ALMOST alone among the English Romantics, Leigh Hunt enjoyed the affection and esteem of Thomas Carlyle. Even more remarkable is the fact that Hunt, who had been an intimate friend of Byron, Shelley, and Keats and who never once wavered in preaching his philosophy based on unrestrained optimism and love of beauty, found delight in the companionship of the Calvinistic Carlyle and his acid-tongued wife, in spite of their Scottish Presbyterian background and the deep shadows in which they often lived and thought. The friendship was a complex one which had to overcome great difficulties on both sides. It flourished upon a basis of clearly understood differences of opinion, character, and ways of life. It persisted despite each friend’s sharp awareness of the other’s faults. Lasting through many years and vicissitudes and tested in many various situations, it proved itself to be a friendship of a very rare and high quality which reflected great credit on the humanity of both men.

Carlyle did not meet Hunt before his visit to London of 1831–2. But he had read him much earlier and had been by no means always favourably impressed. “Is Happiness our being’s end and aim?” Carlyle wrote on 7 June 1820; “... L. Hunt I do not like.”¹ About two years later he wrote to Jane Welsh: “Hunt is the only serious man in it [The Liberal], since Shelley died: he has a wish to preach about politics and

¹ To Matthew Allen. From a MS. letter in the John Rylands Library. For help with the text and annotations of these letters I am indebted to my colleagues Arthur Tilo Alt and Thomas M. Simkins, Jr., to Miss Florence Blakely and Mary Canada of the Duke University Library, and to my secretary Mrs. Janet Ray Edwards.
bishops and pleasure and paintings and nature, honest man."  
And while in London in 1824 he wrote to her: "Leigh Hunt writes 'wishing caps' for the Examiner, and lives on the lightest of diets at Pisa."  
Up to this time Carlyle had discovered that Hunt was serious, honest, and critically disposed toward politics and bishops; but he had found little else congenial to his own way of life and philosophy.

The correspondence and friendship began through a gesture of Hunt's when the Carlyles were in London in early 1832. He sent a copy of his *Christianism*, just published, addressed to the author of the essay "Characteristics". Carlyle promptly wrote to thank him and to suggest a meeting.

*Letter 1.* Carlyle to Leigh Hunt.  
4 Ampton Street, Gray's Inn Road  
8 February 1832

The writer of the essay named "Characteristics" has just received, apparently from Mr. Leigh Hunt, a volume entitled "Christianism," for which he hereby begs to express his thanks. The volume shall be read: to meet the author of it personally would doubtless be a new gratification.

T. Carlyle

Hunt's reply, although delayed for almost two weeks, was written in the same spirit.

*Letter 2.* Hunt to Carlyle.  
18. Elm Tree Road—St. John's Wood  
Feb. 20 [1832].

Dear Sir,

(For so I hope the spirit of your writings, and the kindness of your note, will allow me to call you) it was not I that sent you the book, but it was sent *at my*  


2 20 December. MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 530.29.

The essays which Hunt was writing for the *Examiner* were called "The Wishing Cap".


Thornton
THOMAS CARLYLE AND LEIGH HUNT

request; & I notice this difference, merely to account in part for the delay in answering your communication, which did not come to me first. The rest has been occasioned by a conspiracy of petty obstacles which I sometimes curiously suffer to hinder me from doing what I wish, precisely because I wish it to be done in the best & most attractive manner,—and after all it shall have nothing to shew for itself!—Your note gratified me very much, especially as I had long been desirous of personally knowing you, and thanking you, among other things, for enabling me to become acquainted with Wilhelm Meister. I shall take my chance of finding you at home some day this week, about noon; and venture to hope, that I may by & by see you at a new abode into which I move tomorrow morning,—No. 5. York Buildings, New Road.

Your obliged servant,
Leigh Hunt

P.S. Be kind enough, among the causes that induce me to give way to the obstacles I speak of, to bear in mind a good deal of ill health, & much troubled business.—I do not allow the excuse myself; so I must get my friends to do it for me. Perhaps you will write me a line to say when it would be most convenient to yourself to be at home.

Carlyle was again prompt in reply.

Letter 3. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

4 Ampton Street, Gray’s Inn Road,
20th February, 1832.

Dear Sir—

I stay at home (daily scribbling) till after two o’clock, and shall be truly glad, any morning, to meet in person a man whom I have long, in spirit, seen and esteemed.

Both my Wife and I, however, would reckon it a still greater favor, could you come at once in the evening, and take tea with us, that our interview might be the longer and freer. Might we expect you, for instance, on Wednesday night? Our hour is six o’clock; but we will alter it in any way to suit you.

We venture to make this proposal, because our stay in Town is now likely to be short, and we should be sorry to miss having free speech with you.

Believe me, dear sir, very sincerely yours,

Thomas Carlyle

Hunt could not find his father’s letters to Carlyle when he was editing the correspondence soon after his father’s death in 1859. See The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt, ed. by his eldest son (London: Smith, Elder, 1862), i. 321. Alexander Ireland made copies of many of Hunt’s letters to Carlyle. The copies have been preserved in the Ireland Collection of the Manchester Public Library. I am indebted to Miss Glenis A. Matheson, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, for examining passages in these in order to answer textual questions. They were studied by Professor George D. Stout of Washington University in his Harvard dissertation for the Ph.D., “Studies toward a Biography of Leigh Hunt”, 1928.

¹ Published by Garnett in “Eight Unpublished Letters”, pp. 327-8, and by Conway in Carlyle, p. 66.
This time Hunt, too, replied promptly.

*Letter 4. Hunt to Carlyle.¹*

Elm Tree Road—Feb. 21 [1, 1832]. Tuesday.

My dear Sir,

The invitation which Mrs. Carlyle and yourself have been good enough to send me, is just the one that suits & pleases me best, and I shall be with you, at the hour you mention, tomorrow evening. In fact, you cannot conceive how much it has gratified me; for since the death of some dear friends, I have lived almost entirely out of the pale of intellectual acquaintance,—a toiling solitary; and with the spring, many unlooked-for comforts seem to await me, of which this is one.

Very truly yours,

Leigh Hunt.

Since there is no evidence to the contrary, then, we may assume that the first meeting of Hunt with the Carlyles took place at 4 Ampton Street on the evening of Wednesday, 22 February, just a few weeks before the Carlyles returned to Craigenputtoch. The meeting seems to have pleased everyone who was there, and soon the Carlyles met Marianne, Mrs. Hunt, and there was visiting back and forth. Mrs. Hunt was much older than Jane Carlyle, and there was very little else to make the two congenial; but in this early period they at least made an effort to become good friends.

*Letter 5. Hunt to Carlyle.²*

Dear Sir,

Will Mrs. Carlyle & yourself favour us with your company to tea at six, either tomorrow or Saturday evening, whichever suits you best,—supposing one of them to be not inconvenient?—The servant, who saw you at the gate yesterday, is new to us, otherwise she would not have talked of my going to dinner.—I have had a great blow since I saw you, which knocks up my prospect of half-week leisures; & the worst of it was, that it was knocked up in the most childish manner, the Proprietors of a new paper, which they had got me to conduct, putting a stop to it at the end of three weeks, because it did not flourish in that time! I never had so tremendous a compliment paid me before, or one that

¹ MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 665.35. Among Hunt's "dear friends" who had died were Keats, Byron, and Shelley. Shelley he seemed to miss particularly; and the radiant optimism of "Prometheus Unbound" seems to have lighted his way for the rest of his life.

² MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 665.68. The "new paper" which had to stop at the end of three weeks was the *Plain Dealer*, also called the *Critical Plain Dealer*, in which Hunt briefly had a hand. See Louis Landré, *Leigh Hunt* (Paris, 1935-6), ii. 495-6; George D. Stout, "Leigh Hunt and the Plain Dealer", *Modern Language Notes*, xvii (June 1927), 383-5.
ended in so frightful a rebuke.—But the prospect, like the extemporaneous
orchard they looked for, was too romantic to last. I am therefore setting about
new tasks, as "lovingly & cheerfully," as a man all over fatigue & jaundice well
can; & as a help to them, hope my friends will come & see me.

Very truly yours,
Leigh Hunt.

March 1 [1832]

Letter 6. Hunt to Carlyle.¹

Dear Sir,

Mrs. Hunt hopes that Mrs. Carlyle will be well enough, with the help of an
omnibus, to favor her with her company this evening; though she begs it to be
understood, that she by no means takes any such thing for granted, being a
terrible stayer at home herself, & knowing enough of illness to be aware that
night-airs & visits are not always to be trusted, even at a short distance. For
the rest, I can only say that my wife is a proper housewifely woman, very matern­
ally given, who will take as much care of yours as if she were her eldest daughter.

Very truly yours,
Leigh Hunt.

March 3 [1832].—York Buildings.

An entry in Carlyle’s notebook for this month sums up the
beginning of the friendship and provides the first of several
inimitable pen portraits of Hunt which he drew:

Leigh Hunt and I have come into contact by occasion of the Characteristics :
he sought me out, and has been twice here; I once with him. A pleasant,
innocent, ingenious man; filled with Epicurean Philosophy, and steeped in it to
the very heart. He has suffered more than most men; is even now bankrupt
(in purse and repute), sick, and enslaved to daily toil: yet will nothing persuade
him that man is born for another object here than to be happy. Honor to tenacity
of conviction! Credo quia impossible.—A man copious and cheerfully sparkling
in conversation; of grave aspect, never laughs, hardly smiles; black hair shaded
to each side; hazel eyes, with a certain lifting up of the eyebrows that has no
archness in it, rather sentient, well-satisfied self-consciousness. He is a real
lover of Nature, and even singer thereof; and, for the rest, belongs to London in
the opening of the 19th century.²

After Mrs. Carlyle’s death in 1866 Carlyle spoke again of
this early period in their friendship with Hunt in a note to one of her letters: “Among the scrambling miscellany of notables
and quasi-notables that hovered about us, Leigh Hunt (volunteer,
and towards the end) was probably the best; poor Charles

¹ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.
² Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle, ed. C. E. Norton (New York: Grolier
Lamb (more than once, at Enfield, towards the middle of our stay) the worst. . . . Leigh Hunt came in sequel (prettily courteous on his part) to the Article Characteristics; his serious, dignified and even noble physiognomy and bearing took us with surprise, and much pleased us. Poor Hunt! Nowhere or never an ignoble man!"  

After the Carlyles' return to Craigenputtoch in late March 1832, there seems to have been a temporary lull in the correspondence with Hunt. But there was no chance that Carlyle would forget or lose interest in him. About August Carlyle sent Hunt a short letter which seems to have been lost. In the autumn he sent John Stuart Mill a note of introduction to him accompanied by some sentences giving a balanced appraisal of Hunt:

I enclose you here a small Note for Leigh Hunt. If you like to make use of it as a Note of introduction, send your card up with it. . . . Hunt, worthy man, is of those unfortunate people whose address is often changing. . . . You will find Hunt a most kindly, lively, clear-hearted creature, greatly to be sympathized with, to be honored in many things and loved; with whom you will find no difficulty to get on the right footing, and act as the case will direct. Hunt is a special kind of man; a representative of London Art, and what it can do and bring forth at this Epoch; what was too contemptuously called the "Cockney School," for it is a sort of half-way-house to something better; and will one day be worth noting in British Literary History.

The following letter to Hunt was enclosed in Mill's letter.

Craigenputtoch, Dumfries  
20th Nov 1832—

My Dear Sir,

I sent you a little Note, by some conveyance I had, several months ago; whether it ever came to hand is unknown here. We learned soon afterwards,

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1 New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. Alexander Carlyle (London and New York: John Lane, 1903), i. 34-35. The original note and most of Carlyle's notes on his wife's letters are in the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.


from a notice in the New Monthly Magazine, that you were again suffering in health.

If that Note reached you, let this be the second, if it did not then let this be the first little Messenger arriving from the Mountains to inquire for you, to bring assurance that you are lovingly remembered here, that nothing befalling you can be indifferent to us.

Being somewhat uncertain about the Number of your House, I send this under cover to a Friend who will punctually see that it reaches its address. If he deliver it in person, as is not impossible, you will find him worth welcoming: he is John Mill, eldest son of India Mill; and, I may say, one of the best, clearest-headed and clearest-hearted young men now living in London.

We sometimes fancy we observe you in Tait’s and other Periodicals. Have the charity some time soon to send us a token of your being and well-being. We often speak of you here, and are very obstinate in remembering.

I still wish much that you would write Hazlitt’s Life. Somewhat of History lay in that too luckless man; and you, of all I can think of, have the organ for discerning it and delineating it.

As for myself I am doing little. The Literary element is one of the most confused to live in, at all times; the Bibliopolic condition of this time renders it a perfect chaos. One must write “Articles”; write and curse (as Ancient Pistol ate his leek); what can one do?

My Wife is not with me today; otherwise she would surely beg to be remembered. You will offer my best wishes to Mrs. Hunt, to Miss, and the little grey-eyed Philosopher who listened to us.

I asked you to come hither and see us, when you wanted to rusticate a month. Is that forever impossible?

I remain always,

My Dear Sir,

Yours truly & kindly

T. Carlyle.

Letter 8. Hunt to Carlyle.¹

December 1st 1832.

