*50. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, 22 February, 1865

Dear Ruskin,

You have sent me a munificent Box of Cigars; for whh what can I say in ansr ? It makes me both sad and glad. *Ay de mi.*[[1]](#footnote-1)

“We are such stuff,

Gone with a puff—

Then think, and smoke Tobacco—"[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Wife also has had her Flowers; and a letter whh has charmed the female mind. You forgot only the first chapter of “Aglaia;” [[3]](#footnote-3) don’t forget; and be a good boy for the future.

The Geology Book wasn’t *Jukes*;I found it again in the Magazine, —reviewed there: “Phillips” [[4]](#footnote-4) is there such a name? It has agn escaped me. I have a notion to come out actually some day soon; and take a serious Lecture from you on what you really know, and can give me some intelligible outline of abt the Rocks,—*bones* of our poor old Mother; whh have always been venerable and strange to me.[[5]](#footnote-5) Next to nothing of rational could I ever learn of the subject. That of a central fire, and molten sea, on whh all mountains, continents, and strata are spread floating like so many hides of leather, knocks in vain for admittance into me these forty years; who of mortals can really believe such a thing! And that, in descending into mines, these geological gentn find themselves approaching *sensibly* their central fire by the sensible and undeniable *increase of temperature*  as they step down, round after round, —have always appeared to argue a *length of ear* on the part of those gentn, whh is the real miracle of the phenomenon. Alas, alas: we are dreadful ignoramuses all of us! Ansr  nothing; but don’t be surprised if I turn up some day.

Yours ever,

T. Carlyle

*51. Ruskin to Carlyle*

[Feburary 23 or 24, 1865]

Dear Mr Carlyle,

*Pray* come —as you kindly think of doing, and let us have talks, and looks. Geology is just in its most interesting stage of youth—a little presumptuous, but full of strength and advancing life. Its general principles and primary facts are now as certain as those of astronomy, but of —Central fire we as yet know nothing. You shall look at stones, and give them a *time*, and see what will come out of them for you, in your own way. I know you will find them interesting. But all the books are dismal, yet full of good work. I will stay in any day for you after Friday. You are sure to catch me before I go out any day, if you are as early as one. —Ever your affecte,

J. Ruskin

I wish you would read the tenth chapter, especially pp.112-113, in the book of Lyell’s[[6]](#footnote-6) which I send, with some care. The facts are those closest to us, and they are distinct, and very wonderful. If one once understands the relation of the formations of such an island as Ischia to the existing Fauna, all the after steps of geology are thereby measurable.

*52. Ruskin to Jane Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

[July 13, 1865]

Dear Mrs. Carlyle,

Am I not glad to hear!—even though it is of such pain and though I have the sorrow of knowing you wrote all that with your lame hand.[[7]](#footnote-7) After those last flowers, I went to Winnington where one of the younger governesses was ill of decline, she’s now dying —And I never saw an entirely healthy and happy girl burned away like a wax candle before –so it gave me some thoughts, &left the others less time, and her sister less heart for their work, and the school was just at its busiest time so I stayed a day or two longer and gave them some talks by way of such help as I could; so when I came back in a fortnight my mother & I concocted a visit to you –and we got up really a nice flower, and away we went to Chelsea my mother so particular about her two cards! one to be for Mr. Carlyle’s mythic presence. So when we got there they said you were in Scotland, but couldn’t tell me where, or I should have written long ago.

Please come back and don’t go to Folkstone[[8]](#footnote-8) [*sic*]. I’ve found a doctor here who will make you well if anybody will, for he’s so good to this poor girl and has helped her in all sorts of out of the way illness, that made the lungs worse.

—I’ve had one letter from lady Trevelyan —she’s better, and soon coming home. I have not answered it. I can’t talk—I’ve no ideas. —& I never seemed to have much interrupting business –it drives me wild not to be able to go on with my life for perpetual “musts” —and I don’t know what I shall come to, but I can’t write for I’m always in bad humour. I’ll see about this friend of yours however. I wrote her last night. I don’t remember any Mrs. Hawkes.[[9]](#footnote-9) I remember Miss Jewsbury.[[10]](#footnote-10) My mother is not well—nervous and dreamy—I am a little anxious—but hope it’s only stomach.

Ever your affectionate,

J.Ruskin

*53. Jane Carlyle to Ruskin*

Holm Hill, Thornhill, Dumphriesshire

15 July [1865]

Oh how delightful! My dear Mr. Ruskin! That nice long letter and lovely little Book[[11]](#footnote-11) —Imagine? They came to me the first thing on my Birthday morning![[12]](#footnote-12) Came with all the charm of a Birthday present! —You once gave me strawberries and cream on my Birthday. Do you remember? (I have never seen such strawberries and cream since! Nor have I had any such pleasant Birthday since! But all have passed in pain and sorrow!) I like the Book and letter far better, however, because these will *keep*! And, being superstitious a little, as a Scotch woman ought to be, I draw ever so many good omens from the Book and letter beginning a new year of Life for me. One piece of good I clearly divine therefrom; that *you* are not going to forget poor me in the pressure of your avocations and *distractions* but will care for me, and give me flowers now and then, as long as I last!

What a talent for *naming* you have!

“Of King’s Treasuries

Of Queen’s Gardens” [[13]](#footnote-13)

The names lift me already into the sphere of Arabian Nights!

