

LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS AND THE PILLS OF RHETORIC

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B. A., Kansas State University, 1969

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

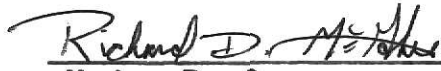
MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

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Latter-Day Pamphlets and the Pills of Rhetoric

As early as 1848, in a letter to his brother, Thomas Carlyle indicated that he was interested in writing several articles on the recent political and social developments in England. Although he did write some short newspaper articles for the Examiner and the Spectator, the Latter-Day Pamphlets, "a sincere yet often criticized series of essays,"¹ did not take form until 1850. In January of 1850 Carlyle again wrote to his brother saying

After long haggling, and much sorrowful toil and consideration, I have decided to venture out with a set of Reform Discourses, 'Latter-Day Pamphlets' I call them, upon the frightful aspects of human affairs, here on our side of the Ocean,--which, especially since I was in Ireland, has lain like a millstone on me. I am minded, perilous as it looks, to tell the people somewhat of my real mind about it;--that is the one service I can do in regard to it.²

This statement provides an important insight into the motives for Carlyle's writing of the Pamphlets. The letter indicates that Carlyle saw the recent developments in Europe as frightful. For a man who knew only too well the lessons of the French Revolution, the times were indeed perilous. The revolutionary fervor of 1848 had not reached England and Carlyle felt the need to warn his countrymen about the perils of revolution. Perhaps the part he played in English history and literature can best be described, especially in the case of the Pamphlets, as physician. He diagnosed a disease in the state of England and sought to prescribe a cure.

The plan of the Pamphlets, as Carlyle saw it in January of 1850, was to produce an essay a month for the whole year, twelve in all.³ Such a projection, however, proved too strenuous for him and only eight essays were written: "The Present Time" (February), "Model Prisons" (March), "Downing Street" (April), "The New Downing Street" (April 15), "Stump-Orator" (May), "Parliaments" (June), "Hudson's Statue" (July), and "Jesuitism" (August). In these essays Carlyle comments on almost all aspects of English life. The manner in which he presents his literary medicine deserves close analysis and it is my purpose to demonstrate exactly how he achieves what he does in the Pamphlets.

In his early work, The French Revolution, Carlyle invented for rhetorical purposes "the eye of history" which functioned as a panoramic movie camera, surveying vast scenes of action, moving slowly or swiftly up to capture the essence of a character or a mood of revolutionary frenzy. The Latter-Day Pamphlets lacks this type of literary machinery. At first consideration one might ask, "So what?" Perhaps a credible answer might be that "machinery" per se is exactly what Carlyle, in the 1850 essays, is challenging; the machinery of politics, economics, and society. The French Revolution had taught him much about idealistic revolutionaries and the machinery they employed to produce those ideals. In the chapter of The French Revolution titled "Realized Ideals" Carlyle explains his view of France's struggle for democracy; and in doing so, delineates a pattern

for all idealistic struggles.

How such ideals do realize themselves; and grow, wondrously, from amid the incongruous ever-fluctuating chaos of the actual; this is what world-history, if it teach us anything, has to teach us. How they grow; and after long stormy growth, bloom out mature, supreme; then quickly (for the blossom is brief) fall into decay; sorrowfully dwindle; and crumble down, or rush down, noisily or noiselessly disappearing.⁴

When one contrasts this rather pessimistic statement on the ability of people to change the course of their existence with the observations he makes in the Latter-Day Pamphlets thirteen years later, an interesting disparity results. If he believed that such ideals, when they are realized, do not last long--that they eventually noisily or noiselessly disappear--why, then, does he even feel a need to write the Pamphlets? The answer to the question, I think, is simple.

Carlyle was, no doubt, aware of the great strides in British industrialism. From 1815 to 1845 wool production jumped from 926,264 yards to 23,831,017 yards; iron production rose from about 170,000 tons in 1800 to 1,500,000 tons in 1840.⁵ At the expense of much human energy Britain had realized great industrial growth. This energy, in essence, is the same human energy expended during the French Revolution. Carlyle's purpose in the Pamphlets, then, is to direct this energy away from the diseased political and economic sham ideals to healthy, humanistic ideals. The Pamphlets act first as a sounding board for his criticism of the times and secondly as a channel or direction for the "incongruous ever-fluctuating chaos" of energy that

pervaded the British nation. Eric Bentley observes that

What he attacks is, after all, what many later thinkers were to attack: mechanistic science. What he defends is what Bergson and the so-called "irrationalists" of the late nineteenth century were to defend: intuition as against logic in the mind, life and organism as against machinery in the external world. This is what he means when he protests that moderns are driving God out of the universe, and when he declares that man is a spirit and a mystery. Sometimes his language is plain: "The healthy Understanding we should say, is not the logical, argumentative, but the Intuitive."⁶

Carlyle wishes to "convert" the English from mechanistic to humanistic goals. If England were to direct her energies toward more humanitarian aims, perhaps then the ideals could be realized and allowed to blossom and grow. In the chapter "The Everlasting Yea" in Sartor Resartus, Carlyle exclaims, "Be no longer a Chaos, but a world, or even a Worldkin. Produce! Produce!"⁷ Applied to the Pamphlets this statement provides an insight into Carlyle's motives for those 1850 essays: to grasp the chaotic advances in industry and society and make a "world" of them. The questions one must eventually ask then are: How did he go about "directing" the energies of the nation? How does he gain his readers' confidence?

In many ways Carlyle's prose and mode of argument are very much like the times in which he wrote; they move quickly, and often seem unrelated and disconnected. It should be noted, however, that although such descriptions do apply, the prose and argument are always under control and quite deliberate in their intention. It is the rhetoric of emotion, passion, and sincerity.

It is unencumbered by mechanical logic. Carlyle, himself, best explains his method: "Our Professor's method is not, in any case, that of common school Logic, where the truths all stand in a row, each holding by the skirts of the other; but at best that of practical Reason, proceeding by large Intuition over whole systematic groups and kingdoms; Whereby, we might say, a noble complexity, almost like that of Nature, reigns in his Philosophy, or spiritual Picture of Nature: a mighty maze, yet, as faith whispers, not without a plan."⁸ Carlyle is not a prophet of inevitable doom; he is an interpreter of the "mighty maze" and an instructor of the "plan." This plan, nebulous as it may be, is there. One must be willing to attempt to grasp the whole fabric of each essay, rather than analyze each predication and all its implications. The reason becomes apparent when one understands Carlyle's rhetorical technique of what I have chosen to call the organic image.