My dear Sir,

I know not what you and Mrs. Carlyle will think of me, when I tell you that I received your first letter; but I trust that your knowledge & your kindness will induce you to think me not unpardonable, when you know all. Twice, nay thrice, I encountered the most singular & painful obstacles, when about to send off a packet; till at last, because I had delayed so much, & must have seemed in spirit to have delayed so much more, shame conspired with accident to make me still more dilatory. There is a story of an old gentleman, who being about to get on horseback before some ladies, begged them to count “eighty”. I would

¹ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. “My book was out yesterday”—probably Sir Ralph Esher, or, Adventures of a Gentleman of the Court of Charles II, published by Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley this year; but possibly The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt, also published this year by Edward Moxon.
beg you & Mrs. Carlyle on this occasion to count great illness, great trouble of all sorts, and in the first instance a singular conspiracy of obstacles. I have now this minute, while writing to you, a great weight in my head, another in my side (from an attack of liver) and the doctor is coming to me, and I have domestic anxieties beside, of various & extreme kinds, with which I will not shadow too much the face of your forgiveness. Suffice to whisper into ears that will husband the secret for me from vulgar ones, and as a specimen of what I have been accustomed to go through for the last year, that not long after you wrote to me, I had an execution on my house for six weeks. It was owing to my not receiving my payments from the True Sun, the difficulties of which paper have distressed me exceedingly, & forced me, much against my will, to suspend my contributions to it.—I have let out more than I meant to tell; but my heart flows towards you for the kind things you say to me, & you must be content to take some of the bitter water with the sweeter. These have been by no means the worst of my troubles; but I support myself by an indestructible love of my calm, same-faced old friends, Nature & books; and by such kind words as other friends give me. Pray do not think me ungrateful, & above all, write me as speedily as possible another letter, that I may be sure you have got this. My book was out yesterday to subscribers, and I expect in the course of a week to be taken out of the worst possible situation in certain matters, & put in such a one as I have not known—God knows for how long. You will therefore understand me when I say, that I shall take it as a very kind & delicate thing of you, if you will not wait for conveniences of conveyance, but send me a letter by the general post at once, both to ease my mind & flatter my new riches. I want to know particularly how large a packet I may venture to send you, because I have some enormous books in which I flatter myself you will both find occasional entertainment on a rainy day,—at all events such as I can send with less immodesty to a solitary place afar off (expense apart) than I could to one where reading is more immediately to be had. Colburn is re-printing the Indicator; which I shall send you also. Meanwhile here is Mr. Shelley's Masque of Anarchy,—& another book which I have persuaded myself you will accept as some proof of the atonement I wish to make for my delay. I am aware that a certain name is in my subscribers' list, & I am proud of my patron; but this copy comes to my friend.

And now—at this point of my letter—not before—I have taken courage to open your second—Not that I thought it would be unkind—My self-love was even greater than that—but because I could not read it, till I had discharged some of my duty. Mrs. Hunt, who is very much yours, read it for me to herself & said it was "all nice."

Alas! I wish so very much that I could come & see you, that I will try to hope I may do so in the spring; but cares like mine, & a family of eight children all at home, & half of them are so large they ought to be away, are terrible obstacles. Tell me again about it however, that I may indulge my fancy, & strive.—I wrote one article in Tait (as you guessed)—The World of Books, & one in the New Monthly, or Indicator; both of which articles, at least the latter, I will send you with divers others of older or coming date in my huge & proper parcel,—for the present (with the exception of my friend's] great heart in it) you are to take only in earnest. Upon your writing I pounce whenever I meet with it, in pieces or magazine, & recognize the head & heart flowing together with a depth & copious-
ness beyond any other living writer I know. "Miss" returns her best compliments, & the "little grey-eyed philosopher" is delighted. He hugs [begs?] his "Flora"[?]. Dear Sir, & dear Mrs. Carlyle, I am truly & thankfully yours, Leigh Hunt.

P.S. Mr. Mill did not bring his letter himself. I wish you would rebuke him for it, for I should like to know him much.

P.P.S. Mind—my verses claim praise only for animal spirits, & for truth & consistency of some kind, though far from what I could wish it: so I do not expect my friends to put their consciences to any trouble for me. My greatest praise has been, that kind eyes have shed tears over some of them. This I know, & therefore cannot give up the "glory" of it, as the French say.

Letter 9. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

18. Carlton Street, Stockbridge, Edinburgh, 28th Feb', 1833—

My Dear Sir,

Last night, after tea, a Bookseller's Porter came in, with two Parcels; in one of which we found your two Books and your Letter; both of which kind presents awakened the gratefullest feelings here. As for your Letter, written with such trustfulness, such patient, affectionate Hope, Faith and Charity, I must report truly that it filled the heart,—in one of our cases, even to overflowingly the eyes. We will not dwell on this side of it. Let me rejoice rather that I do see, on such terms, such a Volume as yours. The free outpouring of one of the most purely musical natures now extant in our Earth; that can still be musical, melodious even in these harsh-jawing days; and out of all Discords and Distresses, extract Harmony and a mild Hope and Joy: this is what I call Poetical, if the word have any meaning. Most of these Pieces are known to me of old; you may be sure, in their collected shape, I shall carefully prize them, and reperuse them, for their own sake and yours.

It was not till I had read your Letter a second or even third time, that I found the date of it to be the 2nd of December! Where, whether at Moxon's, or at Longman's the Parcel may have lain hid these three months can only be conjectured: I had determined in any case to write by return of Post; and now, on that vexatious discovery, had almost snatched my pen, to write before I went to sleep; as if that could have got you word a little sooner. It is very provoking and to me at the moment doubly so, for a cheerful illusion was dispelled by it.

Alas, then, it is too likely that sorrowful Paragraph we read in the Newspapers was true; and the modest hopes your Letter was to import to me were all misgone before its arrival! Would I could help you. Tell me at least without delay, how it stands; that we may know if not what to do, at least what to wish. Meanwhile I again preach to you: Hope! "Man," says a German Friend of mine whom I often quote, "is properly speaking founded upon Hope;

¹ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. Published in "Concerning Leigh Hunt", Cornhill Magazine, Ixv (May 1892), 488–90. The "German Friend" quoted in paragraph three is Goethe. The "Lord Advocate" is Francis Jeffrey. The Carlyles left Craigenputtoch for Edinburgh in early January and remained there through April.
this world where he lives is called the *Place of Hope*.” Time and Chance, it is written, happen unto all men. Your good children, now like frail young plants, your chief care and difficulty, will one day stand a strong hedge around you, when the Father’s hand is grown weary, and can no longer toil. Neither will the sympathy of kind hearts, so far as that can profit, ever fail you. Esperance!

I too am poor, am sick; and, in these wondrous chaotic times, dispirited, for moments, nigh bewildered. Let us study to hold fast and true even unto the death; and ever among the Sahara sands of this “wilderness journey,” to look up towards load-stars in the blue still Heavens! We were not made to be the sport of a Devil of Devils’ servants: my Belief is that a *God* [underscored twice] made us, and mysteriously dwells in us.

However, let us now turn over to a more terrestrial leaf, and talk of this journey to Craigenputtoch, which we here cannot consent to abandon. It is not a piece of empty civility, it is a firm scientific conviction on my Wife’s part and mine that you would both get and give true pleasure in our Nithsdale Hermitage. She says emphatically, I must press you to come. You shall have her Pony to ride; she will nourish you with milk new from the Galloway Cow; will etc. etc. In sober prose, I am persuaded it would do us all good. You shall have the quietest of rooms, the *firmest* of writing-desks: no soul looks near us more than if we were in Patmos: our day’s work done, you and I will climb hills together, or saunter on everlasting moors, now cheerful with speech; at night the Dame will give us music; one day will be as peaceable and diligent as another. Why cannot you come? The way thither, and back again, is the simplest. You embark at your Tower Wharf in a Leith Ship (Smack it is called); where under really handsome naval accommodation, sailing along shores which grow ever the finer, and from Flamborough Head onwards can be called beautiful, you land at Leith; say, after a voyage of four days, the whole charge Two pounds Sterling. An omnibus takes you to the inn door: whence that very night, if you like, a Coach starts for Dumfries; and seventy miles of quick driving bring you safe into my old Gig, which in two hours more lands you at Craigenputtoch house-door; and you enter safe and *toto divisus orbe* into the oasis of the whinstone wilderness. Or there is another shorter daylight way of getting at us from Edinburgh; which a Letter of mine could be lying here to describe and appoint for you. Will nothing be temptation enough! Nay, we are still to be here till the first week of April; could lodge you in this hired Floor of ours, show you Edin*, and take you home with us ourselves. You must really think of this; Mrs Hunt, for your sake, will consent to make no objection; your writing work, one might hope, would proceed not the slower but the faster. You see two Friends; innumerable stranger Fellow-men; and lay in a large stock of impressions that will be new, whatever else they be.

As for the projected Book-parcel, fear not to overburthen me with Books: at home, I am quite ravenous for these. Fraser (Magazine Fraser) the Bookseller of Regent Street will take charge of anything for me, and have it forwarded; at the utmost, for five-pence per pound. Or perhaps your better way (if the Colburns are punctual people) were to direct any Parcel simply “to the care of Messrs Bell & Bradfute, Edinburgh” (with whom they *infallibly* communicate every Magazine-day), by whom, also at the lowest rate, such as themselves pay, it will be carefully forwarded.
My Paper is nigh done; yet I have told you little or nothing of our news. The truth is happily there is almost none to tell. Mrs Carlyle is still sickly, yet better than when you saw her; and rather seems to enjoy herself here,—almost within sight of her birthplace. For me I read Books, and scribble for better for worse. We left home some two months ago, once more to look at men a little. The style of thought and practice here yields me but little edification; as indeed any extant style thereof does not yield one much. I too have some of your "old same-faced Friends"; and rummage much in the Libraries here, searching after more. A thing on Diderot of my writing will be out by and by in the F.Q. Review.

This sheet comes to you under cover to the Lord Advocate. If he call on you some day with a card of mine, you will give him welcome. He is a most kindly sparkling, even poetic man; with a natural drawing towards all that is good and generous. Fortune has made strange work with him; "not a Scottish Goldoni, but a Whig Politician, Edinr Reviewer and Lord Advocate"; the change, I doubt has not been a happy one. And now my dear Sir, good night from both of us, and peace and patient endeavour be with you and yours! We shall often think of you. Write soon, as I have charged you.

Ever faithfully,

T. Carlyle

Carlyle was no more an unmitigated pessimist than Hunt was an unadulterated optimist. In this letter, as we have seen, he preached hope and courage to Hunt, just as he was to do a little later to another even more robust optimist, Robert Browning.¹ Hunt's optimism was fine-woven in its texture and of great radiance and beauty; Carlyle's was thrown in bold relief by massive shadow and given strength by a quality of granite-like intellectualism; Browning's was militant, aggressive, and irresistible.

Letter 10. Hunt to Carlyle.²

My dear Sir,

Great was the comfort your letter gave me yesterday; especially as I had begun to think—not that you were offended with me (for I knew you were too wise & kind for that)—but that out of some subtle intention or other of doing me good, you had resolved not to write to me except at long intervals. I had endeavoured to persuade myself that my packet might have been delayed, but I had no notion of its being delayed so long. I saw Mr. Moxon in the afternoon, & he explained it by a mistake he had made relative to the road it was necessary for it to take: —at least so I understood him during a brief & interrupted interview; but he said he was going to write to you on the subject. Luckily I shall

¹ See my "Carlyle, Browning, and the Nature of a Poet", Emory University Quarterly, xvi (winter, 1960), 197-209.
² MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.
now know what to do in future, & your books shall come accordingly at the beginning of the month. Would to heaven that I could come myself! You have no conception how much I desire it, for you do not know from under what a daily & deadly load of cares I should slip away for the time, freshening my wings in your pure northern air, amidst the breath of wild-flowers, & the converse of the wise-hearted. Your walks, & your talks, and your music would all be most delightful to me; & the very offer & notion of it is so:—nay, if I can at all manage to be master of my time & movement any time within these two years, most certainly will I come to you, and meanwhile I shall look upon it as a good thing which I have in a sort of posse,—as a pleasure which I can fly to, if I can fly anywhere,—a friend's locale at my service,—an own other-man's possession & country-house, which is mine when I can go to it. This is much, believe me; & reminds me of one of the greatest pleasures I had in the world, which was, that wherever Shelley had a roof over his head, there I had a bit of it to put over mine, in case I chose to seek it,—whether he was abroad or at home, in England or Italy, or had gone to China. He once thought of taking a voyage to India; & I immediately felt as if I had a house in Calicut, or the Himalaya mountains.

Saturday March 9.

I was obliged to leave off here in order to go to Town upon business; & during my absence Jeffrey called. Imagine my disappointment. I called upon him however myself yesterday, & found him at home, & most pleasant. He is full of life & evident good heartedness, & is a boy still, in spite of the bar, & his wig, & the Whig (with the aspirate in it) and criticism, & Lord Advocacy. He finds it hard to Germanize; but loves those that can, & is full of respect for you & yours. I am to see him again, & speedily; so I shall write you further about him, for now that we have a Parliament again, there are members in town, & I can get franks. I will make him give me some. He shall be, in all senses of the word, Frank Jeffrey with me. (I hope, in your universalities, you do not exclude the humanity of a pun. I want you to see that I have some animal spirits left,—especially for my friends when they write me such kind & consolatory letters.)