Please tell your Mother how much I am obliged to her for her call, altho’ I was so unlucky as [to] miss it. And you may add, if you like, that I am sure she would not dislike me if she knew me: for the only time I ever saw her, I felt to *take to her* very much, because she said no superfluous or insincere word! And I have always found that those I take to at first sight take to *me* sooner or later if they give themselves a fair chance.

I cannot understand your persistence in forgetting Mrs. Hawkes (Madame Venturi)! She is to my mind perfectly charming! If you knew the romantic thing she once did for love of you, it would fix her in your mind forever!

“My lamed hand!” Alas no! It is not with *that* I write. *That* is quite past making any sort of writing whatsoever. It is too painful to attempt using *it* at all. So I have had to learn to write with my *left* hand, which protests against the unwonted exaction in taking every now and then the Cramp!

I hope to get home on the 24th or 25th.

Yours affectionately,

Jane Carlyle

I saw Mr. Carlyle Yesterday, entirely sick of “Solitude,” which he had got to call “*Stagnation”* ! He is about to start on further travels.

*54. Ruskin to Jane Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S

[July 18, 1865]

Dear Mrs Carlyle,

I am so happy about the birthday,—and very proudly happy that I can give you pleasure on any day. My mother is very cock-ahoop too, about your pretty message, but that is good for her, for she’s always snubbing *me* and then I say impertinent things to her, which she pretends not to mind, but does; and while she is always *saying* things which look as if she was the most conceited person in the world, she is really very uncomfortably humble, and glad of a bit of nice praise like this of yours.

I wrote “lame hand” carelessly, but I *had* read your letter. I meant the cramp-taking hand, not the disabled one.

But you must get the hands into order, we can’t have strikes right & left like this.

I’m trying to draw flowers, and feel as if I was a cramp altogether like Stefano[[14]](#footnote-14) [sic]. But unremissedly in affection and duty to you always your,

J. Ruskin

The photograph is very sweet in expression—Keepable, which few are.

*55. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, 20 December, 1865

Dear Ruskin,—

Don’t mind the *Bewick*; the indefatigable Dixon has sent me, yesterday, the Bewick’s “Life” as well (hunted it up from the “Misses Bewick” or somebody, and threatens to involve me in still further bother about nothing)—and I read the greater part of it last night before going to bed.[[15]](#footnote-15) Peace to Bewick: not a great man at all; but a very true of his sort, a well complete, and a very enviable, —living there in communion with the skies and woods and brooks, not here in do with the London Fogs, the roaring witchmongeries and railway yellings and howlings.

The “Ethics of the Dust,” whh I devoured witht pause, and intend to look at agn, is a most shining Performance! Not for a long while have I read anything tenth-part so radiant with talent, ingenuity, lambent fire (*sheet—*and other lightnings) of all commendable kinds! Never was such a lecture on *Crystallography* before, had there been nothing else in it, —and there are all manner of things. In power of *expression* I pronounce it to be supreme; never did anybody who had *such* things to explain explain them better. And the bit of Egyptn mythology, the cunning *Dreams* abt Pthah, Neith, &c apart from their elucidative quality, whh is exquisite, have in them a *poetry* that might fill any Tennyson with despair. You are very dramatic too; nothing wanting in the stage-directns, in the pretty little inicatns: a very pretty stage and *dramatis personae* altogether.[[16]](#footnote-16) Such is my first feeling abt yr Book, dear R.—Come soon, and I will tell you all the *faults* of it, if I gradually discover a great many. In fact, *come* at any rate!

Yrs ever,

T. Carlyle

*56. John A. Carlyle to Ruskin*

The Hill, Dumfries

4th Jany 1866

Dear Sir,

By this day’s post I have received your most welcome gist of a copy of you Ethics of the Dust, & I beg leave to thank you most cordially for sending it to me. I read nearly all of it yesterday, my brother having lent me a copy which I shall send back to Chelsea today. I also ordered a copy from London last night. I have recommended the book to friends who will be able to understand & appreciate it. I entirely agree with you in regard to all the things you teach in it, & admire the correct, easy & graceful style of the little book. It is one of the very best I have ever read, & I should be glad to have any “illustrated notes” you may be able to find time for—

Yours very truly,

J.A. Carlyle

Enclosed cutting from the Scotsman will show that your letter about Jamaica was also published in Edinburgh & would do some good there too [.]

*57. Ruskin to Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

Wednesday morning [1866?]

Dear Mr. Carlyle

It must be Thursday, I find, not to day, but I hope for a happy chat.

I shall bring you some eggs I’ve been putting by for you.

Ever your affect.

J.R.

*58. Ruskin to Carlyle*

[1866?]

Dear Mr Carlyle,

It breaks my heart to get such a letter from you, yet it is quite like you— very monumental of you— Only how could you think I did not understand your emphasis— I know how you feel things, and that what you were feeling was right, though you had not had time to see other things in the picture. What is that between thee & me?— Well, of course I’ll come; but could not Mrs. Carlyle and you come here.— You see, if I ask you to dinner my mother will make a state-matter of it—and fatigue herself with thinking of all dishes on and out of the earth— If you will come earlier, & stay dinner by surprise good; but I think the best way would be to drive over her about ½ past six, to tea, & for chat in evening. Could you do this— would you like it? Then I’ll come for another goodbye chat—at Chelsea—Any day would do for us except tomorrow?

Ever your loving

J. Ruskin

*59. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, 16 Feby, 1866

Dear Ruskin,

You vanished in a moment, that Athenean night;[[17]](#footnote-17) & I had not once thanked you, for yr valiant punctuality both in signing and agn in voting. You are becoming a very evasive furtive kind of man; that night at Chelsea too, for instance, was not there a Box of Distinguished Cigars, whh told a strange story of you? For shame!—Where will that end? In *fact*, I know not what to say of it.

