



# B. W. Procter and the genesis of Carlyle's "Frederick the Great"

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twentieth century. His interest in such matters led him to prepare material on the provision of annuities for the widows of ministers and professors, and a 'Table showing the Probability of the Duration, the Decrement, and the Expectation of Life in the States of Massachusetts and New Hampshire.'<sup>11</sup> It is pleasant to report that he himself received an annuity from the University when ill health forced him to retire in 1791. His business ability enabled him also to help pull the College finances through the difficult days of the Revolution, thus correcting the effects of John Hancock's neglect.<sup>12</sup> In Janu-

<sup>11</sup> *Memorial History*, IV, 191. The date is here given as 1782; on p. 497 it is given as 1791. The writer has not found a copy of the 'Table.'

<sup>12</sup> See Josiah Quincy, *The History of Harvard University* (Cambridge, 1840), II, 261, where Professor Eliphalet Pearson, Hancock Professor of Hebrew, is quoted as attributing to Wigglesworth 'in addition to eminent skill in theology, native quickness of apprehension, cultivated understanding, correct judgment, skill in mathematics, as well as financial talents; and these last were very eminently displayed in the security of the funds of the College, when endangered

ary 1775 he was chosen one of a committee of the Corporation to inquire into the state of the College expenses for Commons, and in July 1779 he was granted twelve pounds for examining the steward's accounts.<sup>13</sup>

The sketch of Wigglesworth in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, by Edward H. Dewey, states that he 'lacked the versatility of knowledge that his father and grandfather possessed, but his service as an educator and citizen make him worthy of memory.' His son, Thomas, became the prominent merchant he himself may once have hoped to become. But the practical training he received through his apprenticeship to business was not wholly lost; he was the better professor and administrator for it.

ROBERT W. LOVETT

by the ferment and innovating spirit of the American Revolution, and well nigh ruined by the depreciation of our paper medium.'

<sup>13</sup> *Faculty Records*, IV, 1 (27 January 1775); *Corporation Records*, III, 47 (21 July 1779) — both in Harvard University Archives.

## B. W. Procter and the Genesis of Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*

**A**N unpublished letter of B. W. Procter ('Barry Cornwall'), now in the Harvard College Library,<sup>1</sup> had very interesting consequences in the life of its recipient, Thomas Carlyle. It was written near the end of November, 1831, a few months after Carlyle had arrived in

<sup>1</sup> Received in 1874 as part of the collection of autographs contained in the bequest of Charles Sumner.

London in search of literary work. He was unable to find a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*, which he had brought with him, or to secure employment for his pen. He wrote of his prospects as looking 'into Vacuity, into Nothingness.'<sup>2</sup> Aware of Carlyle's difficult circumstances, Procter, who had introduced him to the editor of the *Edin-*

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Thomas Carlyle 1826-1836*, ed. C. E. Norton (London, 1888), I, 374.

*burgh Review* in 1827 with gratifying results, again volunteered assistance. He spoke in Carlyle's behalf to Edward Lytton Bulwer, and then he wrote Carlyle the following letter:

25 Bedford Square  
Friday Morning.

My dear Sir —

I mentioned your name to Mr. Bulwer (the New Editor of the *New Monthly*) the other day, & he appeared desirous of having your help. He spoke in praise of a paper of yours which I called to his mind — on the Subject of Voltaire.

If you should be inclined to communicate with him his address is

E. L. Bulwer, Esqr.  
36.b. Hertford Street  
Mayfair.

At present, he is at Brighton, but he will return I believe in a few days. I ought to mention to you perhaps that the average length of magazine papers is not more than 6 or 8 pages. Indeed they have generally disliked them when longer, as they in that case interfere with the variety which is considered desirable in a magazine. My best compts. to Mrs. Carlyle

Yours very truly  
B W Procter

Carlyle's response was characteristic, as illustrated in a letter to his brother John:

Three or four weeks ago Procter wrote to me that E. L. Bulwer had 'some disposition' to employ me in the '*New Monthly Magazine*,' of which he is editor, and that it would be advisable for me to call on him; to which proposal of course there could be no answer, except mild silence — *der Inbegriff aller Harmonieen*. Whereupon in ten days more the mystagogue of the dandiacal body wrote to me a most bland and euphuistically flattering note, soliciting an inter-

view as my 'admirer.' I answered that for some days I was too busy to call, but would when I had leisure, as I yesterday did; and found him from home. I have also looked into his magazine, and find it polished, sharp, and barren — yet not altogether — the work as of gig-men, or rather gig-boys and whig-boys aiming blindly enough towards something higher: *Abndungen* [sic] *einer bessern Zeit!* My business being to see all men, I will in time look towards the 'Inspired Penman' once more and ascertain better what his relation to me really is.<sup>3</sup>