Carlyle seldom uses a metaphor or simile once. He returns to it time and again. The reader comes upon these images at various intervals in Carlyle's essays, somewhat in the way a patient would receive medicine from a doctor at prescribed intervals. Each argument becomes a fabric of imagery, calling to each reader's mind notions of mythology, the Bible, industry, science, and nature. Through this technique the author is able to prejudice his readers. Whenever Carlyle mentions something that he thinks deserves his ridicule, he encloses his object of attack in connotative clothing. The first essay of the Pamphlets,

"The Present Time," provides a good example of my point.

The year 1848 saw revolutions all over Europe; England was the only major country that did not see a popular uprising. Carlyle thought that such an expenditure of unorganized energy was useless and wasted. The organic imagery can be seen in Carlyle's first reference to democracy, the cause of all the wasted enegery, in the first of the essays. He calls it "immeasurable Democracy . . . monstrous, loud, blatant, inarticulate as the voice of Chaos."⁹ The next reference adds to the connotations of democracy by calling it "open 'kinglessness,' what we call anarchy."¹⁰ Carlyle enlarges his imagery in his next reference. "And so in City after City, street-barricades are piled, and truculent, more or less murderous insurrection begins; populace after populace rises, King after King capitulates or absconds; and from end to end of Europe Democracy has blazed-up explosive, much higher, more irresistible and less resisted than ever before; testifying too sadly on what a bottomless volcano, or universal powder-mine of most inflammable mutinous chaotic elements, separated from us by a thin earth-rind, Society with all its arrangements and acquirements everywhere, in the present epoch, rests."¹¹ In that sentence Carlyle links the concept of democracy with all sorts of pejorative ideas, "murderous insurrection," "explosive," "a bottomless volcano," "universal powder-mine," "mutinous chaotic elements." There are, implicit in such phrases, enormous amounts of energy, unchanneled and misdirected. The imagery

expands in subsequent references to include such phrases as: "universal big black Democracy," "an inevitable fact," "no-Government." His mode of argument often gives the appearance of being raucous; yet he remains always in control, ever expanding the original purport of his original argument.

Later in the essay he contends with American democracy, which he calls successful. But then he heaps on qualifications to that judgement. "New Spiritual Pythons, plenty of them; enormous Megatherions, as ugly as were ever born of mud, loom huge and hideous out of the twilight Future on America."¹² He anticipates the uproar such statements will cause, but, nevertheless, concludes that democracy is forever impossible. One might ask, and rightly, how he comes to such a conclusion. His rebuttal or "proof" comes not before the conclusion but after it. In a very effective analogy Carlyle states his case. He proposes that the only way to be governed effectively and justly is to put "The Noble in the high place, the Ignoble in the low; that is, in all times and in all countries, the Almighty Maker's Law."¹³ Such an answer is loaded from the beginning. If one contradicts Carlyle, then the critic defies God's Law. If, on the other hand, one agrees with Carlyle, then the assenter is against democracy which one cannot be because democracy is change and all change is good. But Carlyle has shown that all change, most assuredly that which follows in the direction of the French, is not good. Where, then, does one side? The obvious answer, at least to Carlyle, is emphatically on the side

of God's Law. The analogy that he uses to buttress his "argument" compares democracy to a ship. He believes that the Noblest can never be elected to the supreme governing position of the nation. Because this is so, a ballot-box (democracy) is "Excellent for keeping the ship's crew at peace under their Phantasm Captain; but unserviceable, under such for getting round Cape Horn."¹⁴ He concludes his "argument" by exclaiming, "Alas, that there should be human beings requiring to have these things argued of, at this late time of day!"¹⁵ The irony of his conclusion lies in the fact that many democratic thinkers viewed the times as a beginning or dawn of social and political advancement. Carlyle views the scene dimly as if it were the twilight of England; hence, the title of the essay "The Present Time" under the general heading Latter-Day (Last Days) Pamphlets.

To see just how dim a view Carlyle had, one must again look at the author's own words. "British Industrial existence seems fast becoming one huge poison-swamp of reeking pestilence physical and moral; a hideous living Golgotha of souls and bodies buried alive; such a Curtius' gulf, communicating with the Nether Deep, as the Sun never saw till now."¹⁶ Implicit in his imagery is not only powerful emotion, but also, and more importantly, an enormous amount of energy, untamed and untamed. The potential for accomplishment is there, but the nation has fallen ill, physically and morally. Carlyle wishes to cure the nation by directing this energy, but only in ways that recognize and obey God's Law. He calls to the Captains of

Industry, the "new Aristocracy," to provide the organization for the working classes. From one point of view this was an unpopular attitude because it came at a time when business was crying "laissez-faire." From another point of view the attitude placed a heavy responsibility upon industry for the welfare of the working classes. At any rate Carlyle sought change; economic and spiritual health for the "Vagrant Lackalls."

In the second essay "Model Prisons" Carlyle strikes out at those people who would disobey God's Law. He castigates those who would heap pity on the criminals who have broken society's laws. "Philanthropy, emancipation, and pity for human calamity is very beautiful; but the deep oblivion of the Law of Right and Wrong . . . is by no means beautiful."¹⁷ Carlyle is saying that mindless philanthropy is worthless unless it plays an important role in curing the human condition. Why waste precious time and good money trying to ease the living conditions of Britain's criminal prisons? The point is, according to Carlyle, to reform and help those wretches who, although they are economically poor, at least have chosen not to do wrong. Carlyle had visited Millbank Penitentiary and his report of the prison's condition is incorporated into the essay. He remarks that "no Duke in England lives in a mansion of such perfect and thorough cleanness."¹⁸ The food was of "excellence superlative," and the prisoners were protected from the petty cares of society. They did not have to worry about money, taxes, and other "botherations." In fact Carlyle seems

actually to envy them. "I fancied I, for my own part, so left with paper and ink, and all taxes and botherations shut-out from me, could have written a Book as no reader will here ever get of me."¹⁹ His lack of feeling in this essay for the down-trodden of English society seems to strike a modern reader especially. The sweep of worldwide protest that often makes an attempt to assert itself today seems to be very much like the sweep of philanthropy that Carlyle wished to stop. He saw nothing wrong with caring for the other man; it was just that he preferred "selective benevolence" on those who deserved it. What he wanted was reform in the areas that caused such social conditions and scoundrelism. His opinion was unpopular because it denied a basic premise of humanity.