And now, by way of shewing you the excess to which they will carry me, I have a very impudent thing to say. Yet impudence is not at the heart of it, or I could not propose it. You are kind enough to ask me to come & see you: I cannot do so at present: there are a hundred reasons, connected with a family of eight children, great & small, & all at home, which prevent me; besides matters of business which I must attend to on the spot, on pain of losing both money & good name. I shall hope to come, & shall keep the visit in prospect; & with that I must content myself. But my eldest boy (man rather, for he is past twenty-one) has lately made us anxious about the state of his health: the doctor recommends that he should go from home a little, into fresh air; & I am unable to send him; & this gives me remorse, & makes me think it criminal in me to be no richer. Will you allow me, dear Sir, to send him to you for a week or two, as my substitute? I will make no apology for the proposal, because you will understand my feelings as much as I do myself, & I cannot pretend & suppose that you will think ill of them. All I request is, that if you are going from home anywhere, by any new chance of necessity in the interval since you wrote, you will be ingenuous with me,—or on any other score of hindrance, if such there be.
Au reste, I shall take it for granted that you will not be sorry to see him. He is an intelligent youth, indeed of no common order of intelligence (as Lamb prophesied for him when a child, & Hazlitt could have borne witness to you in his riper years); & he is capable of deriving knowledge from you, & I think, of contributing his share of reasonable entertainment as a guest. In the course of a few months, he begins his career as an artist, having had a regular education for it these three years, & the greatest encouragement from the critics; and should it not be inconvenient to you to receive him, I have another favour to beg; which is, that you will let him make an essay at taking a portrait of you for his father. He would bring canvas & all appurtenances with him, for that purpose. Of music he is passionately fond; so that he would be enabled to enter into all your pastimes. Finally, he is a good fellow;—and has ever treated his father's scantiness of means with a considerate & unaffected delicacy, and a cheerfulness of self-denial, which sometimes brings a bitter tear out of my very delight. But I hope all will turn to good account with him in the end. Better have his difficulties first, & his pleasures afterward, than the reverse. I endeavour to console myself with thoughts like these; but it is sometimes hard. Heaven send I may live to see him healthy & strong, & in the dawn of worldly prosperity.

And now, my dear Sir, never say a word to me again in kind allusion to your own scantiness of means, with reference to myself. I think, & indeed know, I made some good guesses about you, as soon as I had the pleasure of your acquaintance; for Jeffrey did not enlighten me as to the spirit, though he did as to the letter of your position; and I venture to tell you (without grudging what generosity you might have shewn me had you been as rich in pocket as in nature) that, as far as myself am concerned, I feel an especial delight in a certain moneyless & scholarly sympathy from a man like yourself, & in the refuge I can take in the thought of you from all thoughts of money & whatsoever belongs to it. I only regret that the want of it will not enable us to do just what we please, to go anywhere & have what books we like, & shew what an indifference we have for it. Has not your own good faith given me a corner in your heart for belief in mine; and do you not tell me of tears of sympathy that have come into womanly eyes? I am rich enough, believe me, Scotland-wards.

Tuesday March 12.

I have been again hindered from closing my letter & fear I shall not be able to get it franked till tomorrow. The Lord Advocate has not been here again; but I expect him. I forgot to say, that in the midst of his praises of you, your benevolence included, he said you were "austere." "Austere!" cried I. "Oh, yes," cried he: "he is indeed: he is quite austere." I said it was one of the last epithets I should have given you, & that if you were austere, it was like the austere rind of a fruit round a heart of sweetness. So you see, though not a Lord Advocate, I am an advocate fit to talk of you among lords. I suppose he fancied you not dulcet enough towards those men of the world, with whom he pretends to identify himself.

Do you see a newspaper? Would you like to see an evening one, the True Sun, the most radical of radicals? I have long ceased to write in it, not having been able to go on struggling with it, in addition to my own struggles; but it is making its way; it is still sent us; & I could frequently transmit it to Craigenputtoch. Cobbett's speeches in Parliament make the debate quite a new thing.
He talks Registers; & keeps up a note, very provoking, about "rich & poor," in which, for my part, I cannot help rejoicing. I like to see people going to the elements of things, & telling the whole truth, instead of agreeing to keep the worse part of it a convenient secret. But then how much of the passions & will there is in the thing, & how little philosophy! for the same man talks against the "blasphemous Jews!" and asks what is to become of Christianity if we treat them well. "However, a sledge-hammer is not a sun-beam." I must not omit to tell you that I am better than when I saw you last. The subscription has not been what it was hoped it would; but it has still served me much, & saved me from some more distressing things which I fear could have gone nigh to bear me down. About six weeks ago I had some new & alarming pains in the fore part & side of my head, accompanied with a terrible cloudiness of feeling; but they suddenly disappeared, & instead of being worse, I have ever since been better.

Dear Sir, I am

Most sincerely yours,

Leigh Hunt

This letter reflects two qualities of mind which he shared with Carlyle: a genuine radicalism which cut through the conventions of thought and insisted on "going to the elements of things, and telling the whole truth" and a sharp awareness of the formidable obstacles which poverty could place before literary men.

On 16 March Carlyle wrote to his mother that Hunt was proposing to send his oldest son to Craigenputtoch and added, "We shall see what will come of it". Generously, even magnanimously, they invited Hunt's son Thornton to spend some time at their home on the Scottish moors.

Meanwhile, Carlyle gave Mill a not uncritical appraisal of Hunt in a letter dated 21 March. "Leigh Hunt says, I must 'rebuke you' for not bringing that Note yourself: he has long had a desire to know you. So whenever you feel called that way, the road is open. The return also will be open; that is to say, Hunt is a most harmless man. I call him one of the ancient Mendicant Minstrels strangely washed ashore into a century he should not have belonged to. For the rest, unless you feel called, it is not worth while to go: he has nothing to teach you, nothing to show you—except himself, should you think that worthy."  

1 MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 520.16.

5. York Buildings—New Road
May 28, 1833.

My dear Sir,

I snatch a hurried moment to write to you, because it is the first in which I am able to break my silence, Thornton not having had it in his power to state confidently at what time he could be prepared to set off, though expecting to have been enabled to do so every day. He now begs me to give his best respects & kind wishes, & say that he can set off whenever you give him signal. He comes by sea, because he thinks it will do good to his health, which has been very poor, especially of late; & I must add here, while I think of it, that his diet is of the most moderate description, & that we have no wine at our table. He is very glad, nay very anxious to come, & is making himself as much acquainted with you as possible by reading all such of your writings as he can get at. He has been long acquainted with Wilhelm Meister, has just read the article on Diderot, and is now in the midst of the Life of Schiller. That is an admirable article on Diderot, full of niceties & depths of all sorts, the extremes of refinement, & of knowledge. I read you always, every bit, with an earnestness not to let slip any thought or implication, & I master you thoroughly, & love & admire you as I go. But why do you put Hazlitt with such names as Derrick & Dermody etc., men from whom he was surely as different as great from small, or a brain from an old hat—? And do you not beg the question (very subtilly as well as with dignity, I allow, and with just rebuke to some of the vagaries of “Denis”) in favour of that very odd & most on-all-hands-proposed “sacrament” of marriage? an experiment which I should hardly think can be said to have succeeded in the world, even in this chaste & hypocritical & Mamma-sacrificing country of England, where, if I like, as I do everywhere, the fine capable human being, I hate as hard as I can the nation boutiquiere [nation of shopkeepers], with their love of pence & lords, & their sacrifice, in the metropolis, of a sixth part of the poor female sex for the convenience of prudential young gentlemen & the preservation of chastity in the five remaining classes of shrews & scolds, & women good & bad, & wives happy, unhappy, & crim-con-ical [?]. The love of two loving people I love & revere, & wish and believe they remain together to all eternity, whether they think as I do on the subject of marriage or not; but my notions, I own, are more Golden-Aged on this point than those of the Kirk & the cutty-stool,—the bishops & Miss Hannah Moore, whom I am Christian enough to wish had not been an old maid, for then she would have been more virtuous & tolerant. Truth is my point of honour,—truth, fair dealing & no deception, grave or gay, with

1 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. Carlyle’s essay on Diderot appeared in the Foreign Quarterly Review, xvi (April 1833), 261–315. Diderot’s given name was Denis. Carlyle clearly sympathized with Diderot’s wife Sophie when he betook himself to mistresses; she was, he said, “too good a wife for such a husband”. Carlyle’s reference to Hazlitt which Hunt objects to reads: “Nay, could many a poor Dermody, Hazlitt, Heron, Derrick and suchlike, have been trained to be a good Jesuit, were it greatly worse than to have lived painfully as a bad Nothing-at-all?”
man, woman, or child,—& this I would have to be the point of honour with all the world,—& let every thing else take its chance. [I] do not trust much harm could come of it, if there were no secrets, & no [belief] that we had a right to sacrifice any body’s happiness to our own, whether belonging to us or not, which is assuredly the case, in a thousand shapes, with our present legitimatized institutions. In short I would have as many kindly feelings left open, & as many hard & selfish ones discountenanced as possible, & make virtue beloved upon Plato’s principle, because she was seen as she really is. Concealment is a great ingredient, I grant, in the present composition & apparent providence of the world, & so is lying & tyranny & monopoly & a hundred miseries which providence provides that we shall fight against. If this mixture is the right thing, & must continue, it will do so; but I hope not, & that the fight will be victorious. As to "Dennis[sic]," I hate his treatment of his wife, if she was the woman she appears to have been, & I cannot comprehend how he could write about his bodily ailments in that manner to his "Veneres Cupidinesque"; except that the French have an art of neutralizing the grossest things by putting on a face of impudent innocence about them. But I delight in your quarrelling with him as you do, & then finding out something good to make you charitable. I have been afraid, since I wrote to you about Jeffrey, that I have been in need of your charitable constructions myself, after seeing me button up my patriotic & fatherly sides in that manner; & trying to behave like a man of this world; but you will smile when you see an article I was writing at the time for Tait, & which would damn me with any prudential Whig, however goodnatured. Jeffrey, I must tell you, has been very kind & got me upwards of 20 subscribers, but he says I have been "indiscreet." I have indeed: the pioneers & preservers of the sacred fire of liberty, when others give it up, are apt to be so, & so I shall continue, whatever fancy I may have got into my head that there was some obscure corner of preferment, Scotch or English, in which they might have thrust an old soldier of Reform, who has done his part in its cause, & who has the comfort of knowing he must go on, whether he fight any better or not.

You must have been surprised at not receiving any more True Suns. I am very sorry, as you say they amused you; but the dictatorship of the paper has fallen into new hands,—trustees I believe, & they have cut off my privileges in common with others. It was not very handsome, because the paper was indebted to me; but trustees are not bashful & it is a great thing to be a creditor. So I am dignified & forgiving.

Best compliments on all hands to Mrs. Carlyle,

Ever truly yours,

Leigh Hunt

P.S. I have at length discovered, to my irrepresible & daily delight, in spite of innumerable cares & the other tasks that took me away from it, a subject that suits all the poetical feelings that I ever had in me, & which, I feel certain will put them in the best & most refined [?] light they ever appeared in, or are capable of manifesting. It is the first time I ever felt my nature versified,—without some confusion of art & misgiving; & the poem will either be fifty-fold the best thing I ever did, or a huge mistake. For my part, I am impudent enough to be full of confidence.
I forgot to notice something you said in a letter or two back. Pray do not say that some day or other you shall succeed in " tempting " me to come to Scotland. It looks as if I did not wish it: which is very provoking, if you knew all. Thornton will tell you how delighted I should be to get a holiday with a friend,—an expectation[?] absolutely unknown to me; & he will explain to you how impossible it is for me to do it.

Letter 12. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

My Dear Sir,

Will you read this to your young Artist; and let him consider it as addressed equally to himself. The unfortunate Frank is bursting, or I should give you both better measure.

Your Letter, tho' dated 28th May, was only franked for the 4th of June, and only arrived here yesternight. It has taken the longest possible time; so I lose none in saying that my Friend Thornton will be welcome whenever he can set out. The following is for his carte de route.

The cheapest sea-passage, and perhaps in good weather the pleasantest, is by a Leith Smack: these vessels lie about the Tower Wharf; ask for the London & Leith Shipping Company, in case there be any counterfeits. The voyager receives his berth beforehand; it is not likely to be crowded. Say four days brings him to Leith. If it is night, or towards night, he can stay on board till morning, and then equip himself there at leisure. If it is day, let him step ashore (trunk and all), and get into one of the Edinburgh " Stages "; or failing that give some idle youth his luggage, and walk; it is only a mile.

Henry Inglis (pronounced Ingles and the " W.S." means Writer to the Signet), to whom I have already spoken, and will in the interim write, is a young friend of mine with a fair young wife and household; a most pleasant, gifted, good-hearted fellow; in whom Thornton will see a Scotch Galantuomo, and friendly Host, whose house is to be his lodging and resting place while he pleases so to honour it. This was Henry's own proposal, and I think ought to be accepted.—Suppose now Edinburgh seen, the Traveler finds a Coach every alternate day (Tuesday is one) starting (from 2. Princess Street) for Dumfries and Thornhill: he takes out his place for Thornhill, is landed there about 3 in the afternoon; sees me (if I be duly warned); or in the other case, asks for Templand (a little furlong off), finds my Mother-in-law there apprised of his coming; and has landed at home. Remark that our only post-day is Wednesday, the Monday night of London, the Tuesday night of Edinburgh. But Templand always stands in the place.—This as the Quakers say, seems " the needful "; and surely nothing more. I am in boundless haste. And so Good Night to all!

Ever faithfully your's,

T. Carlyle.

P.S. A still more brief independent and direct method, whereby Edinburgh is omitted altogether (and can be seen in returning) is this: A Dumfries Mail Coach leaves Edin' every night at half past nine (the starting-place, quite in the road from Leith, and known to all); take a place in this forthwith; you are in Dumfries next morning; write there to me, which a Boy will carry for a shilling;

¹ MS. letter at the Carlyle House, Chelsea.
then go to bed (if you have not slept in the leathern convenience, or go and see Burns's Mausoleum etc. if you have); before you are well awake I am there with a gig.—In any case "do the impossible" to give us warning of the day you are to arrive on; that will make it all smoother.—

But Thornton Hunt did not get to Craigenputtoch. In late June he did arrive in Edinburgh, where he stayed with Henry Inglis, as Carlyle had suggested. After just two nights there, however, he was overwhelmed and his illness greatly intensified by home-sickness and on 1 July wrote Carlyle to say that he was returning to London as soon as possible and to attempt such explanations as he could make.¹ The Carlyles seem to have been disappointed but accepted Thornton's letter in a kindly spirit.

