

1825
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On Saturday the 20th inst., in this city, at the age of fifty-two, Mr. Robert Carlyle, a gentleman well known either personally, or by reputation, to the majority of our readers. We regret that we are not able to find data for a connected memoir of one whose extensive literary acquirements and whose social virtues had rendered every thing relating to him, peculiarly interesting to his numerous friends; but we think it would be unpardonable if we were to record the death, without noticing some particulars of the life, of a man so conspicuous for his talents, both as an artist and a man of letters. Mr. Carlyle was descended from a very ancient family, which had resided in this city, or its neighbourhood, for several centuries; and which, as he himself informed the writer of this brief memoir, had repeatedly represented it in parliament. One branch of it formerly attained baronial honours, which lapsed by the extinction of the direct male line and the difficulty in connecting the collateral branches, some of which yet maintain a highly respectable rank in society. His father, a man of considerable talents and local reputation, was an artist, who attained great skill in wood and stone work. Much of the carved and other wood work in Carlisle Cathedral was executed by him. He also executed a horse which stood long in the park at Greystoke, and a couple of greyhounds in stone, at Crofton, the seat of Sir Wastel Brisco, which have been much admired. The manner in which he executed the last was singular, and showed talents in no usual degree;—a rude block of stone was roughly shaped by a mason; a servant then brought a greyhound and held it steadily; from this greyhound the self-taught artist made a drawing, and from the drawing cut the stone into a faithful and spirited likeness of the original. He died at the advanced age of eighty. Robert Carlyle was his second son. At an early age he showed a strong predilection for the delightful arts of drawing and painting; and besides the example of his father in the kindred art, had the benefit of the instructions of the late well-known painter Henry Nutter. His progress was correspondent with the excellence of his instructors and his own natural abilities. He attained distinction and patronage with unexampled rapidity. His reputation was early established by his elegant and accurate delineations of the antiquities of Carlisle Cathedral, for which he obtained the silver medal from the Society for the encouragement of Arts, and was still farther extended by the numerous drawings which he made, from actual observation, of the principal antiquities, gentlemen's seats, and other interesting objects throughout Cumberland, which he was employed to delineate by the publisher of Hutchinson's History of Cumberland, in order that they might be engraved for that work. He was then in his sixteenth year; and the beauty of his drawings and the elegance of his conversation recommended him to the notice of the principal noblemen and gentlemen throughout the county, whose patronage, had he possessed sufficient activity and energy to have availed himself of it, could not have failed to have been of the highest service to him, could he have been induced to push his fortune in the metropolis. But he was diffident, indolent, was indifferent to the pursuits of ambition, and when but young, was oppressed by that morbid melancholy, which seldom preys but on minds endowed with genius and sensibility, in whom it deadens the liveliest emotions, and obscures the most splendid abilities. He remained in his native county, and exercised with success, we need not say with reputation, the humble profession of a drawing master; still, however, keeping up his acquaintance with his old patrons,—among whom he numbered the late Duke of Norfolk, the late Dean Milner, and the present Mr. Howard of Corby Castle, of whom he used to speak with the most enthusiastic respect.—The last of his works is well known; it is a drawing of the city of Carlisle from the North-east, engravings from which have been extensively circulated, and which is acknowledged to be the most correct and elegant representation of this ancient city extant. But Robert Carlyle was not merely an artist; it was his extensive literary acquirements that principally recommended him to the notice of his patrons and friends. In the early part of his life, the year we do not know, he visited Edinburgh, where he exercised his profession with great success, and was employed in the families of Lord Palmerston, and other noblemen. He there cultivated the friendship of Mr. Brougham, Dr. John Thompson, and other distinguished characters, and studied moral philosophy for two winters under Dugald Stewart, and he has been heard to acknowledge with delight and gratitude the liberal patronage accorded him by that venerable philosopher. There was no passage of his life he seemed to lament more than his neglect in not availing himself of the opportunities he had of establishing himself in Edinburgh. As is usually the case with men of his mental conformation, he was not capable of much connected effort, and his works bear comparatively few