Carlyle saw the criminals as nothing much more than animal-like creatures. He forgot that they are still men and should be treated as humans. Perhaps this is the weakest part of his argument, but if we suspend our reason long enough, his opinions become an ironical comment. In much the same manner as Swift's Modest Proposal, perhaps Carlyle is saying exactly the opposite of what he means. Certainly his invective is Swiftian in tone. James Froude believed that although Carlyle's protests were ignored in 1850, as time went on, many fell into agreement with Carlyle. "His savageness was but affection turned sour, and what he said was the opposite of what he did."²⁰

The imagery that the author employs is not necessarily grand or sublime. When he refers to the imprisoned felons,

they become less than human. Upon seeing, during his tour of Millbank, a "Chartist Notability" Carlyle remarks that he "had noted well the unlovely voracious look of him the Chartist, his thick oily skin, his heavy dull-burning eyes, his greedy mouth, the dusky potent insatiable animalism that looked out of every feature of him: a fellow adequate to animal-magnetize most things, I did suppose."²¹ Carlyle chooses to downgrade the pathetic criminals even more by describing them in bestial terms. Later on in the essay, after viewing all twelve hundred criminals, Carlyle observes: "Miserable distorted blockheads, the generality; ape-faces, imp-faces, angry dog-faces, heavy sullen ox-faces; degraded underfoot perverse creatures, sons of indocility, greedy mutinous darkness, and in one word, of STUPIDITY, which is the general mother of such."²² These images suggest the gross baseness to which the felons have fallen. John Holloway observes that "whether his [animal] images enlighten us about the good things in the world or the bad, this effect is equally present: everything seems busy with a restless, overwhelming life."²³ The universe is filled with energy, potential and realized. Some energy is viewed in the form of nature, some is visible in men. When the energy is released, undirected, without moral or spiritual direction, it is realized as chaos and anarchy. Carlyle seeks harmony through cooperation with and adherence to the Laws that govern the universe: to make a "God's Cosmos in place of a Devil's Chaos." When the energy is unchained in men without spiritual direction,

they become like animals, rude and lowly.

The third essay of the series is an attack against all that is wrong at Downing Street. That street is, of course, an effective synecdoche for the entire executive branch of British government. Conditions in Parliament are so rotten that Carlyle views the whole legislative body as an enormous dung-heap. Perhaps this is "organic" imagery at its most base level. In this essay Carlyle "cashes in" on the effects of his prejudice-building. That is, he has so conditioned his readers by way of subtle suggestion and not so subtle exclamation that, if they are still patient, they will begin to accept almost anything he says, if he keeps up the illusion of being at least cursorily reasonable. At the outset of "Downing Street" he says

For in fact, it is reasonably asked, What vital interest has England in any cause now deciding itself in foreign parts? Once there was a Papistry and Protestantism important as life eternal and death eternal; more lately there was an interest of Civil Order and Horrors of the French Revolution, important at least as rent-rolle and preservation of the game; but now what is there? No cause in which any God or man of this British Nation can be thought to be concerned. Sham-kingship, now recognised and even self-recognised everywhere to be sham, wrestles and struggles with mere ballot-box Anarchy; not a pleasant spectacle to British minds.²⁴

His question may be reasonably asked, but his answer is not reasonably given. His false assumption (Britain is concerned with nothing) denies any logical conclusion, but, nevertheless, Carlyle is not to be denied. His dramatic connotations allow

the reader to be emotionally swayed rather than reasonably persuaded. The situation he portrays is certainly not a "pleasant spectacle to British minds" because he has "prepared" his readers through the connotations that he had given to Papistry, Protestantism, Civil Order, the Horrors of the French Revolution, Sham-kingship, and ballot-box Anarchy. Papistry carries with it certain allegations made clear in "The Present Time" where he sarcastically takes a poke at a recent "Reforming Pope." The Horrors of the French Revolution, of course, had already been extolled upon in his 1837 volume. He, nevertheless, reminds the British of that French "explosion." Perhaps his most scathing verbal outbursts against ballot-box Anarchy, or democracy, occur also in "The Present Time." With such careful preparation the terms become not only effective catch-phrases but also phrases that call to mind all of Carlyle's previous references to these things. The various contexts to which he applies the emotionally charged words demonstrate the broad generalizations which Carlyle is making. The meanings are not limited, but expanded. Mark Roberts notes that their function "is to ask us, ~~not to think~~, nor to understand something, but to see and feel something. The import of an expression such as this does not normally emerge into the field of logic and analysis."²⁵

Carlyle's hero-worship comes into play during his criticism of Downing Street. The last great British hero was Cromwell, according to the author. As he looks to the nation for

potential leadership, he finds Sir Robert Peel. Of all the men in the kingdom, Carlyle thinks Peel is the most able to govern. He is the man who will shovel away the dung heap on Downing Street. The Able Man "is definable as the born enemy of Falsity and Anarchy, and the born soldier of Truth and Order."²⁶ This definition seems, also, to describe exactly the role that Carlyle himself is assuming, at least in the Pamphlets. All the way through these essays he has much to say against those in Parliament who would merely talk and not act. Action, or "doing," is an integral part of Carlyle's hypotheses. He desires to get away from mere cant in governmental affairs. Too much talk and not enough action! "An apt debater in Parliament is by no means certain to be an able administrator . . .; nay, rather quite the contrary is to be presumed of him."²⁷ It is not that cant is just bad but the presence of it insures bad administration. In fact he concludes that "No mortal can do both work and good talking in Parliament."²⁸ Carlyle is not picky; even an "approximately heroic Prime Minister" will do. In these latter-days of English government, Britain desperately needed a heroic personage; democracy was not capable of supplying such men to high offices. Just because more people have a vote, doesn't mean that they will elect the best man to the highest office. In fact, Carlyle feels that the "twenty-seven Millions, mostly fools," are not capable of much of anything. The interesting part of his method is that he is not afraid to assert startling statements that seem unjustified

by either the context or by the information that has preceded such assertions. When he does pull such a seemingly illogical "blunder," the reader should beware. In later passages and essays he is able to gain credibility for his previous statements. And when he asks rhetorical questions, they are strategically placed so that the reader, regardless of his sentiments, can hardly deny Carlyle's intended conclusions. One such passage occurs in "Downing Street."