At the Athenean we were blackballed, as you perhaps know, lost by one ball it appears. A base envious Plebe delights here & there to squirt a drop of dirty water in the face of his betters: never mind; it is the nature of the beast, and of the time it lives in.

Jane accepts you for Tuesday; and will this day warn the photograph people; indeed, is on the road thither at this moment. As to the lectures,[[18]](#footnote-18) of whh  the Program is abundantly seductive to us all, I had to prohibit *her* altogether: not to be thot of in such danger from cold. My Brother & I are extremely desirous; but even for us, such the distance, such the lateness of hour, I do not yet see any good possibility. The difficulty is not that of Dinner in the least; but that [of] getting home by abt 11 p.m. If *you* saw a practicable course in that particular and sent us tickets and indicate [?] &c. I almost believe we, even the lazier of us, wd lift anchor and try.

Fair befall you in all your enterprises furtive & other.

Yours always truly

T. Carlyle

*60. Ruskin to Jane Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

25th March [1866?]

Dear Mrs. Carlyle,

Could Mr. Carlyle and you dine with us on Tuesday? I could not ask you before, because I want you to see the child who was ill, (as I told you in posing up to photographers the other day), and I was not sure if she would be able to come, but she’s well now again and she’s coming with her other unless she gets ill again. So please come both, if you can. Just let me have one line by Crawly,[[19]](#footnote-19) if possible saying if you can come. (½ past 6).

Ever his and your affectionate

J. Ruskin

*61. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, London, 10th May 1866

Dear Ruskin,

Your kind words from Dijon were welcome to me: thanks. I did not doubt your sympathy in what has come;[[20]](#footnote-20) but it is better that I see it laid before me. You are yourself very unhappy, as I too well discern—heavy-laden, obstructed and dispirited; but you have a great work still ahead, and will gradually have to gird yourself up against the *heat* *of the day*, which is coming on for you, —as the Night too is coming. Think valiantly of these things.

I cannot write to you; I do not wish yet even to speak to anybody; find it more tolerable to gaze steadily in silence on the blackness of the abysses that have suddenly opened round me, and as it were swallowed up my poor little world. Day by day the stroke that has fallen, like a thunderbolt out of skies all *blue* (as I often think), becomes more immeasurable to me; my life all hid in ruins, and the one light of it as if gone out.[[21]](#footnote-21) And yet there is an inexpressible beauty, and even an epic greatness (known only to God and me), in the Life of my victorious little Darling whom I shall see no more. Silence anout all that; every word I speak or write of it seems to desecrate it, — so unworthy of the Fact now wrapt in the Eternities, as God has willed.

This day fortnight, about this hour (1 p.m.) we were lowering her dust to sleep with that of his Father, in the Abbey of Kirk of Haddington, as was our covenant for forty years back: since that day my life has been as *noiseless* as I could make it; and ought to continue so till I see farther. My Brother and Miss Welsh[[22]](#footnote-22) are still with me; everybody is and has been kind as Humanity could be; help me farther nobody can. If by slow degrees I *can* really do some useful work for the poor remainder of my days, it shall be well and fit; if otherwise, I always ready seem to see I shall soon follow whither she has gone. That is yet all.

Come and see me when you get home; come *oftener* and see me, and speak *more*  frankly to me (for I am very true to your highest interests and you) while I still remain here.

You can do nothing for me in Italy; except come home improved. If you pass through or near Montey (in the Valais, not far from Vevey, I think) you might call on (Dowager) Lady Ashburton,[[23]](#footnote-23) and bring me some report of her. Adieu, my friend, adieu.

T. Carlyle

*62. Ruskin to Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

[September 14, 1866]

Dear Mr. Carlyle,

How can I ever thank you enough for being to me what this Milan letter[[24]](#footnote-24) says (& your saying is like nature’s—one with deed) that you are—& for trusting and loving me enough to be able to write so to me. *Then—oh me—*if I had lost this letter!

God keep you and give you back some of your care to use your inner strength—the strength is itself unbroken.

I cannot say more today.

Ever your loving

J. Ruskin

*63. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, 27 Sept., 1866

Dear Ruskin,[[25]](#footnote-25)

I have again read all those letters: but do not, from Mr. Price or his *Jamaica Standard*, get the least glimmer of new light abt “The Tramway Swindle”[[26]](#footnote-26) or any of the other miracles alleged.—which I can only conceive as more of less *natural* misbirths of that nearly *in*conceivable little *Chaos in a Coalbox* (probably very violent, and sure to be *fuliginous*) whh they call “House of Assembly”; all intent upon *talk* of various kinds, while their Governor was pushing towards work and result. A mere heap of flaming soot; abstrusely equal to zero for us! Mr. Price, I have no reason to doubt, was and is perfectly honest and *bona-fide*; but need not concern us farther.