Letter 13. Carlyle to Hunt.²

My Dear Sir,

There seems no hope now of our good Thornton; so these two Letters, memorials of what might have been and was so near being, must now go the road they came. We had still an expectation; for I wrote off, to the care of Inglis, the instant I had Thornton's Letter, who however I conclude was already gone. We are really vexed all of us; we think how happy your son could have been and we with him in these fine July days; my Brother here too to have doctored him, and nothing but the shine of wholesome skies, and the sound of green woods all round us. Thornton's Letter, so ingenuous so true and gentle looking, had not a little increased our interest. But what can we do? Pray only that the good youth may have got home to his own again, and feel his great misery (to me well known) assuaged a little. After such a misadventure it looks foolish to say more about visits: I will only repeat however that I took you at your word in that kind imagination of your also having a house in Nithsdale; be it well understood then that so stands it. For the rest give our love and sympathy to Thornton, our prophecy that he will rise to be a Man and Painter, in spite of all hindrances; there looks thro' him that fair openness of soul which,

¹ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.
² MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. "Craig-crook" is Jeffrey's home in Edinburgh. It was later the home of Carlyles' friend John Hunter, mentioned below as an admirer of Leigh Hunt. On 28 July Jane Carlyle wrote to her friend Eliza Stodart: "Young Hunt is not come nor coming. He got the length of Edinburgh, where he was kindly entertained by Henry Inglis, as we had arranged for him. But the fatigue of the journey and the separation—his first separation—from his own people increased his nervous ailments to such a degree, that he could resolve on nothing but to go back with all despatch the way he came." Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. David G. Ritchie (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1889), pp. 243-4.
besides its intrinsic price and pricelessness, I have ever found the surest presage of all other gifts.

And now, my dear Sir, let us beg a Letter from you, to knit up these ravelments; so much lies uncertain to us. That you labour, and continue thro' all weather to labour, with such undying cheerfulness and hope, we rejoice to believe: but pray give assurance of it; let us sympathize with you if it is not so. I say we and us in all this matter; for my Wife and I are at one in it.

What you mention about the new Poetical subject might awaken one's curiosity; but perhaps you are of Goethe's mind (which I think a very good one) that if you blab in seeking hidden treasure, the spirits will rise, and whisk it (and oneself too) to the Devil. I can heartily give you joy of the mood you hint at; it is one I have fancied often enough, but never was at any time near to. Go on and prosper, were the times never so prosaic! There is an ear and a heart in man; if not in this man or in that man, yet in some man: let us forever have faith in man. We are this morning reading your Rimini; with praise enough on all hands; with a clear feeling on my part if not of the Art yet of the Artist: sunny Italy with her children of the Sun, all is so freely mirrored there.

As for myself I am idle, all but a little reading; chiefly of French Revolution Mémoires, and such other Realities as I can come at. My Brother has all manner of things to say about Rome and Naples, even the poor old purple or rather scarlet old woman of a Holy Father is worth looking at. To me Italy face to face were perhaps almost wearisome at present. Spiritually I feel myself in a kind of crisis; the best I can do is to stand still a little; my road will disclose itself again (let me hope, to still higher countries, pleasanter or not) by and by. I have found it generally so with me; from time to time I have a kind of sick moulting-season; but after that, new feathers; without great previous pain I never made any advancement.

Many thanks for your attentive perusal of my poor Diderot. A few such readers, and careful writing were worth while; that one such thinks me worth reading is encouragement. Pity that I were not with you to hear your whole Miserere over the Marriage-state; which I wholly agree with you is at present miserable enough. Nevertheless I would stand by my argument that the Covenant of Marriage may be perennial; nay that in a better state of society there will be other perennial Covenants between man and man, and the home-feeling of man in this world of his be all the kindlier for it. For instance, could two Friends, good men both, declare themselves Brothers, and by Law make themselves so! Alas, Friendship were again possible in this Earth; and not as at present only Dining-together. But as for the unfortunate-females and so forth, I declare I can see no remedy except in improvement of the individual: till people learn again what godlike meaning is in Duty and practice self-denial which is the beginning of all, what can you do for them by Laws? All machinery of Laws will entangle itself in new confusion before it is well set up; because the hinges are naught; I mean the four Cardinal virtues are not there. Finally I will most heartily agree with you, nay I often vehemently assert the same myself that at whatever rate we value chastity, it is brutish and delirious to punish only the weaker for want of it. The fault I continue to declare is (in spite of all genealogy barbarisms) alike for both: and so indeed our worthy old Cutty Stool (which I reverence much even in its worm-eaten state) has always most honestly
regarded it. Praise to the Cutty Stool, for its day, then! I pray only to Heaven
that we had a new one—of better structure if you will;—but a new one, the
principle that made the old one, this is to me the grand want of wants. Thus you
see we could discourse most eloquent musical discords for a week, or year.

What of the Advocate now? It is months since we heard a syllable of him,
except by the Newspapers. I fear he is vexed and worried; the people and their
Editors are grunting at him not a little here and there: I wish he were well out
of that scandalous Cockpit, and back again to Craigcrook.—Do not wait for
Franks when none are convenient. Nothing is better worth its price (even taxed
price) than a Letter of yours. And so all Good with you and yours! My Wife
joins with me in that prayer.—

Ever affectionately
T. Carlyle

I expect some Tait’s Magazines soon, and will ferret you out.

Hunt to Carlyle is written across a page and a half of this letter. 1

4. Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea, near London.
Monday—July 29 [, 1833].

My dear Sir,

I should have written to you before, but I have been more than usually
unwell, with a great pain in my right side, & another, not so physical, in my left;
but I have resorted to my good angel, Patience; & have been helped by him[?] as
well; & which I have not seldom found after more than ordinary trouble, I
have the pleasure of telling you, that I have just experienced a more than ordinary
improvement in my position, having, as you will see by my new address, got at
last into another far cheaper yet better house,—at least to my taste; for it is of the
good old solid wainscotted fashion, such as reminds me of the times of my father
& mother; & instead of paying a hundred & sixty guineas a year for paltry heavy
furniture of the people, it costs me thirty guineas with honest furniture of my
own; & instead of being swept all day by a tempest of carts and omnibuses, [it]
is as quiet as if it were a hundred miles from town,—a remnant of the rustic part
of the old village, up in a corner where there is no thorough-fare, no houses to
overlook us, with gardens & trees back & front, & I have got a tree to look at as I
write, with a cottage window peeping under it, amid a nest of green & you have
no conception,—as the phrase is (for you have) of the comfort this is to me, &
how my head seems to bathe itself in the quiet. We are all of us the better for
it, Thornton included.

But to speak more of him, I was astonished one day, on returning home, to
find him sitting, not at Craigentutoch, but in one of the drawing-room chairs,
impudently smiling in my face, as if nothing had happened. I was alarmed at
first, but not long; & though he has been very ill since, he has not been as ill
as at Edinburgh, & upon the whole is better than when he left us. We all regret,
& he not the least of us, that his journey was unfinished; especially as in you he

1 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. “A Day
with the Reader”, intended to be a very long, comprehensive poem, was never
finished, and only fragments of it were published.
had found another friend who could have understood him in his strength as well as weakness, & encourage & sustain him, & do all, & perhaps more, than any other friend. Yet I must tell you, that these trials are not unknown to his father; sometimes I fear to inherit a tendency to them from me, as I did from one of my own parents—another of whom gave me perhaps more animal spirits to vary them than belong to him. Yes, my experiences have been very bitter, & at any rate have the benefit of what I can tell him to comfort him & how to manage himself; & he sees me come home, in spite of all my troubles, able to "take the good the gods provide me," & realizing consolations & an amount of years, which I never expected to see. At the same age with himself, I fell into a hypochondriacal illness, which stirred up sources of thought in me frightful as if I had seen the gulfs of time & place opened. I had another, sometime after, which lasted me four years & a half, in midst of which I had to go into prison; and I had a third but shorter, more severe, about three years ago, since which I feel as I should have been better in my general health than before, if I had not had so many other anxieties. In the intervals of all these attacks, I have enjoyed a natural tendency to a flow of spirits singular for one who has suffered so much; and I have never ceased to extract a certain delight from Nature (so called), even when she pressed too strongly upon my consciousness, & seemed to cut me with too much distinctness, except upon one point which also turns to a great pleasure when I can entertain the thought of it. But enough of myself. Thornton writes to you across this letter, & both of us are thankful for what you say about franks, which in truth have at times nearly driven me out of my wits, as the saying is,—owing to the cross-purposes they have occasioned & the uncertain movements of the bestowers of them. I did not like to write without them, because being the man you are, I felt as if I could not be certain that it might not inconvenience you at the moment, well off or not as you might be in general; or if this is too moneyless a fancy, I must own that it may have originated in circumstances experienced [by] myself;—not now experienced however; & it will be a grace in you if you will take me at my word in this as in the other instance, & act as if you did; for I assure you, my letters must be welcome to you indeed if they are half as much so as yours to me. I was going to say as much instead of half; but my animal spirits, in my time, have got me into such bad reputation with some people for vanity—I mean the critics—that they have made me jealous sometimes of their getting me into a scrape with my best friends; & I feel that the perplexity somewhat sophisticates me. I now believe I ought to have lived in the south, or in my father's West Indian island, that allowance be made for extra-vivacity, and that way so called mental as well as personal gesticulation, or (to lump metaphors together accordingly) for that foliage of manners, which however relevant and superfluous, may yet contain some fruit with a sound core to it underneath. Scotchmen, I think, have understood me worse than any other people; but I have at length met with one, who is inclined to construe me so handsomely [that] I am anxious to obtain that revenge over his countrymen, even at the hazard of being thought a little too well of. I endeavour to persuade myself, that if he thinks too well of me in some things, I could almost piece out his good opinion in some other points,—if he knew all. But here is more of myself, & yet I must needs give you more still, to answer what you say about my verses. Next time, I will talk to you of marriage, & all sorts of other matters, abstract & concrete,
& endeavour to interchange minds & fancies with you. I can see what you very
goodnaturedly find to like in the Story of Rimini; and that you cannot help
finding deficiencies in it; and I am equally sure, that I agree with you in your
objections. There is at once too much art in it, & too little: too much in the
conventional sense, & too little in the high, artistic. Neither, in spite of this
better knowledge, do I believe that I shall ever be where I could wish to be in
poetry, but I do certainly believe that I can get a footing in the enchanted ground
beyond what I have yet shewn any abundant marks of; & I have got a strong
persuasion upon me, that I am now getting it. My subject, at all events (which
I will disclose to you, & of course to your other you, in spite of what Goethe says
& says truly) is one, for the first time, that suits my whole nature, its gravity, &
its levity; its experiences, & its wishes; & if I have any poetry in me at all, there
it will be found. The poem is entitled A Day with the Reader, & its object is to
shew how the common-places of life may be enriched by feeling & fancy, not omit­
ting his breakfast, with his China teacups, his dinner, his bed, his room with the
most trivial things around him, his walks on the streets, & his restings in the
country. It is too long, & I think of publishing a portion at a time, beginning
with morning, for I propose to enrich his eyesight[?] the moment he wakes, let
the day be never so rainy & so to accompany him around through the four &
twenty hours till he wakes again. I do not know whether you ever saw a little
periodical publication of mine called the Indicator, which is thought by my
friends the best thing I ever did. I shall send you a copy of it shortly, for
Colburne is re-publishing it. Well, the papers in that collection have a similar
object to the poem; I used often to feel, while writing it, a propensity to put
my thoughts in verse, which with great impatience I was forced not to do, because
I wrote for the day that [?] went over my head. The poem will be a sort of
"Indicator" in verse, but more connected; & I am so full of it, that I shall let
my pen run as it pleases, thinking no more of what the Edinburgh critics will
say, than a bee. It is in blank verse, in order that I may be as headlong or other­
wise as I please.

I have got much to say to you about "marriage," — which I love, be it known, in
the particular, but think naught & horrible in the general. So my kindest
regards to the "gode wife," & to her "guide, philosopher, & friend," & may all
blessings be with the good hearts of Craigenputtoch, quoth their obliged &
affectionate friend,

Leigh Hunt

Since "The World of Books," I have written nothing in Tait but
"Wishing-Caps." I have seen nothing more of Jeffrey, but mean shortly to
call upon him. I shall get franks again, & be able, I trust, to do all things with
proper planetary order & swiftness, once I have got out of a chaos indescribable.

Letter 15. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

¹Published in "Concerning Leigh Hunt", pp. 491-5. The "cynical
Extravaganza of mine" is Sartor Resartus, which appeared in Fraser's Magazine
for November and December 1833, and for February, March, April, June, July,
and August 1834. "Amid the Cannon vollies, shrieks and legislative debates,
the laughter and tears": Carlyle had already begun the reading which prepared
him to write The French Revolution. Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges (1762–1837)
My Dear Sir,—

It is above two long months since the sight of your hand-writing last gratified me at Dumfries. I was there in person, I remember; and read the kind lively sheet, with a pipe and tumbler (of water), taking with double relish "mine ease at my inn." Why I have not answered sooner, looks foolish to tell. I waited for "opportunities"; had but one and missed it by pressure of haste. A Reformed Parliament having now, by Heaven's grace, taken itself into retirement, there are henceforth no "opportunities" possible. What can I do but what I should have done six weeks ago—make an opportunity? You shall pay thirteen pence and odds into His Majesty's impoverished Exchequer; and on this long sheet get talk from me enough:—soon, I hope, through the same channel, repaying with interest, to the Patriot King's benefit and mine.

Your new situation looked so cheerful and peaceful, I almost fear to inquire what it has become. Chances and changes hardly leave us a week at rest in this fearful Treadmill of a World. The prophet said "Make it like unto a wheel": that is the kind of wheel I think we are made like unto. Meanwhile, ever as I figure you, that cheerful Tree, seen from your window, rises leafy and kind on me; I can hardly yet consent to have it leafless, and its kind whisper changed into a loud October howl. Be patient, and nestle near the chimney corner: there is a Spring coming. Nay, as I hope, one day, an Eternal Spring, when all that is dead and deserved not to die, shall bloom forth again, and live for ever!