Or perhaps there is now no heroic wisdom left in England, once the land of heroes, is itself sunk now to a dim owlery, and habitation of doleful creatures; intent only on money-making and other forms of catching mice, for whom the proper gospel is the gospel of McCroudy, and all nobler impulses and insights are forbidden henceforth? Perhaps these present agreeable Occupants of Downing Street, such as the parliamentary mill has yielded them, are the best the miserable soil has grown? The most Herculean Ten Men that could be found among the English Twenty-seven Millions, are these? There are not, in any place, under any figure, ten diviner men among us? Well; in that case, the riddling and searching of the twenty-seven millions has been successful. Here are our ten divinest men; with these, unhappily not divine enough, we must even content ourselves and die in peace; what help is there? No help, no hope, in that case.²⁹

Since so much of Carlyle's language is symbolic and suggestive, it is difficult to pin down his meanings exactly. He never bothers to define his terms, but rather he hopes that the various contexts and figurative associations that he places them in will provide all the clarification a reader needs. His method reminds one of the tale of "The Emperor's New Clothes." God's Law is visible for everyone to see, if we would but open our eyes and notice. Perhaps he plays up to the reader's

vanity by implying that if one cannot understand Carlyle's premises, then the reader is somehow guilty of being blind to an almost divine revelation. Of course no reader would admit that he was blind to God's Law. When one accepts Carlyle's assertions as they appear at first, without questioning the subtleties of his propositions, "there is a tendency for these appeals to the reader not only to win acceptance themselves, but to carry with them the less immediately acceptable elements of the discourse in which they are set."³⁰

"The New Downing Street," the fourth in the series, published fifteen days after "Downing Street," is a continuation of his criticism of English government. He begins by asserting that every European government has gone to anarchy because none of them was wise enough. Such hyperbole not only shocks the reader into paying attention, but in doing so, also prejudices him into believing that everything which is not exactly like Carlyle's plan for good government is necessarily either anarchy or just plain bad government. His New Downing Street, or English Government Remade, will be inhabited by the gifted, and will direct all of its energies upon "real and living interests." The State has been badly managed for many years and is in danger of dying completely. In one passage he contrasts this picture with England of the past.

I perceive how the old Christian society continued healthy, vital, and was strong and heroic. When I contrast this with the noble aims now held out to noble souls born in remote huts, or beyond the verge of Palace-Yard; and think of

what your Lordship has done in the way of making priests and papas,--I see a society without lungs, fast wheezing itself to death, in horrid convulsions; and deserving to die.

Over Europe generally in these years, I consider that the State has died, has fairly coughed its last in street musketry, and fallen down dead, incapable of any but galvanic life henceforth,--owing to this same fatal want of lungs, which includes all other wants for a State.³¹

In these latter-days, because of the lack of wisdom in government, the State is dying. The contrasts that Carlyle presents for consideration are, in essence, a growth of the previous imagery in the earlier essays. The moribund society of the present, "one huge poison-swamp of reeking pestilence physical and moral; a hideous living Golgotha of souls and bodies buried alive," is both alive and dead, breathing yet breathless, ill yet capable of recovery. Carlyle, as physician, seeks to restore health to a nation that is swiftly becoming invalid. These paradoxes make up much of Carlyle's rhetorical technique. The seemingly disparate elements create a kind of tension that is, at first, hard to comprehend. How can one be dead when one is alive? He answers by stating that England is indeed alive in the body, but dead in the spirit.

At this point mention should be made of Carlyle's "qualifiers." At various places in his discourse, he makes assertions. Such statements, to be accepted by the reader, must, at least, give the appearance of being truisms or they will be discarded as false. Carlyle sets up the terms to be considered and then, qualifies those terms with such words as "true," "real," "divine," "sham," "eternal," and "imaginary." His New

Downing Street is explained in such terms. He wants "A Downing Street inhabited by the gifted of the intellects of England; directing all its energies upon the real and living interests of England, and silently but incessantly, in the alembics of the place, burning-up the extinct imaginary interests of England, that we may see God's sky a little plainer overhead."³² Everything that is real is truly alive, but what, exactly, are the real interests of England? Carlyle never precisely defines them; and the reader, led on by such qualifiers, is able to supply his own meanings to these assertions; therefore, making them truisms and acceptable premises, himself. A notable criminal defense lawyer once described his personal method of convincing a jury as leading them down a dark hallway at the end of which is a closed door. He slowly and carefully jars the door so that just a part of what is inside is visible. The jury, led to an almost obvious conclusion, opens the door, sees what is inside, and revels in how perceptive and smart it is for finding it. Although the comparison is admittedly crude, it does point up the fact that much of Carlyle's argumentative success comes from his use of deliberately ambiguous qualifiers. The reader is able to supply his own meaning and then say to himself, "Why, of course! I knew that all the time." John Holloway believes that "these truisms are not worthless, because they are not empty. There is an ambiguity in their crucial terms that gives some point to them after all. Their air of incontrovertibility is a persuasive or rhetorical device,

making the controversial seem non-controversial; but, though Carlyle may unconsciously trick the reader, it is not into nothing."³³

The paradoxes that the author employs serve various purposes, as I have stated, and can be seen throughout the collection of essays. Let it suffice to say that they serve one argumentative purpose: to disorient the reader so that he may consider or see something which he had not considered or seen before. Such a process may confuse a reader, but in his confusion he may be somewhat more susceptible to Carlyle's suggestions.