The best thing you can now do is to consult seriously that practical Mr. Harris;[[27]](#footnote-27) and if, unfortunately, he won’t be of the Committee, get him to undertake that lucid Digest, or conclusive little Summary of facts and of principles, whh *must* be set forth, and addressed to the British People for their answer. Such a thing would have immense results, if rightly done; and, to all appearance, he is the one man for it. Be diligt. I bid you!—

The letter from Christie[[28]](#footnote-28) (*ex-Brazillian* Excellency, and a very shrewd fellow) came this morng. I leave a memorandum of it with Hume;[[29]](#footnote-29) to whom, if you chance to look in, you may give it *in corpore*;—other-wise, keep or return hither.—I expect agn abt Wedny; and hope to be alone and get more good of you. *Ay de mi!—*

Yours ever

T. Carlyle

*64. Ruskin to Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

29th Sept. 1866

Dear Mr. Carlyle,

I went to Waterloo Place[[30]](#footnote-30) and gave Mr. Hume that letter about Lord Russell, [[31]](#footnote-31) yesterday, and the bearer of this had already delivered his pamphlet to him today. I asked him also whether he might not be helped in his present work by the lawyer’s precision of my friend Mr. Pattison[[32]](#footnote-32)—(I heedlessly called him Harrison to you the other night—having another lawyer and politico-economist friend of that name).[[33]](#footnote-33) But Mr. Hume looked a little disconcerted at the proposal, so it is best, I suppose, at present to leave matters in his very willing and active hands. I spoke to him about the Price matters; your kind note being, for the rest, quite enough for me; —however, I spoke to Hume about it, and he read me Eyre’s own letter about Price—which is conclusive.

The reason I attached overdue weight to Price’s letter you might partly guess from his niece’s, which I left with you, not inadvertently. I do not know if you looked at it again or thought of it in any wise—but if you could be troubled to glance over this two-in-one letter enclosed, which you see bears (receptive) postmark, “Luzern, 28th Nov., 1861,” you will see how it is that I can’t work now so well as I used to do; and why you must not scold me for not always being able to “look valiantly upon these things.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

Ever your loving

J. Ruskin

The passage about governesses refers to a gallant thing she did in defiance of all scoldings by her friends—namely, nursing her children’s sick governess herself, through a month’s long illness requiring *closest* watching, during some part of it, night and day.

I have opened my letter to put in also one that has come by this post, which I think you will like—in answer to what I told her of your impression of Mr. Price.

I’ll come over on Wednesday as usual. I am so glad you *like* to have me alone.

*65. Ruskin to Carlyle*

Denmark Hill, S.

[October 1, 1866]

Dear Mr. Carlyle,

Please, I’ll come over and take you to the committee on Wednesday. Then I’ll come on *Thursday* evening for talk, if that will do—or Friday—as you like best.

I’ve been looking for accounts of Gustavus—Lutzen, etc[[35]](#footnote-35) can’t get anything human about them.

It seems to be that a magnificent *closing* work for you to do would be to set your finger on the turning points and barriers in European history—to gather them into trains of light—to give, without troubling yourself about detail of proof, your own *final* impression of courses and causes of things—and your thoughts of the leading men, *who* they were, and *what* they were. If you like to do this, I’ll come and *write* for you a piece of every day, if after beginning it, you still found the mere hand work troublesome. I have a notion it would be very wholesome work for me, & it would be very proud & dear for me. But that’s by the way –only think of the thing itself.

Ever your loving,

J. Ruskin

*66. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Chelsea, 11 Octr, 1866

Dear Ruskin,

I chanced to be a little out of sorts last night, —the cause inconceivably small, that of first drinking two mouthfuls of bad tea in a house where I called, and then of eating cauliflower instead of potato at dinner time, *inconceivably* small but suffict to keep me pointedly awake the greater part of last night! It is therefore probably as well that the second misfortune came, —tho’ possibly too, yr talk might have warmed the past morning[?] into genial heat, and *saved* me from the monsters of the Night, nobody can say for certn. Certain only that *thus* we now are—and that, so far as I can now judge, Wednesday Evg next will be the favourable time. Unless you prefer Monday or any other day of next week, *and* will take the trouble of announcing it to me. Otherwise silence (as to Wedny) shall mean assent.

Last night I drew Price from his doomed Limbo down in kitchen (happy to find him still *un*burnt), & sent him to you. Don’t send him back, please!—

Interruptn of many hours, at this point, by a mass of printed slips form Hamn Hume, part of his *Pamphlet on Eyre*. Facts diligtly *chosen*; but *presented* as if wrapt in bales of wool—or by the broadest end & even by the *side*, instead of the point! Ah me, I feel as if I had *douched* for hours in *dirty water*,—yr own feeling, probably, in reading Price. For Hume’s pamphlet, yes; but for Eyre’s Committee, they will never do!—You will ultimately *have* to call in yr Mr. Harrison, or man of real logic and law. Meanwhile, go to poor Hume, & help him a little—take *you* his printed slips & read them: can you? I must absolutely *shut up* in that directn, to save my sanity!—

Enough today;

Yrs Ever

T. Carlyle

*67. Ruskin to Carlyle*

[December 1866]

Dear Mr. Carlyle,

I fear you have been expecting me. I have been expecting myself—every evening, but cold & hoarseness came after the toothache, & now I can’t speak.

I’ll come as soon as I can—I want so much to speak to you about that precious writing of yours, about old days. I had not courage when you did me the grace to speak of it, to say what I wanted to say. I must try, next time I come.

Ever your faithful & affectionate

J. Ruskin[[36]](#footnote-36)

*68. Carlyle to Ruskin*

Mentone ( The Dowr Lady Ashburton’s)

15 feby 1867

Dear Ruskin,

If the few bits of letters I have written form this place had gone by the *natural* priority and sequence, this wd have been the first or among the very first;—and indeed it is essentially so, —the first that I have written except upon Compulsion, or in answer to something written. My aversion to writing is at all times great. But I begin to feel a great want of having some news from you, at least hearing that you are not fallen *unwell*; and there is no other method of arousing you to yr duty.