You must tell me more specially what you are doing. How prospers your Poem? Has the winter checked it; or is it already branching out to defy all storms both of outward and of inward weather?

I see nothing here; scarcely more of you than a small "wishing-cap" incidentally in Tait, and even that not lately. The Newspapers told us you had been engaged for the Theatrical department of some new Weekly True Sun: I can hardly imagine it, or you would have sent us an old paper, some day, by way of sign. The whole Literary world seems to me at this time to be little other than Chaos come again; how should I see your course in it, when I cannot see my own? This only is clear for both of us, and for all true men: mix not, meddle not with the accursed thing there; swim stoutly, unweariedly, "if not towards landmarks on the Earth, then towards loadstars in the Heaven!" For the rest, as our good Scotch adage has it: Fear nothing earthly; there is ever Life for the Living.

Since I wrote last, I have read all your Poems; the whole volume, I believe, wrote bibliographical and genealogical works. His Censura Literaria, in ten volumes, was published at London by Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme from 1805 to 1809. He is said to have written 2,000 sonnets in one year. Richard Porson (1759-1808), English classical scholar, edited Aeschylus and made important contributions to knowledge of iambic and trochaic verse. "Peter Pindar" was the pseudonym of John Wolcot (1738-1819), a physician who wrote witty but coarse satires. Carlyle was greatly influenced by Dr. Johnson's biography of the comparatively obscure Richard Savage, which he certainly had in mind when he wrote his Life of John Sterling, a much better biography than either his Cromwell or his Frederick the Great.
without missing a line. If you knew with what heart-sickness I in general take up a volume of modern rhymes, and again with a silent curse of Ernulphus, (for where were the good of making a spoken one?) lay it down, this fact would have more meaning for you. I find a genuine tone of music pervade all your way of thought: and utter itself, often in the gracefulllest way, through your images and words: this is what I call your vocation to Poetry: so long as this solicits you, let it in all forms have free course. Well for him that hath music in his soul! Indeed, when I try defining (which grows less and less my habit), there is nothing comes nearer my meaning as to poetry in general than this of musical thought: the unpardonable poetry is that where the word only has rhythm, and the Thought staggers along dislocated, hamstrung, or too probably rushes down altogether in shameful inanition. One asks, why did the unhappy mortal write in rhyme? That miserablest decrepit Thought of his cannot even walk (with crutches); how in the name of wonder shall it dance? But so wags, or has wagged the world literary: till now, as I said, the very sight of dancing, drives an old stager like me quick into another street. More tolerable were the Belfast Town and Country Almanack, more tolerable is the London Directory, or McCulloch's Political Economy itself in the Day of Judgment than these! To come a little to particulars: we all thought your Rimini very beautiful; sunny brilliancy and fateful gloom most softly blended, under an atmosphere of tenderness, clear and bright like that of Italian Pictures. Beautifully painted; what it wanted to be a whole (and a picture) I believe you know better than I. Leander also dwells with me; I think, that of his "bursting into tears," when he feels the waves about to beat him, is eminently natural. Thank you also for the two children's pieces: I remember, some seventeen years ago, seeing Dick's one quoted by a Quarterly Reviewer, as an instance of "bad taste" (may the Devil, in his own good time, take "taste," and make much of it!): but the effect on me quite baulked the Reviewer. In the same Article, I first saw that picture of the mother ("a poor, a pensive, but a happy one"), singing as she mended her children's clothes, when they were all asleep; and never lost it, or am like to lose it.

You shall now get quit of criticism; and hear a little about Craigenputtoch. For a long while, for eight or nine months almost, I have been not idle, yet fallow; writing not a word. A cynical Extravaganza of mine is indeed beginning to appear in Fraser's Magazine, and will continue there till you are all tired of it but it was written wholly three years and a half ago: it was some purpose of publishing it as a Book that brought me up to London. The last thing I wrote was a Count Cagliostro in that extraordinary Periodical. When I shall put pen to paper next is quite a problem. It ought to be when I have mended my ways; for nothing is so clear to me at present as that, outwardly and inwardly, I am all in the wrong. I believe, one is hardly ever all in the right. Let us not mourn over that. But the strange thing at present with me is the outward economic state of Literature. Bookselling I apprehend to be as good as dead; without hope of revival, other than perhaps some galvanic one: the question therefore arises, what next is to be done? A monstrous question, which I think it may take two centuries to answer well. We, in the mean time, must do—the best we can. I have various projects, some of which may become purposes; I reckon, I may see you again in London by and by, for one thing.

This winter, at all events, and who knows how much more, we mean to spend
here in the depths of the wilderness; divided from all men. Probably it may be a healthier winter; probably a happier and usefuller one. London I liked much, but the fogs and smoke were pestiferous; Edinburgh I find has left but a sad impression of hollowness and dullness on me: however, both might yield profit; and now a solitary winter, filled to overflowing with Books (for I have discovered a Library here), may be the profitablest of all. You, as a determined Book-moth, will appreciate my felicity, when you hear that I read some ten hours often at a sitting, divided by one, for a walk, which I take like physic. My head grows a perfect Revolt of Paris; nothing occurring to divert me; only the little Table-clock (poor little fellow) suggesting now and then that I am still in the world of time. I fall asleep at last towards midnight, amid the Cannon vollies, shrieks and legislative debates, the laughter and tears, of whole generations;—for it is mainly History and Memoirs that I am reading. Now and then I shall perhaps write something, were it only for Prince Posterity. Thus you see us with winter at our door; but with huge stacks of fuel for the body's warmth, and for the mind's.

A benevolent artist arrived lately, moreover, and rehabilitated the Piano: a little music is invaluable to me; better than sermons; winnows all the bitter dust out of me, and for moments makes me a good man.

Pray think of us often; send now and then a Paper Messenger through the snow to us; to which I will not fail to reply.

I had innumerable questions to ask you about matters literary in London. Who manages the New Monthly Magazine now? For I see Bulwer has given it up long ago. What else is stirring? Pray tell me all you can think of, about such things: remember that here simply nothing reaches me of its own accord. Do you know an English Book, of date 1709, reprinted some twenty years ago, named Apuleius' Golden Ass? I fancied it a translation of the old story; found it only an Imitation; full of questionable and of unquestionable matter. It surprised me a little; especially as a Queen Anne performance. Farther, can you in a few words inform me who or what Sir Egerton Brydges is? Was his Censure published in London? Much of it is perfectly useless for me; but the man has a small vein of real worth in him, and knows several things: the whining in his Prefaces struck me as the strangest. I still continue to wish much you would undertake the Life of Hazlitt; though in my ignorance of the position matters stand in, to advise it were beyond my commission. Of all imaginable Books True Biographies are the best, the most essential. Hazlitt should not be forgotten. How I have lamented too that Porson studied, and drank, and rhymed, and went to the Devil, in vain! Peter Pindar too! We should have Lives of all such men: not of the "respectable" sort (far from it!); but of the true sort; painted to the life, as the men actually looked and were. There are hardly any readable Lives in our language except those of Players. One may see the reason too.

But now, alas, has my time come. Accept in good part this flowing gossip. If I had you here, you should have ten times as much. Answer me soon, though I have no right to ask it. Our kindest regards to Mrs. Hunt to Thornton and all the rest; not forgetting that smallest listening Philosopher, who has forgot me though I have not him. Adieu!

Ever faithfully,
T. Carlyle.
There was another lull in the correspondence after Carlyle sent this letter. On 30 January 1834 he wrote to Henry Inglis:

"We have heard no whisper of Hunt these many months. Your notice of Hunt junior was news; for it seemed too possible something had got wrong. Poor Leigh has the toughest battle to fight; it is never up till he is down again. The Battle must last too till—Night! God help him; and us."


My dear Sir,

I write to you in pure despair of being able to write as I could wish. I am always hoping to send you long letters, with full, true, & particular accounts of all that I am doing, thinking, writing suffering, & enjoying; & the consequence, it seems, is, that I write none at all; which is a meeting of extremes that must not be. But I get so knocked up with writing every day, that I literally dread to put pen to paper again for the remainder of it. I forget that I might write something less for my task, & devote the time I save from it to my friends; or rather, I get so bitter with my task while about it, & think it necessary to say such heaps of all sorts of superfluous things, that my time is swallowed up before I am aware of it, & my cheek & head begin to burn before I have done what I undertake. No more of this. I will be wiser.—I beg your acceptance of the two vols. of Essays herewith sent you, which were first published sometime back (the Indicator & Companion), and also of the numbers that have hitherto appeared of a new three-halfpenny periodical, which is to be an English Chalmers and much honester than its richer brethren, ergo, more effective in what it has of good in it. You will like the good-will in it at all events.—You must know I was mystified enough when your Sartor Resartus first appeared, to take it for a satire on "Germanick Pism" itself from the pen of the editor of the magazine, also nevertheless appeared to me to intimate a number of serious & deep things in it, for which I gave him a great lift in my imagination. I soon found out my mistake; but by some unaccountable chance I had overlooked—forgotten rather, that part of your letter in which you had advised me of it. I shall send you, when I think this letter has arrived (otherwise I will not mystify you by the abrupt entrance of an old newspaper or two) the number of the True Sun, in which I spoke of it; & they shall be followed by a few essays in the Weekly True Sun, which may amuse you for want of something better. I have had a flitting engagement in both the papers, but have ceased with the one, & am about to do so with the other.

But they tell me you are coming to live in London, & that you wish to live in a house like mine? Is it true? & may I look out for such a house? & shall it, or can it be, any where in this neighborhood? Tell me so, & it will be the best

1 MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 1796.35. Published in the Glasgow Herald, 16 February 1882.
2 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.
news I have heard from you, since the day on which a gentleman came to us & said he had a proposal to make to assure competence to my family (this new project, to wit): for my first want is to see my labours turn to some lasting account for the little people about me; & my need is the want of a companion. If you lived here, I should have somebody to walk with & talk with, and you should be some gainer too, as you are of the sociable order of philosophers, especially as huge literary London could be close to you, & companions endless; for though you have Mrs. Carlyle with you, & music, etc. yet the best & most loving human beings cannot live wholly upon spices—at least, so they say—without some ordinary food for the staple commodity of their dish; & so I hope you will come & make your dumpling out of us, & be still happier than before with the plums with which God has blessed you.

Ever indeed yours,
Leigh Hunt.

P.S. Thornton has been uneasy at never hearing from Mr. Inglis. He was constrained on his abrupt departure from Scotland to borrow five pounds of him, which he returned after the lapse of a good many weeks; and he sometimes fears he may have most involuntarily given offence; sometimes hopes that Mr. I. thought it unnecessary to write.

Letter 17. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

My Dear Sir,

Your Letters are rare, too rare, in their outward quality of sequence thro' the Post; but happily still rarer in their inward quality: the hope and kind trustful sympathy of new Eighteen dwelling unworn under hair, which you tell me is getting tinged with grey! It is actually true that we are coming to London; so far have Destiny and a little Resolution brought it. The kind Mrs Austin, after search enough, has now (we imagine) found us a House; which I hope and believe is not very far from yours: it shall be farther than my widest calculation, if I fail to meet your challenge, and walk and talk with you to all lengths. I know not well how Chelsea lies from the Parish Church of Kensington; but it is within sight of the latter that we are to be; and some "trysting-tree" (do you know so much Scotch?) is already getting into leaf, as yet unconscious of its future honour, between these two suburbs of Babylon. Some days too we will walk the whole day long, in wide excursion; you lecturing me on the phenomena

¹ MS. letter in the British Museum, 33,515, fol. 39. Published in Conway's Carlyle, pp. 204–7. The Carlyles' friend Mrs. John Austin (Sarah Austin) (1793-1867) translated and edited German and French historical works. Like Carlyle, Shakespeare, Bacon, and Coleridge have an exalted conception of "discourse of reason" and distinguish between it and such communication as the lower animals may be capable of. "Delicacies of Pigdriving": Carlyle had read a review of Hunt's The Indicator and Companion, 2 vols. (London: published for H. Colburn by R. Bentley, 1834), in the Examiner for 12 January 1834, in which Hunt's essay "On the Graces and Anxieties of Pig-Driving" had been quoted at some length. Leigh Hunt's London Journal appeared weekly from 2 April 1834 to 25 December 1835.
of the region, which to you are native: my best amusement is walking; I like, as well as Hadrian himself to mete out my world with steps of my own, and so take possession of it. But if to this you add Speech! Is not Speech defined to be cheerfuller than Light, and the Eldest Daughter of Heaven? I mean articulate discourse of reason, that comes from the internal heavenly part of us; not the confused gabble, which (in so many millions) comes from no deeper than the palate of the mouth; which it is the saddest of all things to listen to, a thing that fills one alternately with sorrow and indignation, and at last almost with a kind of horror and terror. As if the world were a huge Bedlam; and the sacred Speech of men had become an inarticulate jargon of hungry cawing rooks!

We laid down your description of your House, as the Model our kind Friend was to aim at: how far we have prospered will be seen. In rent it appears we are nearly on a par; we also anticipate quiet and some visitations of the heavenly air: but for the rest, ours will be no "high-wainscotted dwelling", like Homer's and yours; no, some newfangled brick-booth, which will tremble at every step, in which no four-footed thing can stand but only three-footed; such as "Holland Street, Kensington", in this year of grace, can be expected to yield. However, there is a patch of garden, or indeed two patches; I will have some little crib for my Books and Writing-table; and do the best that may be. [Innumerable], immeasurable vague forebodings hang over me as I [write]; meanwhile there is one grand assurance: the feeling [that] it was a duty, almost a necessity. My Dame too [is] of resolution for the enterprise, and whatsoever may follow it; so, Forward in God's name!

