three brothers whose "education" was similarly cared for. She lost her father early in womanhood. During one of her vacations she visited a younger schoolmate at Liverpool, the daughter of a prominent banker. The schoolmates were hidden to dine alone that day, as the banker would be busily engaged with a friend, whose name, they learned, was "Richard Carlile." His name was anathema to them as the synonym of all that was satanic. Their curiosity was aroused, and the young ladies, accordingly, determined to play the spy. Carlile was received in a room next to their own. After dinner had been cleared away and the servants had withdrawn, they, consequently, found it comparatively easy to seek positions where they could see and hear everything without themselves being seen. By kneeling on a rug and placing, in turn, their ears and eyes to the keyhole, they were able to mark every word and note every action of this notorious individual, whose amiability of manner and refinement of bearing betrayed no suggestions of being hellishly inspired. A year later a cousin introduced some of Carlile's writings to her notice, with whose opinions she rapidly developed a sympathy.

Taking advantage of the joint visit of Carlile and Taylor to Bolton in 1829, she attended their meetings, and waxed more enthusiastic than ever in the cause. She now found it increasingly difficult to act the hypocrite as she was obliged to do "at home. After having once thrown off the fetters of current theological and political superstition, even the pretense of remaining in their chains became repulsive to her. It was impossible to continue a process of concealment and" disguising of her real sentiments. Regular weekly visits were paid to a local bookseller, A. Hardie, who dared to expose Carlile's works for sale. She confided in him, and he, more than once, wrote about her to Carlile. These letters found their climax in one which Hardie addressed to Carlile on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1831, requesting the latter to address a letter, to Miss Sharples, care of him, as she was expecting to visit London, and was anxious to organize meetings in Carlile's defense. At this time her age was upwards of twenty-five.

By Christmas of this year, she had finally decided that every exertion should be called forth, every effort, every attempt made to enlighten herself first, and then to diffuse that knowledge and instruction to mankind so universally wanted. She openly avowed herself an enemy to every kind of subordination and persecution. She was the foe of kings and priests and lords. She felt proud in being called an infidel, and wished that all mankind felt as she did. "What a reformation, what a glorious reform we should have." This decision was her response to Carlile's hearty welcoming of her to the public platform as an advocate of those philosophical truths which were the light needed to remove the Cimmerian darkness of his contemporary civilization.

## Chapter 14

Christmas, 1831, was the last Elizabeth Sharples ever spent with her mother, sisters, and brothers, who never forgave her for her theological unbelief and political Republicanism. Preparations were made for her journey to London; which she reached on

January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1832. She interviewed Carlile in the Compter, and re-opened the Rotunda for the purposes of delivering philosophic addresses and holding discussions. Seventeen days later she delivered her first lecture there, concealing her identity from the public, and speaking as “The Lady of the Rotunda.” Thus described, she lectured here and elsewhere in the Metropolis, on Sundays, and two or three times a week. Being one of the first women to mount the English platform as an independent thinker, she naturally attracted much attention, and the journal which she commenced in February, 1832, *Isis*, found a ready sale.

She now successfully busied herself in seeking to obtain a mitigation of the severities practiced on Robert Taylor during his incarceration.

These activities caused Elizabeth’s twenty-one-year-old sister, Maria, to write a letter to her, expostulating with her upon her ambition to continue as a public teacher of Infidelity, whilst confessing that that ambition was above all suspicion of being any ordinary pursuit of riches, or any particular regard to reputation.

By this time a strong reciprocal affection had grown up between Elizabeth Sharples and Richard Carlile. She was aware of all the circumstances of his union with, mutual separation from, and present simple friendship with Jane Carlile. Accordingly, she consented to their living together as man and wife on his release from prison. This union was defended by Elizabeth in the preface to the first volume of *Isis*. Nothing, she here states, could have been more pure, more free from venality, than this union. It was not only a marriage of two bodies, but of two congenial spirits, of two minds reasoned into the same knowledge of true principles, each seeking an object on which virtuous affections might rest, and grow, and strengthen. They who were married equally morally, would not find fault with her; but where marriage was merely of the law or for money, and not of a soul, there she looked for abuse. They had passed over a legal obstacle, and remembered that they were human. They had not fallen into the error of pledging love for life, hoping, in the absence of that pledge, to make it last the longer.

Carlile also replied to the attacks made on this free-love union of his with Eliza Sharples. Stating that on the subject of marriage he had ever been the advocate and consistent practitioner of monogamy, of the honorable and happy and mutual attachment of one man to one woman, he averred the basis of such an attachment was the divine law of love and affectionate chastity, and not the human law. He was now living up to this divine law in the highest sense in which it could be interpreted, openly, honorably, and with injury to no one. His union was pure in spirit *and was pure*. It concealed neither motive nor purpose. It did not intrude itself upon the world’s attention, but it did not shrink from the world’s scrutiny.

Such were the purity of the motives which inspired each of these devoted children of liberty and parents of freedom. When the world has learned to forget their slanderers, the freedom for which they fought will prove a legacy whereby posterity shall honor them.