I have done passably well since getting out hither; and cannot but count it a kind of benefit that the impetuous Tyndall[[37]](#footnote-37) tore me out from the sleety mud-abysses of London, as if by the hair of the head; and dropped me here, on a shore where there is at least clean air to breathe, and a climate that is bright and cheerful to move about in, —and where if frost did fall, and the streets became all of glass, people wd *not* be “fined for throwing ashes before their door” and trying to *save* one’s bones or brains from being broken if one ventured out! — That is really hitherto the most unmanageable, or almost the one unmanageable point for me in the problem of my London Winter: compelled to take no exercise except under peril of life of limb;—“most thinking people”, was there ever the match of you for a power of “common sense” especially!—

I dare say you have been here; and descriptn of scenery, locatlity etc., wd be quite thrown away on you. From Antibes on the west to Bordighera on the east, a stretch of perhaps forty miles diameter, is a beautiful semi-circular alcove, guarded by the maritime Alps from all bad winds; included in this *big* bay (or *alcove*) are five or six smaller ones,—of whh *Mentone*, towards Bordighera, is the last but one:—no climate, you perceive, can have a better chance to be *good*: and indeed, ever since Xmas last, when I arrived, it has far surpassed all my expectatns, or requiremts in that particr; rather *too* hot for most part, and driving me into the olive-woods and shaggy ravines, if the sun is still high. One’s paths there are steep exceedingly and rough exceedingly (donkey-paths for the country people, paved into dreadful *stairs* in the bad places); but they are silent, solitary; a walk there is soothing to one’s sad thots, instead of irritating, and does one good, tho’ of a mournful kind. As to “scenery”, you know me to care next to nothing for it; but I must own, these pinnacles that *stud* the back of *our* little Mentone “alcove,” for example, are the strangest and grandest things of the mountain kind I ever saw; bare-rocks, sharp as steeples, jagged as if hewn by lightning; most grim, perilous, cruel; “sitting there”, I sometimes say, “like so many witches of Endor,[[38]](#footnote-38) *naked* to the waist, but therefrom with the amplest petticoats of dark or bright green” (for all is terraced, and covered with olives, or oranges and lemons, down almost to the sea),—a really fine scene especially at morning and evg in light and shade, under a sky so clear and pure; scene whh I never yet raise my eyes to without something of surprise and recognitn.

The worst of my existence here is that I am thoroughly idle,—for the “work” I try at intervals is a mockery of work;—and my real task is to walk about four or five miles every day, and to guard myself vigilantly from being bored by surrounding black heads. For we are abt 800 here; and none of us has really anything to do. Patience, Vigilance,—and shirk off into the olive woods!

Often I begin to think of my route home agn; & what I shall next do there. Alas, all is abstruse and gloomy on that latter head; but surely something shd and must be settled as to all that too: while the days are, and any remnant of strength is, one ought not to wander in mere sadness of soul, doing nothing! The only point I look forward to with any fixed satisfactn as yet, is that of having Ruskin agn every Wedny evg, and tasting a little human conversatn once in the week, if oftener be not practicable!— But the very time of my returning is uncertn though I care not for yr March tempests, and perhaps had better be at Chelsea even now: but there are grand speculatns abt seeing Rome first, Genoa at least and Florence first,—and many attempts to awaken my appetite that way, hitherto witht success perceptible. It is strange how one’s love of travel perfects itself by simply sitting still, if [one] can do that long enough!—

Adieu, my Friend; I want a little note for you *quam primum* [“first thing”]. I send many regards to the good & dear old Lady;— and am ever

Yours gratefully

T. Carlyle

*69. Ruskin to Carlyle*

Denmark Hill,

17th February, 1867

Dearest Mr. Carlyle,

I should indeed have written to you, as you bade me—long ago, if it had not been that I had nothing to say except either what you knew very well—(that I loved you—and because I did, was glad, for the time, I had lost you)—or—what it would have made you very angry with me to know. Which, as it must be told, may well now be at once got confessed. Namely, that one day—soon after you left—I sat down gravely to consider what I could say about poetry, and finding after a forenoon that the sum of my labours amounted to four sentences, with the matter of two in them, that also my hands were hot—and my lips parched—and my heart heavy—I concluded that it was not the purpose of fate that I should lose any more days in such a manner, and wrote to the Oxford people a final and formal farewell.[[39]](#footnote-39)

For which they have graciously expressed pretty regrets: but I have since felt none—except those which related to the letter I had some day to write to Mentone.

One pleasant thing I had to tell you of, however, was a most happy evening we had with your sister.[[40]](#footnote-40) I think she enjoyed it too. My mother was entirely happy with her at once, and my cousin rejoiced in her, and I rejoiced in all three. Her modest gentleness of *power* is notable to me above anything I have yet seen of womankind.

She saved a little bit of Frederick the Great from the housemaid—and sent it me—for which I am ever her grateful servant.

She told me a little thing that touched me closely also—that you had thought it worth while to keep—labelled—that little scrawl of curved lines I made one evening. And I think I shall be able to show you, when you return, that my poor little gift, such as it is, *does* lie in eye and hand—not in brains—for, since I finally gave up the Oxford matter, I set myself (chiefly to put some too painful thoughts from me) to do in painting one or two little things as well as I could. (Which I never did before—for all my drawing hitherto has only been to collect data—never for its own sake.) And, doing as well as I could, I have done—not ill—several things—a dead partridge, and a wild drake, and a small twisted shell. That sounds despicable enough, I fear, to you in your olive woods at the feet of Witches of Endor;—nevertheless, poor as it may be, I think it *is* my work. For, Turner being dead, I am quite sure there is no one else in England now who could have painted that shell, but I; and it seems to me, therefore, I must have been meant to do it.