indications of his extraordinary talents. In the year 1804 he published a novel entitled "The Rose of Cumberland," a work every way unworthy of him; and a few years since a poem, entitled "De Vaux, or the Heir of Gilsland," which, though it contains many passages of very superior merit, and is pretty free from striking faults, and shows much local knowledge, and is evidently the production of no ordinary mind, was so far beneath what might have been expected from him, that he much regretted its publication. His best pieces are anonymous and fugitive; some little pieces of poetry we have seen, of great beauty; some essays, which we have not been fortunate enough to meet with, we have more than once heard him allude to as his most happy efforts; and we do not doubt that, with a little care and discrimination, a volume of miscellanies might be collected, which would do much towards perpetuating the fame of their author. But it was in conversation that his talents shone with the greatest lustre. When we first became acquainted with him, in the decline of all his faculties, he was short in person, corpulent, ungraceful in his movements; his voice harsh, his countenance forbidding, and clouded by an habitual gloom, and, except when lighted by a cheerful smile, betraying not the smallest indication of genius. But his manners were easy, he had nothing of the harshness and pedantry of the scholar, his sentiments were always elegantly expressed, and you could not be five minutes in his company without feeling that he was an extraordinary man. His knowledge was astonishingly extensive, and minute. There was not an opinion in modern philosophy—there was not a poem or a character in modern literature, which he could not describe and discourse on with the energy of the philosopher and the poet. In his own county there was scarcely a family or a patch of land of which he knew not the history since the Norman Conquest; or an individual of the smallest note with whose character and habits he was not perfectly acquainted. We well remember his relating a conversation he had when in Edinburgh with a celebrated literary character now living, and who expressed pretty loudly his astonishment that a painter should know any thing of astronomy. And what was still more extraordinary, though he had never been farther south than Durham, he was intimately acquainted with the topography of every county, and with the peculiarities and beauties, even to the date of their erection, and the number of feet in the measurements, of almost every ancient building in Britain. A few days before his death, he fell in company with a clergyman from an episcopal city in the south west of England, and showed so intimate an acquaintance with every thing interesting in it, that the stranger could scarcely be persuaded that he was not a native of the place he described so accurately. It was pleasing and extraordinary, to behold a lump of apparently as sordid clay as ever was fashioned into a man, lighted up by so brilliant an intellect, and charming every heart within the sphere of its influence. Mr. C. was a freeman of this city, and a steady supporter of Mr. Curwen; and to the honour of the late Dean Milner be it recorded, that when Mr. Curwen's election for Carlisle was disputed by Sir Philip Musgrave, whose interests were espoused with unmixed zeal by our leading churchmen, and when a very few votes would have turned the scale in favour of the unsuccessful candidate, and Mr. Carlyle persisted in voting for Mr. Curwen in opposition to the wishes of the Dean, that worthy dignitary, who had it in his power to inflict weighty marks of his displeasure, continued, with rare liberality, to treat his *protegee* with his accustomed cordiality and munificence. As Mr. Carlyle advanced in years, his melancholy increased to an insupportable height, and except when in cheerful company he fell into the most lamentable despondency. The objects of ambition were fading before him, he felt the decay of his intellect, and lost all pleasure in literary pursuits. He recollected with the bitterest compunction and reflected with misery, on the errors and dissipations of his life, and expressed the most profound regret, that he had not sought that happiness in domestic enjoyment which the world had denied him. He dreaded the premature loss of his mental faculties; and the decay of his sight, the greatest deprivation in itself, began to strengthen the gloomy anticipation. He had also apprehensions of another kind; he had been accustomed to the favours of the great, to a life of plenty and occasionally of luxury; but his principal friends were either dead, or like himself, sinking in the vale of years, and a slender income seemed to afford little prospect of a continuation of those comforts and luxuries which he more than ever required. In this melancholy state of mind, looking back on a life in which he fancied he saw nothing but energies wasted and talents misapplied, full of regret for the past, and apprehension for the future, he settled into a quiet and immovable despair, and sunk at last beneath the accumulating pressure of real and imaginary evils.

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R.A.