## Chapter 15

Carlile was unexpectedly released from the Compter in -1833, after the Government of the day had sent three warrants to the governor of the jail ordering his release, the third of which removed the two sureties he had been ordered to find in £250 each, and a heavy personal fine that had been imposed, so that the Government had yielded on the two most important points of his indictment. The Sunday subsequent to his release, both Carlile and the Rev. Robert Taylor made their reappearance at the Rotunda, receiving an enthusiastic reception from an audience of over 2,000 people, this being their last appearance at this hall of free discussion, which was leased on the succeeding day to an actor named Davidge. This worthy, in an announcement to the public referring to the change of management, "hoped that they would congratulate themselves on the remarkable advantage a first-class theater would be to them over this sink of profligacy, etc., etc., which had been a focus for the concentration of the worst characters, from whence had emanated the most demoralizing and destructive doctrine both in religion and politics, etc., etc., operating at once as a shock to the good sense, good feelings, and as a serious detriment to the interests and comforts of the entire neighborhood, etc., etc." The public interest awakened, Mr. Davidge, with an eye to further business, wrote a private letter to Carlile, offering to sell him the lease of the City Theater, formerly a chapel, for £600, with immediate possession, the rent being £200 per annum, and the period of lease unexpired being about sixteen years. Carlile published both the public announcement and the private letter in *The Gantlet*.

The authorities now turned their attention to preventing him speaking in the open air, claiming that none but licensed clergymen were entitled to the then privilege which we claim to-day as a right. Accordingly he found that it was only necessary to profess a belief in God, and to pay 2s. 6d. to the authorities, in order to obtain this cheap honor of "reverend" prefix. The decision to act in this manner, and the consequent juggling with terms involved, marked a lamentable sacrifice of principle on the part of one from whom such a sacrifice was least expected. It is given to none, however, to always do the right thing; and what with Carlile was a lamentable exception, with many another reformer might have proved the rule. Thus let us think of his weaknesses, for his strength of character has earned of posterity the drawing of "the veil over his faults. Nor was his compromise on the present any reflection on his courage, since, in the year following his release, he was arrested for refusing to pay his church assessment rates, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, fined 40s., and ordered to find sureties for good behavior for three years in £200. This, however, Carlile refused to do, and, being once more sent to the Compter, was released four months later, having yet again defeated the intentions of his captors. This marked the end of his imprisonments, the total time that he had served being nine years seven months and one week.

With Isis (Eliza Sharples) he made a lecturing tour of the country, in the course of which their six-months-old baby-boy died from small-pox, after the death of whom the bereaved parents leased a pretty house at Enfield. "The place," wrote their daughter, Hypathia, many years ago, though not large, had a nice garden and many fruit trees, with a fine spreading yew on the front lawn, under which tea was often served in fine weather. Here they lived for seven years, and

here their two daughters (Hypathia and Theophila) were born, Julian having been born at 62, Fleet Street. The many years of imprisonment had seriously affected Carlile's lungs, and had developed a family tendency to asthma. This, with the fogs and dampness of the usual London winter, made it almost impossible for him to breathe in the city's atmosphere. He was almost well at Enfield, but whenever he was called to London to lecture, or on any other business, he would suffer agony until he got back to the country again. Unfortunately, these calls were frequent, and often required forty-eight hours in bed to overcome their effects, and Isis had frequently to take his place on the rostrum. But he was not idle by any means. In the summer months he made extended trips to the leading towns of the island, and in the winter he wrote much, always with a good grate-fire in his room, for he could not live without a good fire, being so very sensitive to changes of temperature."

## Chapter 16

A bitter struggle for existence was now waged, and the little family oftentimes starved for days at a stretch. Carlile was none the less enthusiastic and heroic about the cause, however. As George Jacob “Holyoake so well said, in candor, in independency of judgment, in perfect moral fearlessness of character, Carlile cannot be paralleled among the public men of his time... Carlile was no slave. He was able to stand in the right by himself against the world. One forgives his errors, his vanity, and his egotism, for the bravery of his bearing and his speech.” Nevertheless, there was a good deal of simplicity— an unostentatious simple greatness—in Carlile’s character. As to this, let the following words, quoted from the preface to Holyoake’s four-chaptered *Life and Character of Richard Carlile* (1849), speak: —