I need not say how happy the kind sentence about your wishing to have me again on Wednesday evenings made me. Nevertheless, I must still unselfishly pray that you may be enchanted away by magical “hair of the head”—to Florence at least, if not to Rome. That satiety of travel is surely a kind of lichenous overgrowing of one’s thoughts when one has been *too* long at rest—very good for most people, if they would only have patience to take the colouring—but surely not for you? I think your interest in seeing would increase the more you were tempted to see, and that the mere change of air and of slope of sunray, by whatever endurance of irksome motion obtained, would be—of—so much better for you than the monotonous effluvium of Chelsea shore. The fog was so dark to-day that I had candles at nine o’clock breakfast. Think of that! and look up to your sky “with recognition.”

My mother thanks you much for your good message. I hope to have some interesting little gossip to write to you about my cousin, next week.[[41]](#footnote-41)

I am so ashamed of my writing. I can’t help it, unless I write so very slow that I should forget what I had to say. Sincere regards to Lady Ashburton.—Ever your affectionate

J. Ruskin

1. Letter 50 MS not located. Pbd: Collingwood, II, 301

   A favorite phrase of both the Carlyles. They discovered it while reading a Spanish edition LeSage’s *Gil Blas* together in Craigenputtockduring the first few years of their marriage. The exact source is *Gil Blas,* book IX, chapter 5— “Ay de mi! Un aňo felice,” etc. —and the phrase can be roughly translated as “Woe is me.” See Wilson, VI, 84-85.

   Years later, in a letter to C.E. Norton on October 7, 1884, Ruskin made a revealing comment on the frequency of the phrase’s appearance in Carlyle’s letters and speech. “The world’s made up of morts and disses,” he said, “and it’s no use always saying ‘ay de mi’ like Carlyle. I’m really ashamed of him in those letters to Emerson. My own diaries are indeed full of mewing and moaning all to myself, but I think my letters try to be pleasant.” (C.E. Norton, ed., *The Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton* [Boston and New York, 1905], II, 204.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An excerpt from of popular poem by George Wither. Carlyle’s quotation is inaccurate, though it is easy to understand why the original stanza stayed, however hazily, in his memory:

   And when the smoke ascends on high,

   Then thou behold’st the vanity

   Of wordly stuff— –

   Gone with a puff:

   Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

   Another reference to this poem can be found in *Sartor Resartus,* ed. C.F. Harrold (New York, 1937), p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The first chapter of Ruskin’s *The Cestus of Aglaia*  has been published in the *Art Journal*  in February 1865. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Joseph Beete Jukes, F.R.S. (1811-69), had been conducting a discussion of Alpine geology with Ruskin in letters to *The Reader* during October and November 1864. See *Works*, XXVI, 553 and n. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On March 1 Carlyle wrote to his brother John: “On Monday I had engaged myself to Denmark Hill, for Ruskin’s superb mineralogical collection and a free discourse upon the same: –and adventure that proved pleasant enough while it lasted” (Alexander Carlyle, *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle* [1904], II, 225).

   Letter 51. MS:NLS, 555.20 Pbd: Ruskin’s Works, XXXVI, 481

   Ruskin’s knowledge of the comparatively new field of geology was extensive. At the age of fifteen he had published an essay of the rock strata of Mont Blanc—the first of many such articles he was to write over the next fifty years. At Oxford he studied under some of the best geologists of the day, and since 1840 he had been an active member of the Geological Society. For a lengthier discussion of Ruskin’s geological interests, see Collingwood (rev.), pp 205-9, where this letter is also published. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Lyell’s *Elements of Geology* (1865), chapter 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Letter 52*. MS: NLS, 555.21. Pbd. in Burd, *Winnington*, pp. 562-63. Addr (cited in Burd, *Winnington*): Mrs. Carlyle/Nith Bank/*Thornhill*/ Dumfries-Shire. Pm (cited in Burd, *Winnington*): LONDON/JY 13 65; THORNHILL/JY 14 [65]. The MS has “13 July, 1865” in another hand.

   Mrs. Carlyle’s right hand had been occasionally lamed by her frequent attacks of neuralgia. See also Letter 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In August, Mrs. Carlyle went to Folkestone to visit her friend, Miss Davenport Bromley. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Emilie Hawkes, a friend of Mrs. Carlyle. She became the wife of Carlo Venturi, an Italian friend of Mazzini, who also knew the Carlyles. The MS of this letter has an asterisk after the name, and “Mrs. Hawkes, later Madame Venturi. A.C.” pencilled in the margin, possibly in the hand of Alexander Carlyle. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury (1812-80), Mrs. Carlyle’s friend and author of several novels. See also Letter 104.

    *Letter 53.* MS: Yale University Library. Pbd: Sanders, p.222. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Sesame and Lilies,* which had been published in June. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. July 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The titles of two parts of *Sesame and Lilies*. The first part, “Of King’s Treasuries” was first delivered as a lecture on the influence of good books at Manchester on December 14, 1864. The second part “Of Queen’s Gardens” was delivered in the same place on December 14, 1864, and was a lecture on the influence of good women.