The fifth of the Latter-Day Pamphlets is an essay concerned with the problem of too much parliamentary talking and not enough parliamentary action. Published in May, "Stump-Orator" is a lengthy discourse on mere cant, "Constitutional palaver, universal solecisms;" in short, windbag parliamentarians. In the nation's attempt to "breathe" again, meaningless hot air is choking out true "life-breath." In developing this point he first begins by explaining the history behind oratory in England. Oratory was the grand lesson at universities in the past; and as a result, mere windbag oratory has been raised to a position that vies with religion for the attention of the people. Carlyle then asks permission to assert three things, and asks the reader "to consider well what truth he can find in them":

First, that excellent speech, even speech
really excellent, is not, and never was . . .

the measure of a man's ability . . .; excellent silence needed always to accompany excellent speech.

Secondly, that really excellent speech . . . is terribly apt to get confounded with its counterfeit, sham excellent speech!

For alas, much as we worship speech on all hands, here is a third assertion which a man may venture to make, and invite considerate men to reflect upon: That in these times, and for several generations back, there has been, strictly considered, no really excellent speech at all, but sham-excellent merely.³⁴

This passage, a good example of Carlyle's persuasive technique, acts as an echo of what he has said before in the preceding essays; but it also expands and develops those ideas. He distinguishes between the Talker and the Doer. The Doer is Britain's salvation--the one who does "good work with lips closed." The Talker is responsible for "the spiritual detriment we unconsciously suffer." Eloquence is not what the nation needs.

For young men of genius, Carlyle contends, there are only two alternatives: "the silent or unlearned career of the Industrialisms . . . and there is the articulate or learned career of the three professions, Medicine, Law (under which we may include Politics), and the Church."³⁵ If he becomes an industrialist, then the test of excellence is how much money he makes, which does nothing to help the nation as a whole. If he follows any of the learned professions, then the test of excellence "is to be done by the tongue." Froude calls this essay the most important in the series because "the necessary tendency of Democracy is to throw the power of the State into the hands of eloquent speakers, and eloquent speakers have

never . . . been wise statesmen."³⁶ His comment is interesting because it seems to prove that Carlyle was an effective arguer; he seems to have convinced Froude. One can see, in the midst of "Stump-Orator," Carlyle's doctrine of Hero-worship, one which he refers to time and again in the Pamphlets. The Hero is the one who is divinely inspired to lead the people--a Doer, not a Talker. He is the one who is content to search silently for Truth. Repeatedly he asks for the Hero to appear. (As I previously mentioned, Sir Robert Peel was Carlyle's hope for Britain, and perhaps that is why, when Peel died, he quit writing the Pamphlets.) The author also employs effective irony in underlining his criticism of the abundance of cant. He says "Contrive to talk well, you will get to Heaven, the modern Heaven of the English. Do not talk well, only work well, and heroically hold your peace, you have no chance whatever to get thither."³⁷ The implications in his short ironic statement are abundant and devastating, yet he has prepared his readers for them, and more than likely, they will accept them as true.

At the end of "Stump-Orator" Carlyle makes a rather startling proposal, much in the manner of Swift's Modest Proposal. "A benevolent man once proposed to me, but without pointing out the methods how, this plan of reform for our benighted world: To cut from one generation, whether the current one or the next, all the tongues away, prohibiting Literature too; and appoint at least one generation to pass its life in silence."³⁸ Then, instead of merely talking about Truth, men would have

to go out and find it and practice it. This echoes his doctrine of Work, as developed in Past and Present (1843). His tone is Swiftian and his manner approaches invective. He is concerned and not disinterested, and by this time in the series, many of his readers, I would imagine, are either completely at odds with him or completely in agreement with him.

The sixth in the series of Latter-Day Pamphlets, "Parliaments," is an express attack on something in particular. He decries the lack of power in Parliament and suggests that his desire is not to further reform "the reformed Parliament we have got,"³⁹ but rather "to find some sort of King, made in the image of God, who could a little achieve for the People, if not their spoken wishes, yet their dumb wants, and what they would at last find to have been their instinctive will."⁴⁰ Carlyle seems to see British society as made up of two classes: "the true Aristocracy of England," and "the People." The latter class is always inarticulate; the former should be articulate, but, unhappily, in these latter-days, is not. Even though the Parliament is reformed, the blind cannot lead the blind; therefore, he calls for a "King, make in the image of God." His qualification is interesting and consistent with his statements throughout the preceding essays. To be articulate is to be able to speak without cant and to be able to see without distortion. How can one obey God's Law if he is unable to see or speak? The answer is, of course, that he can't; thus, Carlyle's reliance on the heroic King, unaffected

by cant and blindness. It is Carlyle's purpose, as physician, to cure this blindness.

Later in the essay he dips into his black bag of organic imagery and pulls out a pill of rhetoric. His metaphor this time associates the condition of Parliament and the country with a giant boiling pot. "Men say: 'If the foul universal boil is to go on ripening, under mere Leave-alone and Premiers of the Phantasm order, perhaps the sooner it bursts, and declares itself as universal gangrene and social death, the better!' Good Heavens, have men computed what the bursting-out of virtual disguised Anarchy into open undeniable Anarchy, such as they have in the Continental countries just now, amounts to in human affairs; what a game that of trying for cure in the Medea's-caldron of Revolution is!"⁴¹

In earlier times the English Parliament was an organization to be admired for its simplicity of structure and efficiency of operation. It "met for earnest dispatch of work which, on the King's part and the Commonwealth's, needed absolutely to be done."⁴² In the present times nothing seems to get done; the Parliament is unresponsive to the country's needs. "To this hour no public matter, with whatever serious argument, can be settled in England till it have been dined upon, perhaps repeatedly dined upon."⁴³ The solution to the problem is the Hero-King, destined to do God's Will. Only he can make efficient and worthwhile what has now fallen into distrust and incompetence. He refers to America as the only

country that is able to subsist with "No-government" (Democracy), because it is the only country with enough land to allow a man to "move-off into the wilderness, let Congress jargon as it will."⁴⁴ In fact, in the history of the world there have been only two Parliaments that have ever done the work of sovereignty: the National Convention, in Paris, during the French Revolution; and the Long Parliament, in London, during England's. During the latter every member was in dead earnest and approached his task "religiously." Each member respected the others and there were no interruptions, as in the present time, by reporters or visitors. The business conducted inside the chamber was regarded as sacred.