“When I first entered London, one Saturday evening in 1842, I was not known personally to half-a-dozen persons in it. On reaching the office of the Oracle of Reason, I found an invitation (it was the first I received in the Metropolis) from Richard Carlile to take tea with him on the next afternoon at the Hall of Science. There was no name known to me in London from whom an invitation could have come which I should have thought a greater honor. The conversation at table was directed to advising me as to my defense at my coming trial. He requested me to hear his evening lecture, which he devoted to the policy of skeptical defense which he thought most effectual. At the conclusion he called upon me for my coincidence or dissent. I stated some objections which I entertained to his scientifico-religious views with diffidence but distinctness. The compliments which he paid me were the first words of praise which I remembered to have trusted. Coming from a master in our Israel, they inspired me with a confidence new to me. I did not conceal my ambition to merit his approval. On my trial at Gloucester, he watched by my side for fourteen hours, and handed me notes for my guidance. After my conviction he brought me my first provision with his own hand. He honored me with a public letter during my imprisonment, and uttered generous words in my vindication, when those in whose ranks I had fought and fallen were silent. It was my destiny, on my liberation, to be able to pour my gratitude only over his grave. In his ‘Life and Character,’ here attempted, I am proud to confess that I have written with affection for his memory, but I have, also, written with impartiality—for he who encouraged me to maintain the Truth at my own expense, would be quite willing, if need be, that I maintain it at his.”

The same characteristic of simple greatness found external manifestation in Carlile’s Enfield home. To his present biographer that home life is sacred, and nothing shall induce him to paraphrase the description which his daughter, Hypathia—then but a child— published in her life of her father, in a chapter entitled “Memories.” From it we make the following extract :—



“With the writer, as far as life has yet lasted, have lingered some precious memories. The memories of her birthplace made sweet and hallowed by the remembrance of one who was all tenderness and gentleness, and who spent much time with her, working and walking in the pretty garden, and occasionally in the orchard beyond the garden. Sometimes as we walked by the house the old-fashioned latticed window would be thrown open, and a beautiful face, adorned with long ringlets, would smile down upon us ; and she remembers what a pretty frame for this beautiful picture the vines, the jasmine and honeysuckles made. There was, too, a pretty lawn, in the center of which grew a tree with wide-spreading branches, where seats and a table were always ready to receive gathered flowers and weary little girls, who here loved to climb upon father’s knee and fall happily asleep. But oh, the mystery of it How strange it was that whenever she might fall asleep she always awakened in the same place. This took her a long time to understand. She was quite a bit old before she understood how she always awoke in her own bed. But the garden, what a subject of wonder it was with its old-fashioned flowers, chief among which were its wonderful moss roses which grew to such perfection there, and the mignonette so fragrantly sweet ; nor can the writer see these roses or inhale the fragrance or mignonette to this day without being instantly transported back to dear Old Enfield Highway of half-a-century and more ago. This little girl was fortunate—or was it unfortunate ?—in having so much of the time of this tender and loving father. She learned long afterwards that it was because of his failing health he had to live in the garden in summer and his room in the winter, because he could breathe nothing else ; and thus the two least competent ones were relegated to the garden and inactivity, the last baby in the family and its failing head.”

With this quotation we are brought to the death scene. Carlile, who had returned to Fleet Street on the lease of the Enfield Cottages running out, had returned but to die—” to die,” as his daughter has it, “on the old ground where for twenty-seven years he had waged such a stern fight against tyranny and injustice. But where could a place be found that was more fitting than this, for the death of a hero of a hundred fights, the battlefield itself?” The London winter—always so dangerous to Carlile—he had hopes of surviving, since November and December, 1842, had been passed in safety, and January, 1843, also. February, however, proved fatal’ and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of that month, 1843, he who had done so much for the cause of freedom, and fought so tremendous a battle passed away, dying as he had lived, exclaiming with a great effort of will-power, and with his last breath, “I am the same man I have always been, I have gone neither to the right nor to the left. My aim has been to accomplish one great purpose.”

He bequeathed his body for scientific purposes to Dr. Laurance—a friend and servant of humanity—after consciousness had ceased to animate his frame. Isis, who experienced great privations, survived until 1861, during which period she devoted herself to the education of her children, established a literary and scientific institution at the back of Warner Street Temperance Hall, assisted in the conversion of Charles Bradlaugh, who became as a second son to her on his persecution by his relatives because he had too much moral principle to be insincere in his religious professions. Bradlaugh’s subsequent political charlatanism serves to prove that early idealism often fails to mature.

## Chapter 17

With the living, imitation is held to be the sincerest form of flattery; the dead we cannot flatter. But we can serve our fellows, and attain to the true heights of our own being by imitating the virtues of the dead warrior. The battle which his dead spirit bids us fight is a hard and unpopular one, but it is a battle which will result in victory for the free; a battle in which freedom's sons will endure privations, oft-times want the necessaries of life, and suffer the contempt, if not the actual persecution, of the world; a battle in which, however, the sense of helping that cause that lacks assistance, of righting the wrong that needs assistance, of raising the intellectual capacity of the human race, of showing the workers the path of direct economic emancipation, will fully recompense for the pleasures foregone and kind words which society never extended to us. We again prostrate our spirit across the gulf of time; we see again this lion-hearted Richard firmly standing to his colors; we note his detestation of hypocrisy, and the manner in which he fought the conventional morality and political corruption and despotism of his time. By defiance he defeated Governmental Terrorism; by revolt we shall accomplish the emancipation of society, and pay the tribute of *individual* and social emulation to his memory.

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