    Carlyle, writing to Jane from Scotland twelve days later, refers to Ruskin’s gift, and makes an interesting comment on it. “Ruskin’s *Sesame and Lilies*,” he said, “must be a pretty little thing. Trollope, in reviewing it with considerable insolence and stupidity and vulgarity, produces little specimens far beyond any Trollope sphere of speculation.” (T. Bliss, *Thomas Carlyle’s Letters to His* Wife [1953], p. 381.) On pp. 404-5 of her book, Bliss has an extract of Trollope’s review, which sheds some light on Carlyle’s description. Trollope, after claiming that Ruskin’s words do not contain Carlyle’s “innate wisdom” and have “no definite tendency,” goes on to lament Ruskin’s “desire to preach sermons instead of making music with his bow,” and wishes Ruskin would return to writing about art.

    *Letter 54.* MS: NLS, 555.22 Hitherto unpbd. The MS has “18 July 1865” in another hand. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, V.i.286.: “O touch me not! I am not Stephano, but a cramp.”

    *Letter 55.* MS:not located. Pbd: Collingwood, II, 321-22 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Thomas Dixon, the “ philosophic corkcutter” whose discussions with Ruskin appear in *Time and Tide*, had sent Carlyle a copy of *The History of British Birds*, by Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), a famous English wood engraver and illustrator. It was a gift for Carlyle’s birthday (December 4). Dixon also sent Carlyle a copy of the *Memoir of Thomas Bewick Written by Himself* (1862), edited by Jane Berwick, who is obviously the “Misses Bewick” mentioned above. Ruskin was studying Bewick at the time, as part of his research for *The Cestus of Aglaia.* See Wilson, VI, 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ruskin’s *The Ethics of Dust* was first issued in December of 1865. Cast in the form of a dialogue between a kindly visiting lecturer (Ruskin) and an audience of young girls at Winnington school, the book is purportedly about crystals, but Ruskin’s imaginative style carries him into the realms of the past, dreams, mythology, and social criticism. The “Egyptn mythology” Carlyle mentions refers to Lecture II of the book, “The Pyramid Builders,” which contains Ruskin’s account of his dreams about Egyptian gods and goddesses—especially Neit and Ptah—and has three lengthy notes about the origins and meanings of these deities.

    Some of the “faults” Carlyle may have discussed with Ruskin after his “first feeling” can be found in a letter to his brother John on December 21: “I have been reading a strange little Xmas Book of Ruskin’s called *Ethics of the Dust*,” he said, “it is all *abt.* crystallography; and seems to be, or is, geologically well-informed and correct; but it twists *symbolically*, in the strangest way, all its Geology into Morality, Theology, Egyptian Mythology, (with fiery cuts at Political Economy, etc!)—pretending not to know whether the forces and destinies and behaviours of crystals are not very like those of men! Wonderful to behold. Apart from this sad weakness of *backbone*, the Book is full of admirable talent: with such a faculty of *expression* in it (or of picturing what is meant) as beats all living rivals.” (Froude IV, 298 and MS: NLS, 526.35.)

    *Letter 56.* MS: Bembridge. Hitherto unpbd. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Letter 57. MS: NLS, 555.28. Hitherto unpubd.

    Letter 58. MS: NLS, 555.17. Hitherto unpubd. The top of the MS has “*Before* April 1866” in another hand.

    Letter 59. MS: Strouse Collection, University of California, Santa Cruz. Hitherto unpubd.

    Carlyle and Ruskin were member of the Atheaeum Club in London. Carlyle, through the efforts of Lord Ashburton, had been elected to the club in early March 1853; and Ruskin had been a member since 1851. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ruskin’s lecture “War,” which was delivered on the night of February 16 at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. It was later included in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866).

    *Letter 60*. MS: NLS, 555.29. Hitherto unpubd. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Frederick Crawley, whom Ruskin called “George” and who was Ruskin’s devoted servant for many years. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jane Welsh Carlyle had died on April 21, 1866. On the afternoon of that day Ruskin had come to Chelsea to call on Mrs. Carlyle, bringing flowers, only to be met at the door with news of her death. On April 24 Ruskin left England for a tour of his Continent with Lord and Lady Trevelyan, and he had reached Dijon on May 4. His diary says “I write to Mr. Carlyle” on May 6 (see *Diaries*, II, 587).This May 6 letter has not been found, but it is obviously the one Carlyle refers to here.

    Carlyle’s reference to Ruskin’s “unhappy” state is probably a reference to Ruskin’s alarming symptoms, since it was at this time that Ruskin first experienced fits of giddiness and clouded vision. It may also be a reference to Lady Trevelyan’s declining health, for she was to die on May13. The grief that Ruskin felt over the loss of both women was a deep and genuine one, as Carlyle knew, and some indication of it can be found in a letter from Ruskin to Rawdon Brown on June 11: “The deaths of Mrs. Carlyle and of Lady Trevelyan take from me my two best women friends of older power; and I am not very zealous about anything,” he said (*Works,* XXXVI, 509). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. A phrase Carlyle had used in the epitaph he composed for Mrs. Carlyle’s tombstone. The last line of the inscription is: “She died at London, 21st April, 1866; suddenly snatched away from him, and the light of his life as if gone out.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Dr. John Carlyle and “Maggie” Welsh, a cousin of Mrs. Carlyle. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The second Lady Ashburton, who was now a widow, since Lord Ashburton had died in March 1864. See Letter 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Letter 62*. MS: NLS, 555.24. Pbd: Ruskin’s *Works*, XXXVI, 515. The MS has “PMk. 14 Sept.’66” in another hand.