The French Convention was also successful, but for different reasons. Whoever attempted to obstruct the business or will of the Committee of Salut Publique was promptly guillotined. The members had to work or die. Although these were successful leading bodies, Carlyle doesn't recommend that such Parliaments, in either instance, are the best way to govern; rather "They were appropriate, and as it proved, the effectual organism for Periods of a quite transcendent character in National Life; such as it is not either likely or desirable that we should see, except at very long intervals, in human affairs."⁴⁵ The reference he makes to the Parliament, calling it an organism, recalls numerous preceding mentions of the abundant energy alive in the universe. Of course, Parliament should be a vital organism; but the abundant images of death, dung heaps, breathless nations, and anarchic pestilences from the Nether-deep

suggest quite effectively that all is not vital and healthy in England. According to Carlyle, the function of English Parliaments in the past was to advise sovereign rulers, and as long as they did just that, they were good. But the Parliament of these latter-days attempts to act as the sovereign ruler, and as long as there isn't a single, all-powerful ruler to preside over all, it is bad. He concludes these points with: "A Parliament, any conceivable Parliament, continuing to attempt the function of Governor, can lead us only into No-Government which is called Anarchy; and the more 'reformed' or Democratic you make it, the swifter will such consummation be."⁴⁶ The only thing that will or can save the nation is undaunted attention to the Laws of the Eternal. Carlyle's ambiguity would disconcert many readers, but it can be argued that he is not ambiguous at all. He is perfectly specific in his prescription. Only those who have strayed too far from these Laws, spiritually, morally, and ethically, will think them ambiguous.

Carlyle leaves the true Aristocracy of Parliament and his criticism of government and takes up criticism of the People in the seventh of the Latter-Day Pamphlets, "Hudson's Statue." In this essay he hits the English in one of the places it hurt most--the pocket book. He derides the English not for having made so much money, but for the way they chose to spend it. He claims "show me the man you honour; I know by that symptom, better than by any other, what kind of man you yourself are."⁴⁷

If we accept his premises as true, then we cannot deny his conclusions. There were great amounts of money made during the first half of the century. The Industrial Revolution had completely refurbished the English countryside. What had once been rather benign rural villages became enormous, malignant industrial complexes. Carlyle laments that the English have chosen to erect a statue to Hudson, the railway king. Hudson had given the people what they wanted most, "Scrip out of which profit could be made."⁴⁸ The word "scrip" becomes symbolic for Carlyle, and refers to more than the mere stock certificate which it was. Scrip is representative of the nation's zeal to accept substitutes for real things. The nation's hero was Hudson, Carlyle believed, because 25,000 pounds had been subscribed, "or offered out of oblation, by the Hero-worshippers of England to their Ideal of a Man."⁴⁹ No statues were being erected to honor Cromwell or other "real" English heroes. The implication is that the English were more concerned about their economic status than their religious or spiritual status. He believed that Cromwell was England's last divinely inspired hero; he also hoped that Hudson was England's last Mammon-inspired hero.

Some of Carlyle's wildest passages of rhetoric are expounded from the mouths of what Mark Roberts calls "Carlylean characters."⁵⁰ Many of the passages are humorous, but they should not be thought to be less effective because of their humor. The characters are also organic in the sense that they

are referred to repeatedly in the essays; and each character represents a particular aspect of Carlyle's attack. McCroudy is the author's spokesman for his industrial economic attacks. Gathercoal is the Yankee sage from America. Hudson, though a real person, takes on Carlylean characteristics and becomes a specific yet general object of criticism. Other characters include Mr. Hesperus Fiddlestring, Right Honourable Felicissimus Zero, Crabbe, and Fitzsmithytrough. One such example of his wild rhetoric that is both humorous and ironic occurs in "Hudson's Statue."

Most excellent Fitzsmithytrough, it is a long time since I have stopped short in admiring your stupendous railway miracles. I was obliged to strike work, and cease admiring in that direction. Very stupendous indeed; considerable improvement in old railways and wheel-and-axle carriages; velocity unexpectedly great, distances attainable ditto ditto: all this is undeniable. But, alas, all this is still small deer for me, my excellent Fitzsmithytrough; truly nothing more than an unexpected take of mice for the owlish part of you and me. Distances, you unfortunate Fitz? The distances of London to Aberdeen, to Ostend, to Vienna, are still infinitely inadequate to me! Will you teach me the winged flight through Immensity, up to the Throne dark with excess of bright? You unfortunate, you grin as an ape would at such a question; you do not know that unless you can reach thither in some effectual, most veritable sense, you are a lost Fitzsmithytrough, doomed to Hela's death-realm and the Abyss where mere brutes are buried. I do not want cheaper cotton, swifter railways; I want what Novalis calls 'God, Freedom, Immortality': will swift railways, and sacrifices to Hudson, help me towards that?⁵¹

In an article comparing Carlyle with H. L. Mencken, Charles Harrold says that "both scorn a systematic criticism . . . and

throw mere logic to the winds in a conviction that a hearty laugh is 'worth ten thousand syllogisms'; they attack the subject with hyperbole, ridicule, vituperation, epithet, vulgarity."⁵² John Holloway calls Carlyle's technique "the dramatization of discussions," and he remarks that "the method tends to be naïve and crude, though not without effect."⁵³ I disagree with Holloway, and believe that Carlyle, although he may be "crude," is most certainly not naïve. He knows exactly what he is doing and has a clear idea of what the intended effect will be on the reader. I submit the preceding excerpt as evidence.

In the last of the Pamphlets, "Jesuitism," Carlyle levels some of his most violent criticism. He blames England's spiritual illness on Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. He remarks that just as the German Reformation is called of Luther, and the French Reign of Terror is named for Robespierre, "so it may be said these current, and now happily moribund, times of ours are worthy to be called, in loose language, the Age of Jesuitism,--an epoch whose Palinurus is the wretched mortal known among men as Ignatius Loyola."⁵⁴ He saw Loyola as the sham or phantasm captain that was leading England away from the true Laws of Right and Wrong. Jesuitism, for Carlyle, was a doctrine that enabled anyone to justify whatever he pleased. It was based on lies and half-truths. Supposedly England "had repudiated sufficiently Ignatius Loyola and the Company of Jesus;"⁵⁵ but the author detects signs of "galvanic" life.