I have seen nothing of you for a long time, except what of the "Delicacies of Pigdriving" my Examiner once gave me. A most tickling thing; not a word of which can I remember, only the whole fact of it pictured in such subquizzical sweet-acid geniality of mockery, stands here, and, among smaller and greater things, will stand. If the two volumes are of that quality, they will be worth a welcome. I cannot expect them now till the beginning of May; or perhaps I may even still find them with Fraser at Whitsuntide. Here among the Moors they were best of all.

The starting of your Journal was a glad event for me; it seemed one of the hopefulllest projects in these days; and surely it must be a strange Public, one would think, in which Robert Chambers (a very silly kind of man) prospers and Leigh Hunt fails. You must bear up steadily at first; it is there, in this as in all things, that the grand difficulties lie.

Thornton need be under no uneasiness about Henry Inglis, from whom we heard not long ago, with some remark too of a very friendly character about the Traveller in question, and not the faintest hint about pounds or shillings.

I am writing nothing; reading, above all things, my old Homer and Prolegomena enough; the old song itself with a most singular delight. Fancy me as reading till you see me; then must another scene open.—Your Newspapers will interest me; as for the unhappy Sartor none can detest him more than my present self; there are some ten pages rightly fused and harmonious; the rest is only welded or even agglomerated, and may be thrown to the swine.

All salutations from us both! valete et nos amata!

T. Carlyle
Letter 18. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

Craigenputtoch, 1st May, 1834—

My dear Sir,

In your last Letter you asked to be permitted to look us out a House in your neighbourhood. By a strange turn of the cards, it chances this day that we find ourselves in the very state to profit by your bounty. Our expected Kensington House has evaporated, and we are here, alone, with all the world before us where to choose.

In a fortnight, accordingly, I expect to see you, on that quest. Mrs Austin is still angling in Kensington for us. If you will fish Chelsea, I shall almost at once know what I am about. The more necessary as the time is rapidly expiring!

As you have not only two eyes of your own, but who knows how many other pairs of younger ones (and as bright as any in England), perhaps you may discover something. At all events, this commission may amuse your walks a little; you have here the announcement of a visit which I know will agreeably occupy your thoughts; and so with hopes of a speedy meeting and prayers that it may be a glad one, I remain,

My Dear Sir,

Yours most faithfully

Th: Carlyle

(in great haste)

By 13 May Carlyle was himself in London. He looked at houses in Kensington, Brompton, Camden Town, Primrose Hill, and Hampstead before finally deciding to take one at 5, Great Cheyne Row, just a short distance from Leigh Hunt’s house on Upper Cheyne Row. Mrs. Carlyle soon joined him after they had decided through correspondence to take the house in Chelsea, and on 10 June they moved into it. It would be their home for the rest of their lives.

As may have been expected, Hunt had been helpful in this quest and was delighted when the choice of the house near him was made. During the search Carlyle had seen inside Hunt’s house and had written his wife a vivid description of the bizarre household:

At length came Chelsea, and Cheyne Row; a set of young bronze coloured gipsy faces were idly looking thro’ a window; I asked them with a half-presentiment where Hunt lived; they answered, Here, and that he was from home. I enter: O ask me not for a description till we meet! The Frau Hunt lay drowsing on cushions “sick, sick” with [a] thousand temporary ailments; the young imps all agog to see me jumped hither and thither, one strange goblin-looking fellow, about 16, ran ministering about tea-kettles for us: it was all a mingled lazaretto and tinkers camp, yet with a certain joy and nobleness at heart

¹ MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 1796.39.
of it: faintly resembling some of the maddest scenes in *Wilhelm Meister*, only madder. They had looked at no houses, knew not what I meant by them: gave me to fancy that perhaps at that hour you might be reading a new Letter of Hunt's asking further instructions of me. They gave me tea, would fain have given me the Husband's shoes (à la Shelley, for I was to be the new Shelley): finally the goblin, "Percy Hunt," a very good sort of fellow, I think, inquired me out an omnibus to Temple Bar: and I came hirpling [limping with the uneven gait of a hare] home, with a determination at least to have my old shoes next day."

A week later Carlyle wrote a similar description of the Hunt household and the "Huntlets" for his notebook: "Non-descript! unutterable! Mrs. Hunt asleep on cushions, four or five beautiful, strange, gipsy-looking children running about in undress, whom the lady ordered to get us tea...a sallow, black-haired youth of sixteen, with a kind of dark cotton nightgown [dressing-gown] on, went whirling about like a familiar, providing everything: an indescribable dreamlike household." 

Once the Carlyles were actually neighbours of the Hunts, they found much in the relationship that proved highly gratifying but also much that indicated that these were neighbours who had to be treated with some degree of caution. Leigh Hunt himself they both developed real affection for; and they found the personal charm of the man irresistible despite marked differences in his philosophy of life and that of Carlyle. Hunt is mentioned favourably in Carlyle's letter to his mother of 12 June 1834, the first letter which he wrote from his Chelsea home: "Hunt, who is close by, is not only the kindest but the politest of men; has never been near us (which we reckon very civil), but will always be delighted when I go and rouse him for a walk; and indeed a sprightly, sensible talker he is, and very pleasant company for a stroll. Jane greatly preferred his 'poetical Tinkerdom' to any of the unpoetical Gigmandoms (even Mrs. Austin's) which I showed her. The Hunts, I think, will not trouble us, and indeed be a pleasure so far as they go." 


two weeks later he described Hunt and his family in greater detail in a letter to his brother Alexander:

Hunt is always ready to go and walk with me, or sit and talk with me to all lengths if I want him. He comes in once a week (when invited, for he is very modest), takes a cup of tea, and sits discoursing in his brisk, fanciful way till supper time, and then cheerfully eats a cup of porridge (to sugar only), which he praises to the skies, and vows he will make his supper at home. He is a man of thoroughly London make, such as you could not find elsewhere, and I think about the best possible to be made of his sort: an airy, crotchety, most copious clever talker, with an honest undercurrent of reason too, but unfortunately not the deepest, not the most practical—or rather it is the most unpractical ever man dealt in. His hair is grizzled, eyes black-hazel, complexion of the clearest dusky brown; a thin glimmer of a smile plays over a face of cast-iron gravity. He never laughs—can only titter, which I think indicates his worst deficiency. His house excels all you have ever read of—a poetical Tinkerdom, without parallel even in literature. In his family room, where are a sickly large wife and a whole shoal of well-conditioned wild children, you will find half a dozen old rickety chairs gathered from half a dozen hucksters, and all seemingly engaged, and just pausing, in a violent hornpipe. On these and around them and over the dusty table and ragged carpet lie all sorts of litter—books, paper, egg-shells, scissors, and last night when I was there, the torn heart of a half-quartern loaf. His own room above stairs, into which alone I strive to enter, he keeps cleaner. It has only two chairs, a bookcase, and a writing-table; yet the noble Hunt receives you in his Tinkerdom in the spirit of a king, apologizes for nothing, places you in the best seat, takes a window sill himself if there is no other, and there folding closer his loose-flowing 'muslin-cloud' of a printed nightgown in which he always writes, commences the liveliest dialogue on philosophy and the prospects of man (who is to be beyond all measure 'happy' yet); which again he will courteously terminate the moment you are bound to go; a most interesting, pitiable, lovable man, to be used kindly but with discretion. After all, it is perhaps rather a comfort to be near honest friendly people—at least an honest, friendly man of that sort. We stand sharp but mannerly for his sake and for ours, and endeavour to get and do what good we can, and avoid the evil.1

The growing intimacy and free discussion soon intensified the philosophical differences between the two men. On 22 July Carlyle wrote to his brother John:

Hunt is always at hand, but as the modestest of men never comes unless sent for: his theory of life and mine have already declared themselves to be from top to bottom at variance, which shocks him considerably: to me his talk is occasionally pleasant, is always clever and lively; but all too foisonless baseless and shallow. He has a theory that the world is or should and shall be a gingerbread Lubberland, where Evil (that is Pain) shall never come, a theory in very considerable

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1 J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green, 1882, 1884), ii. 439-40. Warlocks and witches presided over by Auld Nick dance wild hornpipes in Burns's "Tam O' Shanter".
favor here; which to me is pleasant as streams of unambrosial dishwater, a thing I simply shut my mouth against, as the shortest way. With Huntdom we find it quite possible and simple to manage altogether without and keep nearly wholly clear of it, except when we can[not] help it, which is seldom. I pity Hunt and love him.¹

About two weeks later he wrote to his mother:

Hunt, nor the Hunts, does not trouble us more than we wish: he comes in when we send for him; talks, listens to a little music, even sings and plays a little, eats (without Kitchen of any kind, or only with a little sugar) his allotted plate of Porridge, and then goes his ways. His way of thought and mine are utterly at variance; a thing which grieves him much, not me. He accounts for it by my “Presbyterian upbringing,” which I tell him always I am everlastingly grateful for. He talks forever about “happiness,” and seems to me the very miserablest man I ever sat and talked with. Poor fellow! And one can do nothing for him, except letting him eat his plate of porridge, and sit and talk there. He has a whole “scrow” of children, all coming up without the slightest nurture, like wild asses’ colts; some of them one can see little outlook for except the Hulks or Treadmill; and yet he talks about “the world getting wiser, and one day all-wise!”²

On 8 September Carlyle wrote in his journal: “Hunt himself seems almost scared off by my Puritanic Stoicism; talks in a quite tremulous way when he does come. A mind shattered by long misery into a kind of unnatural quivering eagerness, which before and instead of all things covets agreement with it? A good man.”³

The first year as a neighbour of the Hunts in Chelsea was undoubtedly somewhat trying at times to Jane Carlyle. From the beginning she had liked Leigh Hunt himself, and soon after moving to London she had written to Elizabeth Stodart: “For the rest, our society, with a few additions, [is] much the same that we had when here formerly, only I find it much pleasanter now, being in better case for enjoying it. John Mill, Leigh Hunt, and Mrs. Austin remain my favourites.”⁴ Mrs. Hunt had

slack ways of keeping house and of borrowing without being sure
to return promptly all that had been borrowed. She seemed
slovenly and irresponsible to Mrs. Carlyle's thrifty and punctili­
ously correct Scotch mind. With her eminently practical
nature, she also found Mrs. Hunt's Bohemian aestheticism
ridiculous. On 1 September 1834 she wrote to Carlyle's mother:

I told Mrs. Hunt on one day I had been very busy painting. "What?" she
asked, "is it a portrait?" "No," I told her, "something of more importance;
a large wardrobe." She could not imagine she said "how I could have patience
for such things." And so having no patience for them herself what is the result?
She is every other day reduced to borrow my tumblers, my teacups, even a
cupful of porridge. A few spoonfuls of tea are begged of me because "Missus
has got company and happens to be out of the article"—in plain and unadorned
English because "Missus is the most wretched of managers and is often at the
point of having not a copper in her purse." To see how they live and waste
here, it is a wonder the whole city does not bankrupt and go out of sight—flinging
platefuls of what they are pleased to denominate "crusts" [underscored twice]
(that is, what I consider all the best of the bread) into the ash-pits. I often say
with honest self-congratulation in Scotland we have no such thing as "crusts."
On the whole, tho' the English ladies seem to have their wits more at their finger
ends, and have a great advantage over me in that respect, I never cease to be glad
that I was born on the other side of the Tweed and that those who are nearest and
deepest to me are Scotch.¹

Some weeks later her feeling toward Mrs. Hunt was approaching
dangerously near the point of complete exasperation: "Mrs.
Hunt I shall soon be quite terminated with, I foresee. She
torments my life out with borrowing. She actually borrowed
one of the brass fenders the other day, and I had difficulty getting
it out of her hands; irons, glasses, teacups, silver spoons are in
constant requisition, and when one sends for them the whole
number can never be found. Is it not a shame to manage so,
with eight guineas a week to keep house on! It makes me very
indignant to see all the waste that goes on around me when I
am needing so much care and calculation to make ends meet."²

Whatever differences there may have been in the way of life
of the two families and however sharply defined the differences

¹ J. A. Froude, ed., *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green, 1883), i. 1–4. Charles Lamb, whom the Carlyles met and
detested, expresses the other point of view, that of the London Englishman as
he considers the Scotchman, in his "Imperfect Sympathies".
² *Letters and Memorials of J. W. Carlyle*, i. 11–12.
of opinion between the two men may have been, Leigh Hunt proved himself to be a true friend of Carlyle during his first difficult years in London before the publication of the *French Revolution* in 1837 made him famous and removed many financial difficulties. There are numerous quotations from Carlyle and favourable references to him in *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* for 1834-5 when he badly needed recognition. Hunt published two poems by him: "Drumwhirn Bridge", 22 October 1834, and "The Wish", 26 November 1834. Hunt also undertook to provide Carlyle with a copy of the *Examiner* each week, which Carlyle usually sent to his relatives in Scotland, often with one or two strokes of the pen upon it which conveyed brief messages concerning health and such matters. Carlyle was duly appreciative and spoke of "our good neighbour Leigh Hunt,—who also is one of the most elastic, unconquerable, innocent-minded mortals I ever met with".

Absolute regularity was beyond the power of Hunt, however, and sometimes the *Examiner* was not forthcoming from him at the times when it was expected. In late October 1834 Carlyle felt compelled to write to his mother: "There was no *Examiner* this week; Hunt bids me tell you that whenever one is missed there will be *two* next week: he is a much-harassed confused poor man; sits in the middle of a distracted uproar that would make many a one mad. I borrowed an *old* Paper from him, that you might not be altogether disappointed: he sent me one of Jan. 7 last; ten months old; which I should think is among the oldest ever went by post."