    Carlyle’s letter of May 10 had been forwarded to Milan, but Ruskin decided not to go to that city, and the letter eventually reached him in London. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Letter 63*. MS: Yale University Library. Pbd: Ruskin’s *Works*, XXXVI, 517.

    This letter, and the three following it, deal with the “Eyre Defense Committee.” In October 1865, a small uprising of blacks in Jamaica was suppressed with great speed and destruction by the governor of the island, Edward John Eyre. Soon a committee, led by John Stuart Mill, T. H. Huxley, Thomas Hughes, Charles Darwin, John Bright, Herbert Spencer and Goldwin Smith, was formed to denounce and prosecute Eyre as an incompetent tyrant and murdered who violated the natural rights of all English subjects. Eyre was recalled to England and put on trial before Parliament. Carlyle, who had little sympathy for democracy, had already written disparagingly of the Jamaican natives in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (see his *Works*, XX, 25-27; and XXIX, 355-57), and looked upon Eyre as a hero who had resolutely stopped a potentially dangerous rebellion. In the late summer and early fall of 1866, he helped form the Eyre Defense Committee, and served as its first chairman. He enlisted the aid of Charles Kingsley, Tennyson, Dickens and Ruskin, whose speech in defense of Eyre can be found in his *Works*, XVIII, 552. Eyre was eventually acquitted, but was not allowed to return to his post in Jamaica. See Introduction. See also Bernard Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (1962); G. H. Ford, “The Governor Eyre Case in England,” *UTQ,* XVII (1947-48) 219-33; and Gillian Workman, “Thomas Carlyle and the Governor Eyre Controversy: An Account with Some New Material,” VS, XVIII, no.1 (September 1974), 77-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In 1862, Eyre had been peripherally involved in an attempt by a colonial engineer to embezzle government funds during the construction of a tramway in Jamaica. George Price, a member of Eyre’s executive committee, had persuaded Eyre to prosecute the engineer by threatening to send a letter to the Duke of Newcastle exposing the whole affair. According to Semmel (*The Governor Eyre Controversy*, p.112), Price wrote to Ruskin in September 1866, and gave all the information on the tramway episode. It is obviously these letter that have been shown to Carlyle. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Actually Harrison. See Letter 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. William Dougal Christie (1816-74), who was ambassador to Brazil, 1858-63, and an advocate of black freedom. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Hamilton Hume, who was writing his *Life of Governor Eyre* (1867). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Letter 64.* MS: NLS, 555.25. Pbd: Ruskin’s *Works*, XXXVI, 517-18.

    No.9 Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, was where the committee met, and where Ruskin delivered his speech on September 7, 1866. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Lord John Russell, who was foreign secretary under Palmerston from 1860 to 1865 and prime minister from October 1865 to July 1866. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This may be Dr. Pattison, a physician whom Ruskin saw on September 6, or (more probably) Mark Pattison, who was then rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, and who had dined with Ruskin on September 23. See Ruskin, *Diaries*, II, 598, 600. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Frederick Harrison, who was actually serving on the Eyre prosecuting committee at the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See Letter 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Letter 65*. MS: NLS, 555.26. Pbd Ruskin’s *Works*, XXXVI, 518. The MS has “P Mk. 1 Octr 1866” in another hand.

    In his *Life of Schiller*, Carlyle refers to Schiller’s abilities as a historian and then gives “a few scenes from his [Schiller’s] masterly description of the Battle of Lützen” and the death of Gustavus Adolphus as “a specimen of Schiller’s historical style” (*Works*, XXV, 104, 317-20). Carlyle was revising his *Schiller* for a new edition, which, according to Isaac W. Dyer, ed., *A Bibliography of Thomas Carlyle’s Writings and Ana* (Portland, Maine 1928), p.245, came out in 1867.

    *Letter 66.* MS: NLS, Acc. 2773. Hitherto unpbd. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Letter 67.* MS: NLS, 555.27. Hitherto unpbd. The letter is dated “December, 1866” in another hand.

    *Letter 68.* MS: Bembridge. Pbd. Ruskin’s *Works*, XVII, 339n., and with omissions in Collingwood, II, 340-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Professor John Tyndall (1820-93), a famous scientist and an old friend of Carlyle. Through his instigation the trip was arranged, and he accompanied Carlyle across the Continent until they arrive at Menton, where the second Lady Ashburton kept a villa on the Riviera near Monaco. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See I Samuel 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Letter 69*. MS: Carlyle House, Chelsea. Pbd: (with MS of first paragraph reproduced in facsimile) Ruskin’s *Works*, XXXVI, 524. The upper left-hand corner of the MS has the following scrawl in Carlyle’s hand: “Thinking to send only a *half*, I…[word illegible], but now Dissent.”

    Carlyle was helping some of Ruskin’s friends at Oxford who were trying to have Ruskin appointed to the professorship of poetry there, recently vacated by Matthew Arnold. After Ruskin withdrew his candidacy, the position was given to Sir Francis Doyle. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Carlyle’s sister Jean (Mrs. James Aitken, of Dumphries), who was taking care of the Carlyle house in Chelsea at the time. She was the mother of Mary Aiken, Carlyle’s niece and helper in his old age (see Letter 93). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. In Ruskin’s diary for Feburary 23 (*Diaries*, II, 611) he wrote “Saturday. The dreadful day for poor Joan.” This is obviously a reference to the fact that Rose La Touche’s brother Percy had broken off his engagement with Joan Agnew. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)