He observes that the English long ago recognized Jesuits as "the servants of the Prince of Darkness,"⁵⁶ which the reader would applaud if he believed Carlyle. But no, what was worse was that, although the country had removed the Jesuits proper, the Jesuit soul had gotten into the hearts of the people.

James A. Froude observes that "Jesuitism to Carlyle was the deliberate shutting of the eyes to truth; the deliberate insincerity which, if persisted in, becomes itself sincere. You choose to tell a lie because, for various reasons, it is convenient; you defend it with argument--till at length you are given over to believe it--and the religious side of your mind being thus penally paralysed; morality becomes talk and conscience becomes emotion; and your actual life has no authoritative guide left but personal selfishness."⁵⁷ If what Froude says can be regarded as a true or at least a fairly accurate representation of what Carlyle thought of Jesuitism, then it is not hard to blame Loyola for the necessity of all the preceding essays in the Pamphlets. Carlyle's rhetoric reaches a peak in this last essay in the sense that all of the charges made by him come to rest on the shoulders of St. Ignatius. His animal references, humor, "Carlylean characters," wild rhetoric, illogical argument, and organic imagery all combine in this essay to produce a grandly "extravagant utterance."⁵⁸

Loyola was a Spanish soldier, who during a battle, had both legs shot off. This, of course, reduced him to an almost horizontal posture which forced him "to look at the world differently." Whereas he had once viewed the universe as "mere

rumour and moonshine,"⁵⁹ he reconsidered and perceived that he had lived his entire life as a "degraded ferocious Human Pig."⁶⁰ The obvious thing for Loyola to have done, according to Carlyle, was to have undergone "Selbsttodtung, Annihilation of Self"; but Loyola didn't, and sought other ways to assert his ego; hence, England is plagued with Jesuit philosophy. What emanates from this Carlylean background takes form as the "Pig Philosophy." Delivered by his imaginary friend Sauerteig, the "Pig Philosophy" is worth quoting, at least in part.

'If the inestimable talent of Literature should, in these swift days of progress, be extended to the brute creation, having fairly taken-in all the human, so that swine and oxen could communicate to us on paper what they thought of the Universe, there might curious results, not uninteresting to some of us, ensue. Supposing swine (I mean fourfooted swine), of sensibility and superior logical parts, had attained such culture; and could, after survey and reflection, jot-down for us their notion of the Universe, and of their interests and duties there,--might it not well interest a discerning public, perhaps in unexpected ways, and give a stimulus to the languishing book-trade? The votes of all creatures, it is understood at present, ought to be had; that you may "legislate" for them with better insight. "How can you govern a thing," say many, "without first asking its vote?" Unless, indeed, you already chance to know its vote,--and even something more, namely, what you are to think of its vote; what it wants by its vote; and still more important, what Nature wants, which latter, at the end of the account, is the only thing that will be got!-- --Pig Propositions, in a rough form, are somewhat as follows:

'1. The Universe, so far as sane conjecture can go, is an immeasurable Swine's-trough, consisting of solid and liquid, and of other contrasts and kinds;--especially consisting of attainable and unattainable, the latter in immensely greater quantities for most pigs.

'3. "What is Paradise, or the State of Innocence?" Paradise, called also State of Innocence, Age of Gold, and other names, was (according to Pigs of weak judgement) unlimited attainability of Pig's-wash; perfect fulfillment of one's wishes, so that the Pig's imagination could not outrun reality: a fable and an impossibility, as Pigs of sense now see.

'4. "Define the Whole Duty of Pigs." It is the mission of universal Pighood, and the duty of all Pigs, at all times, to diminish the quantity of unattainable and increase that of attainable. All knowledge and device and effort ought to be directed thither and thither only; Pig Science, Pig Enthusiasm and Devotion have this one aim. It is the Whole Duty of Pigs.

'5. Pig Poetry ought to consist of universal recognition of the excellence of Pig's-wash and ground barley, and the felicity of Pigs whose trough is in order, and who have had enough: Hrumph!

'9. "What is justice?" Your own share of the general Swine's-trough, not any portion of my share.

'51. "What are Bishops?: Overseers of souls.--" "What is a soul?" The thing that keeps the body alive.--"How do they oversee that?" They tie on a kind of aprons, publish charges; I believe they pray dreadfully; macerate themselves nearly dead with continual grief that they cannot in the least oversee it.--"And are much honoured?" By the wise very much.

'52. "Define the Church." I had rather not.--"Do you believe in a Future state?" Yes, surely.--"What is it?" Heaven, so-called.--"To everybody?" I understand so; hope so!--"What is it thought to be?" Hrumph!--"No Hell, then, at all?"--Hrumph! 61

This "Philosophy" was received by many readers with moral indignation, and insofar as it did just that, I am quite sure that Carlyle would have thought it a success. He repeatedly refers to the English population, throughout the Pamphlets, in bestial terms; they are owlish and blind. And as I mentioned at the outset of my discourse, he hoped to see what they could not and, as a doctor, prescribe medicine to heal the diseased nation.

The "Pig Philosophy" is the culmination of those rhetorical pills that he had given his readers early in the essays. The humor of such a passage as the "Philosophy" is very important to its effect; it acts as a cover or clothing for the "insinuation of ideas that might otherwise be rejected by the reader out of hand."⁶² Perhaps Carlyle fancied himself a heroic Palinurus, a helmsman destined to steer the ship of state through the straits of these latter-days, undaunted, without "ineffective" logic and mere reason to befuddle further the minds of his readers. He aimed at the hearts of the people, not at their heads.

To accomplish such a purpose Carlyle sought not to convince the nation of anything, but rather to make it feel something. If, he, himself, resorted to wild flashes of passionate rhetoric, it was because he thought that such flashes might illuminate and startle the owlsh people back to sight. As I have said, Carlyle might best be understood if we see him as a doctor, presenting pills of rhetoric that, hopefully, will enable the nation to regain its health. The vehicle for Carlyle's arguments and observations is the organic quality of his imagery. He builds it in the fashion of a pyramid, a large base of references and images which culminates in the single apex of God's Law.