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4 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. "Arthur Coningsby's Father and Mother" are Mr. and Mrs. John Sterling. Sterling's novel *Arthur Coningsby* (1833) is not to be confused with Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844). Mary Somerville (1780-1872), wife of Dr. William Somerville, wrote on mathematics and physical science. She brought out in 1831 a popularized
My Dear Sir,

Arthur Coningsby’s Father and Mother are expected to Tea with us tomorrow evening; also the mathematical Mrs Sommerville [sic], and perhaps John Mill; all of them well affected towards you, and good people as people go. Will you come too, and do us all a real kindness? Say “Yezzir”; or what were better (for I am quite idle and solitary) come over straightway, and say it with the lips.

Here is Kean again, with many thanks.

Yours always
T. Carlyle

Wednesday evg

Early in 1835 the friendship was subjected to a new test. Leigh Hunt’s son John, for many years a problem to his father and other members of the family, appealed to Carlyle for help and forced him into a difficult situation where he had to do what he could wisely to help the son and yet if possible in so doing to avoid offending the father. Carlyle gave a detailed statement of the case in a letter to his mother:

Yesterday afternoon a son of Leigh Hunt’s sent me a Letter to say that he was out of his Father’s house, could not get back again, and wanted “a few shillings,” being in a “starving” state! We sent for him to come and get some meat; shillings we could not give him. I find on talking with the poor youth (about 22, strong and healthy) that he is very much what I supposed: a creature grown up to manhood without the slightest nurture or admonition, with wild hungry wishes in, with very considerable natural faculty, but without any the faintest principles of conduct; whom accordingly (for what else could happen?) they have had to keep for the last 20 months or more up in a garret, none of them speaking to him, from which state he is at last broken out into the street, and a “starving state.” I gave him numerous “good advices”; without much hope that he could (with all his wish to do so) profit much by them. “Do you think I should go into the Army, Sir?” I had been telling Jane a few minutes before that I saw nothing under the Sun he could or should do but that. However I counselled him to try all other honest shifts first; in the meanwhile not to go back to his garret (from whence he would certainly have to break forth again) if there remained a resource for him on Earth: but above all to know and lay deeply to heart that without quite a total change in his inner man, and way of thinking and managing himself, no thing whatsoever could or would go well with him. He stared on me with his keen black eyes, astonished, not unthankful looking; and went his way, with our “best wishes,” but not “best hopes”; nor no pressing invitation to come back, for, as I calculate, one is better out of all that folly, and could do no good in it. Hunt is a fool surely (tho’ very clever too):

English version of Laplace’s *Mécanique Céleste*. Somerville College, Oxford, is named after her. Carlyle seems to have been reading Bryan W. Procter’s *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols. (London: E. Moxon, 1835).
Carlyle did more than lecture to John Hunt. He spoke to Mill about his desperate situation, and Mill provided some work for him to do. On 2 February Carlyle wrote to Mill as follows:

Here is poor Ishmael Hunt, of whom I spoke: the news that you had work for him was like a reprieve from death. As I find he is totally without cash at this moment, I have promised that you will pay him five shillings in advance; I said too that the longer he could make this serve him, both you and I would think the more of him. The rate he seems to say is “a penny for 72 words”; but he will be thankful for any rate. It will perhaps be kindest to him that you do not pay him more than what is strictly earned. As he has all the virtues to acquire, the one most within his reach, and most important for him were probably thrift. How singular if this copying of your manuscript should be the beginning of salvation for a living man! Alas, it is too dubious: ich stehe für Nichts.

Ten days later he wrote to Mill again:

Hunt will be at you tomorrow, or at farthest on Saturday; hungry as a hyaena. To cut off from him the very temptation to play false, I beforehand furnish you with the enclosed receipt; testifying visibly that he has already (with your five) eaten twenty shillings of his wages. His work, what part of it I have seen, seems very tolerably done; nor have I, of my own insight, anything (except that crime of hunger) to urge against him. He has not even intruded himself on me, unless when driven by necessity stronger than an armed man. Poor devil! And yet one can do nothing for him, so good as leave him almost if not altogether alone. Wer nicht anspannt, dem kann man nicht vorspannen, is one of the truest proverbs in the world.

Carlyle found himself, however, in an awkward position in relation to Leigh Hunt, and his position became even more awkward after Hunt discovered that John had applied to Carlyle for help. Carlyle was compelled to write the father a note of explanation.

1 MS. letter of 29 January 1835 in the National Library of Scotland, 520.39. Published incomplete in Norton’s Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1826-1836, pp. 484-6. In a letter to his brother Alexander of 28 January 1835 Carlyle wrote: “We have not seen Leigh Hunt for almost three months! There was no quarrel either: but I believe the poor man is very miserable, and feels shocked at my rigorous Presbyterian principles; in short is afraid of me! I pity him much; but think too, he is perhaps as well where he is, and I where I am.” Ibid. p. 484.

2 MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 618.60. Ich stehe etc.: “I can’t guarantee anything.”

My Dear Sir,

I regret you should have heard at all of poor John's having ever applied to me: nothing else but the hope you might not hear could have excused me for not apprising you instantly. Nevertheless be of comfort; all I do trust may still be well. Let this line meanwhile assure you that the poor boy has spoken no word, given no faintest hint to prejudice me against you, which indeed no hint or word of his (or I think of anybody's) could have done; he seems to me to love you as a son should, to be in short a wild untamed creature with considerable stuff in him,—whom the world will tame. So much suffice at present. Tonight I fear I shall be engaged; but if not, I will certainly step over to you: at all events, tomorrow. Pray explain nothing to me that you feel it painful to speak of. I have trust enough in you; and, I may say, no distrust at all.

Yours always

T. Carlyle

The sequel to this episode in the life of Hunt's second son, however, was a sad one. He married, drifted from one job to another and from one degree of poverty to a lower one until his early death, about ten years after his interview with Carlyle. Carlyle was one of many who from the time when John was a young boy had tried to save him. Thornton Hunt speaks of a natural deficiency in John's nature which may have rendered all efforts hopeless, but adds that nothing could ever make him lose his affection for his father. We can only speculate whether Carlyle's moral instruction, if it had been given earlier, would have done any good.

Although Carlyle's judgment of men was usually penetrating and sound, he sometimes let his prejudices sweep him off his feet in dealing with a man as different from himself as Leigh Hunt was. The best that can be said for the appraisals in the following passage from a letter written by Carlyle to his brother John, 16 February 1835, is that Carlyle knew his own mind: "Mill is very friendly; he is the nearest approach to a real man that I find here; nay as far as negativeness goes he is that man, but unhappily not very satisfactorily much farther. It is next to an impossibility that a London-born man should not be a stunted one. Most of them (as Hunt) are dwarfed and dislocated.

1 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.

But allowance must be made in such descriptions for Carlyle's fondness for exaggeration. His esteem for Hunt was real, and he was always ready to encourage him. When this year Hunt sent him a copy of his newly published poem "Captain Sword and Captain Pen", he was generous with his praise.

Letter 21. Carlyle to Hunt.¹

[c. 1 April 1835]

My Dear Sir,

I had thought of sending over to you for a loan of these two belligerent Captains; the more welcome to me is your gift; for which, many kind thanks. I read the book over last night without rising (sedens sede in una). What Aristotle and The Schlegels, or even the British Able Editors might say of it I know not; but to me it seemed to be a real Song, and to go dancing with real heartiness and rhythm in a very handsome way, thro' a most complex matter.—To me you are infinitely too kind; but it is a fault I will not quarrel with.

Here are two wall-flowers, pledge of the Spring and of Hope. Why do you not come to see me? Depend upon it, whatever hinders is most probably a mistake or an absurdity.

Jeffrey is in Town; he that was Francis and is my Lord,—somewhat of the Francis having oozed out (I fear) in the interim. He "will with the greatest pleasure" come hither to meet you some night. Will you come? That is to say, will you actually come?—Pray do not promise if it is to embarrass you.

Depend on the goodwill and perfect trust and esteem of both me and mine. I know you do care for it.

Always most truly,

T. Carlyle

Letter 22. Carlyle to Hunt.²

[c. June 1835]

My Dear Sir,

Accept kind thanks from both of us for the volume you have sent my Wife. We are glad to see the London Journal in a new shape promising more of permanency. One may hope that at a future epoch some fit eye searching for what was good and graceful in an age when so very much was the reverse, may find something here to dwell upon and treasure.

¹ Froude, Carlyle, iii. 25.
² MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. Published in "Concerning Leigh Hunt", p. 495. "Sedens sede in una": "I read it at one sitting." Jeffrey was elevated to the judicial bench as Lord Jeffrey in May 1834.
³ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. Leigh Hunt's London Journal was merged with the Printing Machine with the issue of 27 May 1835. See Landré, ii. 497. Albany Fonblanque (1793–1872) edited the Examiner from 1830 to 1847.
I am afraid you take too much trouble about that Examiner. As hinted today, I have now generally another Newspaper which I can address to Scotland; and that was mainly the thing I wanted. For my own share, Fonblanque has lost nine tenths of his worth now when he is to be read not at Craigenputtoch but at Chelsea.

You would far misconstrue us both if you supposed that our natural regret at your temporary cessation of visits, had ended or was like to end, in irritation, suspicion or other unworthy humour. I can fancy causes enough of the phenomenon without implying disregard, or even diminution of regard on your part. Much must and should in all such cases be left to individual determination, grounded on such insight as is to be had. To me two things only are clear: that there is no man in London I like better to commune with from time to time; and that seen or unseen, I can feel nothing towards you but esteem and goodwill, and am and remain,

My Dear Sir,
Very faithfully Your's
T. Carlyle.

And Carlyle's power of sympathy was unfailing. When Leigh Hunt's London Journal collapsed in late 1835, Carlyle was one of the first to try to help. On 18 January 1836 he wrote to his mother:

No Examiner came last week, for I got none; Hunt is very unpunctual. His Journal, poor fellow, by which he lived, has broken down suddenly, and he is now without work, without support, and eight or nine of a most thriftless ravenous family hanging on him; a man whom all men may justly pity! What he will do one cannot see rightly; he cannot dig, to beg he is ashamed. I have seen him twice lately; not for a long time previously: he speaks of trying the Journal (it was a Three-halfpenny weekly Paper) under a new form. I pray heartily he may succeed in it.—Did I mention last night that his son was drawing my Picture in oil colours? The poor young man requested it, as a thing that might do him good; and I could not refuse, tho' the task proved wearisome. Whether he will make a Likeness after all is very dubious: the figure at present is one of the toughest, grimmest[?] with "a look that would split a pitcher," as the Irish say! ¹

A few days later he wrote to his brother John: "As to the Specklets in the eye, let me not forget to say that I know you Doctors call such things muscae volitantes, and make light enough of them; neither do I mind it. John Mill has had one jigging about daily these four years; Leigh Hunt has whole trains of them. . . . Poor Hunt's Journal is broken down with him; and he is once more, suddenly, in straits; yet not so great as he has known. He is a man of much infirm worth, and purest humanity; whom I gelten lass, when we meet; which is very

¹ MS. letter in the National Library of Scotland, 523.36.
rarely, for long." To this letter Jane Carlyle added the follow­
ing postscript: "He ought to have told you that he is setting for­
his portrait to Thornton Hunt and is getting himself depicted
one of the sulkiest commonplace men in the Island. I also am
in progress and am if possible still more odious, with a frightful
mechanical smile covering over the most vulgar Devilishness.
Fortunately we give only our time." ¹ At the same time Carlyle
was trying to help his friend in ways more tangible than extending
his sympathy and encouraging an artist son.

Letter 23. Carlyle to Hunt.²
[c. 15 January 1836]

My Dear Sir,

Yesterday a Gentleman, sympathizing with the late mischance of the London
Journal, asked me, whether I thought I could, without offence to your feelings,
hand you the inclosed little Paper on the part of a Nameless Friend? I answered,
after consideration: Yes. The little gift is one of honourable goodwill; which
why may not honourable goodwill accept? It falls nameless; like a little drop
of manna in the wilderness, coming (truly) from Above: a devout heart, I think,
may lift it, and say piously, "It is twice blest." If I have gone wrong, I pray you forgive me for the intention's sake. It was
part of my bargain that you were never so much as to ask me for the Name; that
we were never to speak of the matter at all after this hour.

Believe me always,

My Dear Sir,
Faithfully Your's
T. Carlyle.

Leigh Hunt was proud, however, and for the moment at least
refused the gift, kindly tendered as it was.