Relations developed in time — though the 'looking' was probably done by the editor rather than the contributor — and Carlyle agreed to write on a topic to be suggested by Bulwer. He was, however, pessimistic about the merit of the suggestion and did not like the seeming importunity with which Bulwer sought his services. On 10 January 1832, he wrote his brother John, 'I have some trashy thing (I yet know not what) to put together for Bulwer; whom I have not yet seen, but who writes, in sickness, cravingly.'<sup>4</sup>

The next day Carlyle learned what the 'trashy thing' was to be. A note arrived from Bulwer suggesting a paper on 'Frederick the Great.'<sup>5</sup> In a few days, however, news of his father's death caused Carlyle to change his plans, and he left London before having completed anything for Bulwer.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* (London, 1882), II, 244-245.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters 1826-1836*, ed. Norton, I, 388.

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Wilson, *Carlyle to "The French Revolution"* (London, 1924), p. 268.

<sup>6</sup> From Scotland, he sent back to Bulwer the short article on 'The Death of Goethe' which duly appeared in the *New Monthly* for June 1832.

But it is well known to what length Carlyle later carried his study of the topic Bulwer suggested to him. Not quite so well known, perhaps, is the condescension with which in later years Carlyle requited the quick rec-

ognition and generous aid extended to him by Procter in the launching of his career.<sup>7</sup>

ELMER L. BROOKS

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, his *Reminiscences*, ed. C. E. Norton (London, 1887), II, 133-134.

## News of the Libraries

### INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY CONFERENCES

**M**R Douglas W. Bryant, Administrative Assistant Librarian in the College Library and Chairman of the American Library Association International Relations Board, was American delegate to a series of international library conferences in Copenhagen during September and October. Mr Bryant has reported that these meetings of the several world organizations in the fields of librarianship, documentation, archives, and related activities made substantial progress along the slow way toward effective international coordination and the development of library and bibliographic services in all parts of the world. The two principal bodies, the International Federation of Library Associations and the International Federation for Documentation, adopted new constitutions which, when ratified by national member organizations, will broaden the bases of their activity and will permit more effective cooperation between them and with other international groups. Of particular immediate interest are the following actions taken at Copenhagen: (a) establishment of a section in IFLA to cover the interests of national, university, and other research libraries; (b)

appointment of a committee-of-action to expedite the editing and publication of the *Manual on Documentary Reproduction*; (c) arrangement for an early conference to study a program for establishing international standards for microfilm reading machines; (d) preliminary approval of an international standard scheme for the transliteration of Cyrillic characters into the Roman alphabet, and approval of a program to prepare similar standards for Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek alphabets; (e) formation of a coordinating committee representative of the several organizations to work on plans for a World Congress on librarianship, documentation, etc., to be convened by Unesco in 1954 or 1955; (f) establishment of a permanent committee to gather and publish information on national bibliographic and documentation centers.

### BOOKS FROM BULLETIN TYPES

**D**URING recent months two books have been published from types originally set for the BULLETIN. The first, *A Bibliography of the Works of Max Beerbohm*, by the late A. E. Gallatin and L. M. Oliver, appeared simultaneously in England and the United States on the



## List of Contributors

KEYES D. METCALF, Professor of Bibliography, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College

EDWIN E. WILLIAMS, Chief of the Acquisition Department of the Harvard College Library

PHILIP HOFER, Lecturer on Fine Arts, Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts in the Harvard College Library, and Secretary of the William Hayes Fogg Art Museum

G. BLAKEMORE EVANS, Associate Professor of English, University of Illinois

FOSTER M. PALMER, Reference Assistant in charge of the Reference Section in the Harvard College Library

HENRY J. CADBURY, Hollis Professor of Divinity, Dexter Lecturer on Biblical Literature, and Director of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library

RAY NASH, Professor, Department of Art and Archaeology, Dartmouth College

CECIL C. SERONSY, Professor of English, State Teachers' College, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

DAVID C. WEBER, Assistant to the Librarian of the Harvard College Library

LESLIE MAHIN OLIVER, Assistant to the Librarian in the Houghton Library, Harvard University

VINTON A. DEARING, Assistant Professor of English, University of California at Los Angeles

ROBERT W. LOVETT, Head of the Manuscript Division, Baker Library, Harvard University

ELMER L. BROOKS, Boston, Massachusetts