It remains, then, to see how Carlyle, himself, felt about the Pamphlets. In a letter to his brother Alexander (November 15, 1850), he makes several interesting and enlightening

comments. A portion of it reads:

I was utterly done before . . . I could get those wild Pamphlets off my hand; the last two in particular did try all the obstinacy I was master of; and really, to my own mind, had something of worth in them in that respect, if in no other. . . . as to their reception from mankind, you never in your life heard such a screaming and squealing,--a universal "screigh as of stuck pigs," stuck to the heart, all running about with gillies in their sides, and bleeding to death, by the hand of a friend! . . . the said universal "skreigh" . . . served as a sign that at least the medicine had been swallowed, and that probably (as old Keble used to say) "it had took an effect on them."--In late weeks, now that the thing is all over, I find the tone perceptibly altering; and have no doubt it will alter to the right pitch, or even beyond it. They had much need of a dose like that, the stupid blockheads of this nation.⁶³

Such comments are certainly in keeping with the man who sought to cure the ills of a nation in the Latter-Day Pamphlets. The benevolent doctor Carlyle had given benighted Britain its pill and it remained only for him to sit silently back and hope the prescribed dosage was enough.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., ed., The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to His Brother Alexander (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 666.

² Ibid., p. 677.

³ James A. Froude, Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London 1834-1881 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), II, p. 26.

⁴ Thomas Carlyle, "Realized Ideals," The French Revolution: A History. Ed. by H. D. Traill. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), I, p. 10.

⁵ G. R. Porter, The Progress of the Nation. (1912; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), pp. 238, 325.

⁶ Eric Bentley, A Century of Hero-Worship, 2nd ed. (1944; rev., Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 71.

⁷ Thomas Carlyle, "The Everlasting Yea," Sartor Resartus. Ed. by H. D. Traill. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 157.

⁸ Carlyle, "The World Out of Clothes," Sartor Resartus, p. 40.

⁹ Carlyle, "The Present Time," Latter-Day Pamphlets. Ed. by H. D. Traill. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 5. Latter-Day Pamphlets will be abbreviated as LDP in subsequent footnotes.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹² Ibid., p. 21.

¹³ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁷ "Modern Prisons," LDP, p. 50.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

²⁰ Froude, II, p. 26.

²¹ "Model Prisons," LDP, p. 53.

²² Ibid.

²³ John Holloway, "Carlyle," The Victorian Sage (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 29.

²⁴ "Downing Street," LDP, p. 89.

²⁵ Mark Roberts, "Carlyle and the Rhetoric of 'Unreason,'" Essays in Criticism, 18 (1968), p. 404.

- 26 "Downing Street," LDP, p. 110.
- 27 Ibid., p. 115.
- 28 Ibid., p. 116.
- 29 Ibid., p. 110.
- 30 Roberts, pp. 405-406.
- 31 "The New Downing Street," LDP, p. 133.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Holloway, p. 55.
- 34 "Stump-Orator," LDP, pp. 173-174.
- 35 Ibid., p. 185.
- 36 Froude, II, p. 26.
- 37 "Stump-Orator," LDP, p. 187.
- 38 Ibid., p. 209.
- 39 "Parliaments," LDP, p. 214.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., p. 215.
- 42 Ibid., p. 216.
- 43 Ibid., p. 217.
- 44 Ibid., p. 227.
- 45 Ibid., p. 231.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 "Hudson's Statue," LDP, p. 255.
- 48 Ibid., p. 264.
- 49 Ibid., p. 255.
- 50 Roberts, p. 404.
- 51 "Hudson's Statue," LDP, p. 277.
- 52 Charles E. Harrold, "Two Critics of Democracy," South Atlantic Quarterly, 27 (1928), p. 150.
- 53 Holloway, p. 27.
- 54 "Jesuitism," LDP, p. 293.
- 55 Froude, II, p. 27.
- 56 "Jesuitism," LDP, p. 309.
- 57 Froude, II, p. 27.
- 58 Ibid., p. 28.
- 59 "Jesuitism," LDP, p. 301.

- 60 "Jesuitism," LDP, p. 301.
- 61 Ibid., pp. 315-318.
- 62 Roberts, p. 398.
- 63 Letters, pp. 680-681.

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LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS AND THE PILLS OF RHETORIC

by

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B. A., Kansas State University, 1969

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

ABSTRACT

Thomas Carlyle, in his Latter-Day Pamphlets (1850), sensed something rotten in the state of England and sought to restore health to a sick country. Almost no aspect of English life escaped Carlyle's scrutiny; he commented on the social, spiritual, political, ethical, economic, religious, heroic, and moral phases of "the present time." For each fault he finds, he presents a prescription, guaranteed to cure the ills of the nation. The way that he proposes his cures defies precise, rational logic. His mode of argument often gives the appearance of being raucous, yet he remains always in control.

Carlyle appealed to his reader's fears. He had already dramatized the French Revolutionary bloodbath, and the European revolutions of 1848 were certainly in the minds of his reading public. In many ways Carlyle's prose is very much like the age in which he lived; the times moved quickly for the Victorians. With the many technological innovations, governmental reforms, and increasing commercialism, many Victorians found it hard to make much sense of these changes. Carlyle's purpose is not only to interpret and instruct, but also to diagnose the problems and prescribe some cures. He felt that undirected change was not good. In each of the eight essays that comprise the Pamphlets Carlyle siezed upon one aspect of that chaotic change and offered a prescription that would, if followed carefully, provide the nation with the health it needed to survive that change. The apparent disorganization of the Pamphlets is just that--apparent; it serves to "disorient" the reader in such a

way that he is more susceptible to Carlyle's suggestions. Many of his techniques appear in other works, but several of them, his Carlylean characters, organic imagery, paradoxes and truisms, and passionate rhetoric, reach their full expression in the Pamphlets. Carlyle offered these essays to his public as a doctor would dispense medicine to his patients. He only hoped that the prescribed dosage would soon take effect.