Letter 24. Hunt to Carlyle.³


My dear Sir,

With the deepest sense of your kind feelings & those of your friend, & a
delight to find another jewel to hang in my memory with the thought of his
offer, I trust that neither you nor he will think ill of me in seeing it come back.
Your delightful & truly delicate letter does me but justice in making no doubt of my
sentiments on such an occasion, supposing the necessity to exist, & the friend
to be of a nature worthy to comfort it (as I have no doubt he is, thus coming
hand in hand with yourself); but all the difficulties of the moment have been
more than done away by other generous friends; & I have no prospective right

¹ MS. letter of 26 January 1836 in the National Library of Scotland, 520.50.
² Muscae voliantes: "flies on the wing." Gelten lass: "approve."
³ MS. letter in the Yale University Library.
⁴ MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa.
to let other purses unclose for me, seeing that myself & my family have now got
time, & that we may have health & strength enough to neutralize the real struggle
before it comes. Not to mention, that the most generous people are not always
the richest, & that I might be drawing upon the resources of one whose purse
might ill spare them, whatever his heart might do. Should a very frightful hour
however still come some day, to which other friends would not be all-sufficient,
I will call to mind,—indeed, I shall never forget,—that I have an unknown
friend in your circle, to whom, if you will then tell me his name, & assure me that
the application would not be more inconvenient than it would now have been,
I will send & say (or you shall for me) " My necessity is arrived." And to tell
you the truth, I should like to know his name now, & shall endeavour to con-
vince you that I ought to know it, purely that I may have the pleasure of repeating
it to my thoughts, & because (though I should not like to make such a confession
in Change Alley) gratitude, even for pecuniary favours, is so far from being to
me a burden, that it gives me wings (always supposing the object to be worthy
of it), and I am now this minute pruning them, & mustering up my forces during
this burst of sunshine amidst my storm, and making myself as light-hearted &
strong as possible, nay, absolutely dandifying the objects about me; for I have
been giving some old perishing books on my shelves fine new cloth covers, which
the very sunbeams seem to love to come & kiss; and if I had silks & satins in
my wardrobe, & it were the fashion to wear them (for the rich), I think I should
put them on, like my old friend Sir John Suckling when he lost at the gamin
table, & so absolutely shame Fortune into treating so fit a companion better.
One thing helps particularly to keep me in spirits; which is,—that my head
was very bad, & my health seemed fairly breaking down with it; but this in-
voluntary rest has taken out of it its worst feelings, & you cannot conceive what
new comfort & life this has given me, little as my appearance at present may have
to show for it. The colds, & rheumatism, & head-aches, that beset me, are like
the Lilliputians about Gulliver, compared with that giant of an ailment.—But
to come to matters both serious & secret, the communication of which is due to
your Kindness,—see now how well off I am, to meet this conjunctive; for one
dear friend has secured us at all times from starvation (a dread which I have
had, at one time—so at least to speak; for no fairly [un]certain condition of life is
allowed perhaps absolutely to perish for want of sustenance); and another, as
soon as my peril was heard of, sent me a hundred pounds to meet it with (fortun
ately not so great a sum for the giver's resources, as your friend's smaller sum is
perhaps for him, nor half of it); and for eight weeks from the beginning of the
year, I continue to receive eight pounds a week from Knight, partly for work
done, partly for some I am to do, or to be otherwise accounted for by things which
he may republish out of the journal (my handwriting is getting bad with my head).
Thus I have one hundred pounds a year certain (as far as the funds will let them
be) and one hundred & sixty-four, to give us time to look about us; and though
I cannot but be anxious with so large a family all at home (but one), yet we are
all inclined to hope & do the best; & so I have many blessings still for which
I have reason to be grateful, & among them, dear Sir, is that of your friendship,
& the offer of my kind unknown.

Affectionately yours,

Leigh Hunt
P.S. Pray send your friend this letter,—I need not add, to a nature like his,—in confidence. For my part, I confess I would fain have no secrets from any body; but then the world, not being yet come to generous man’s estate, is apt to make mistakes. It is still more needless to add that no secret of course is to be made with Mrs. Carlyle, if she has any curiosity to read what I write, as she may have,—reckoning, as I know I may do, upon her kind wishes. It is one of my dreadful theories, you know, that husband & wife are the last people who ought to keep any secrets from one another.

P.P.S. I have just received a prodigious hamper from some anonymous friends in the country, containing an absolute poulterer’s & pastry-cook’s shop. Among the contents is a Twelfth Cake, which I shall keep for your Mozart evening, & a pig, a quarter of which (already dressed) will beg admittance at your small table today, sure of not being refused.

Hunt’s worries about money, nevertheless, were not at an end. Possibly the following undated note from Carlyle indicates that he was forced by circumstances to change his mind and to take the money after all.

**Letter 25. Carlyle to Hunt.**

[c. 1 March 1836]

Thursday Morning

My Dear Sir,

Here is the old piece of Paper from the unknown Friend; with many satisfactions that it can do you a service. Courage!

I understand that there is decidedly hope of the Pension; that persons [of] all colours are striving in it, voting for it. A little while! *Post nubila Phoebus!*

Ever affectionately

T.C.

Hunt did not get his pension at this time, despite the efforts of Mill, Jeffrey, and others who were spurred on by Carlyle. Shortly before Carlyle had written to his brother John: “I was out with poor Hunt till near ten last night, and good for little when I came home. His *London Journal* (did I tell you ?) has fallen to the ground; so with bad health, incipient old age, and thoughtless imbecility all round him, he has the sorriest outlook; yet keeps up his heart amazingly: ‘a man of genius (real genius) in the shape of a Cockney.’” Jane Carlyle’s postscript to this letter speaks of Carlyle “having several calls tonight, one to go and speak comfort to Leigh Hunt, on things in general.” An effort was made also to continue the encouragement to Thornton

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1 MS. letter in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. *Post nubila Phoebus*: “After cloudy weather comes the sun.”

Hunt; but the portrait of Carlyle which he was making seemed so bad that Carlyle finally stopped sitting for it. "The picture Hunt's son was drawing has yet come to nothing. It grew so dreadfully ugly, and promised to be so little like one's own ugliness, and was withal such a wearisome thing, that I shirked off, by some good opportunity, and never came back again." Yet in the early spring of 1836 there still seemed a chance that Hunt would soon be given a pension. Carlyle wrote to John Sterling:

"By the bye, Jeffrey has taken Hunt's Pension in hand: may he prosper in it! Mill I find has as yet made small way."

When a little later Hunt's financial situation became desperate, Carlyle was indefatigable in helping to find a scheme that would at least give him temporary relief.

**Letter 26. Carlyle to Hunt.**

[? June 1836]
Sunday Night 11 o'clock

My Dear Sir,

I had a long conversation with Mr Talfourd; whom I found to be a most polite humane man, exceedingly well disposed towards you.

After much frank communication, both of us agreed that of the two Schemes the one suggested by Jeffrey did seem the hopefuller; that as both could not be followed, this latter must for the present be exclusively aimed at,—in the track and by the methods which Mr Talfourd and other Friends had already decided on.

The grand point for the moment being that you should have the means of meeting this existing perplexity, I took pains to ascertain how you were to act so that the result (of getting money to pay the debt, tomorrow morning) might be "infallible." This was the manner of procedure,

That you were to call at Mr Foster's [sic] tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock; when Mr F., furnished with Lord Melbourne's Letter and instructions how to act, would go with you, and get what money (£35 or £40) might be needful; the remainder to be put into some Bank, to lie there as a nucleus for the Subscription, which ought thereupon to be directly proceeded with.

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1 MS. letter of Carlyle to his mother, 22 March 1836, in the National Library of Scotland, 520.52.

2 MS. letter of 12 April 1836 in the National Library of Scotland, 531.12.

3 MS. letter in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795–1854), judge and poet, edited Charles Lamb's letters and memorials and defended Edward Moxon when he was prosecuted for publishing Shelley's *Queen Mab*. John Forster (1812–76), whose name Carlyle misspells in this letter, became a close and lasting friend of Carlyle about 1840, when they worked together in founding the London Library. Journalist, historian, biographer, he is best known for his life of Dickens.
Knowing the pressure of the case, and to secure "infallibility," I obtained farther that if you missed Mr Foster, or if by any accident Mr Foster and you could not obtain the money, then Mr Talfourd (who, or some substitute for him, was to be at the Court of Common Pleas) would himself advance the money on the security of that Letter.

I am in great haste. I write this down that the servant may carry it to you at 6 tomorrow morning. There was nothing more to be said, even if I had seen you tonight. Good night my dear Sir.

Yours always
T.C.

As the year wore away, Mrs. Hunt, who was a much better artist than housekeeper, found an opportunity to redeem herself in the eyes of Mrs. Carlyle. In September Jane Carlyle found, upon returning home from a summer jaunt, a gift from Leigh Hunt consisting of what she considered a fine bust of Shelley made by Mrs. Hunt. She wrote to one of her aunts: "I found all at home right and tight; my maid seems to have conducted herself quite handsomely in my absence; my best room looked really inviting. A bust of Shelley (a present from Leigh Hunt) and a fine print of Albert Dürer, handsomely framed (also a present) had still further ornamented it during my absence."¹ And a few days later she wrote to a friend in Scotland:

The Hunts go on in the old way. Leigh Hunt himself looks well and is in good spirits tho' without any regular employment yet. . . .

Since I am come so unexpectedly on the subject of furniture, I must tell you some acquisitions I have made since you were here in which you will feel a friendly interest. The piano which refused any longer to do the service of one, is exchanged for a horizontal grand one of age very advanced indeed, but retaining much of its original sweetness. Then, on one of the tables stands that really admirable bust of Shelly [sic] which you may have read in the newspapers has lately been executed by Mrs. Hunt.²

The Carlyles themselves did not admire Shelley the poet and man, but they were aware of the Hunts' great admiration for him and could fully appreciate the significance of this gift to them.

Late in the year Carlyle seems to have approached Mill, as editor of the London and Westminster Review, in search of employment for Hunt and with the suggestion that he might

² MS. letter to Susan Hunter, 11 September 1836, in the National Library of Scotland, 20.5.25.
THOMAS CARLYLE AND LEIGH HUNT

write a review of Lord Wharncliffe's new *Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. He further praised Hunt in language reminding one in its fine generosity of praise of Dr. Johnson's words for Goldsmith: "There was nothing he touched that he did not adorn." "In fact I know not what", Carlyle wrote Mill, "Hunt would deliberately undertake that he would not render worth reading."¹ Mill gave Hunt the assignment; but again Hunt's path seemed to be dogged by difficulties. The review was scheduled to appear in the number for April 1837, but there were awkward delays in getting a copy of the book into Hunt's hands.

*Letter 27. Carlyle to Hunt.*²

My dear Sir,

Here is Mill's answer about the Wortley: I suppose the Book will come one of these days.

T.C.

*Letter 28. Carlyle to Hunt.*³

My dear Sir,

Mill, the other day, when I told him that you had never yet got your Wortley almost flew into a fury, quiet man as he is and philosopher,—at some Editor or Sub-Editor or Manager he has who had shamefully neglected that duty. He means to pay off the said negligent Manager. He went forthwith and ordered the Book himself; and here it is: he did not know your address. Pray welcome it, and take to it as you would have done, had no fret (I know how fretting these things are) occurred in the business.

There is something in one or the other of those *Biog. Univ.* volumes you have which I want to see. Can you send them?

Ever faithfully Yours

T. Carlyle

We are at home and alone every night.

*Letter 29. Carlyle to Hunt.*⁴

¹ Undated letter of November or December 1836 in the National Library of Scotland, 618.73.

² MS. note in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. Carlyle's note is written on the one from Mill, which reads: "My dear Carlyle Let it be Wortley by all means, & I will immediately get the book."

³ MS. note in the Brewer Collection, State University of Iowa. On the back of the envelope Carlyle asks: "Have you the New Monthly?"

⁴ MS. letter in the Cornell University Library. Hunt's review duly appeared in the April issue, pp. 130-64.
Friday Morning

My dear Sir,

I have just received a Letter from Mill; of which this is the first paragraph:

"Mr Hunt’s Article will be in time if it be not later than the 12th of March: and whether it be printed or not in this No (tho’ I am anxious that it should) I undertake that he shall be paid for it."

Hand to the work, therefore! And best speed to you! So says,

Your’s always
T. Carlyle

With all his love for Burns, for rural Scotland, and for the simple ways of people dwelling in Annandale and Nithsdale, Carlyle was no primitivist. Bronson Alcott, an “acorn Quixote”, with his efforts to convert the whole world to vegetarianism, smacked too much of the backwoods for him. He preferred Piccadilly and St. Paul’s, symbols to him of the ways of civilized men. Hence Leigh Hunt’s fine urbanity did not go with him unappreciated. In May 1837 Carlyle saw it dramatized and thrown into clear relief through the visit to London of his highly esteemed old Annandale friend, Ben Nelson. In earlier years Carlyle had called Ben “the cleverest, most intelligent man I have ever met; with head enough to furnish half a dozen Gutters [?] Authors, and Gaz[teers], and yet employed only in importing timber and exchanging Wool with Tar!” ¹ Nelson visited Carlyle briefly in late April while on his way to Germany to take care of his son, who was seriously ill. His son died, however, before he could reach his bedside; and when Nelson returned to London with the sad news, Carlyle sought for ways to comfort him. To bring about a meeting of his old Scotch friend with Leigh Hunt, with his “purest humanity”, suggested itself to him as one resource.

Letter 30. Carlyle to Hunt.²

My dear Sir,

There is a worthy old-friend of mine here at present, an intelligent good man, Burgher of the little Scotch Town of Annan, whom I have known since my school days. He is to be with us this evening. I would not have him leave London without an image of at least one man worth carrying so far. Our tea is at six.

¹ MS. letter to William Tait, 27 January [1830], in the National Library of Scotland, 3823.17.
² MS. letter in the University of Virginia Library.
There will be none here but Friend Ben Nelson and we. Can you give us an hour? I am sure you will like Ben, and he you. Refuse frankly if you cannot.

There is a kind of possibility that I may catch John Mill too, but no certainty, perhaps hardly likelihood.

Yours ever
T. Carlyle.

Hunt obligingly came, but the meeting with Ben Nelson was far from successful. Carlyle gave this account of it to his brother John: "Ben seemed to bear the matter [the death of his son] with hard Dutch Stoicism; not without natural emotion, yet not with very much of it. I never before had discovered what a dogged sort of man he is; obstinate, obdurate, and carries the mark of that too in his physiognomy. I studied to be as kind to him as I could, went to West Abbey etc with him, and saw him often: but he did not prove very presentable here; one night when I brought out Hunt to see him, he made an almost absurd figure; contradictory, pedantic, à la 'Ewart's shop'; at which poor Hunt could only arch his brows." ¹

The perfect eloquence of Leigh Hunt's arched brows was clearly not lost on Carlyle. But Ben Nelson was not merely a foil to set off some of the quality of Leigh Hunt; in the eyes of Hunt he was also a foil to set off some of Carlyle's.

¹ MS. letter of 30 May 1837 in the National Library of Scotland, 523.49. See also Carlyle's letter to his mother of 19 May 1837 in the National Library of Scotland, 3823.230. "Ewart's shop": probably a reference to an earlier experience in Scotland when Nelson behaved in a similar fashion.