CHAPTER XIX

ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF "SARTOR RESARTUS"

CARLYLE is in some respects the most important figure in nineteenth century literature. Remember, when I say this, that I am speaking of literature, as distinguished from science or scientific philosophy, or scientific writing of any kind. Carlyle is not the greatest English philosopher by any means; but he is the greatest literary philosopher of our times—I mean the nineteenth century. The philosopher as man-of-letters, the poet philosopher or essayist, is rather a rare figure in English literature. We have plenty of philosophers; indeed, I think that English philosophy is now the first in the world, though Germany and France may still refuse to acknowledge the fact. But we have had scarcely any literary personage who could be called a great philosophical influence, with the exception of Carlyle. Carlyle represents, though perhaps in a smaller way, in English literature what Goethe represents in German literature. Or, again, we might say that he represents in English literature something that Michelet represents in French literature — a great emotional power and influence created under the obsession of a single great idea. Emerson is another figure of this kind, the only one that America has produced. Now, philosophers of this literary class do not exactly make a new philosophy. They are emotional rather than logical thinkers; they do not so often find new truths for us as they make new applications of older truths. And if they do find a new truth sometimes, it is rather through feeling than through reasoning. But they exert more influence than the larger thinkers do—the pure philosophers—because they are more easily understood and more widely read. To a certain extent they help the progress of the higher philosophy by interpreting it to the people, or at least such parts of it as they are willing to accept. Carlyle is especially a a teacher of this kind. He presents in marvellous emotional speech many of the best thoughts of the greatest modern thinkers; and if he is one-sided, we must be still thankful for the form and the force of his message. This message is especially given in his "Sartor Resartus," and "Sartor Resartus" is a book which ought to be as well known to English students as Goethe's "Faust." It is likely to become so, at all events; every year it is being more and more read, every year new editions are being issued, and recently the book has been put forth in illustrated forms, with some eighty pictures. Because the expression is sometimes obscure, and because of the hard slow thinking that the book requires, it might have been ignored a few years ago in a course of university reading. But this is no longer possible. The book has become too great an influence, and we must bend ourselves to the task of comprehending it.

I think that the question of comprehending it, without assistance, depends very much upon the age and experience of the reader. My own experience was this; as a young man less than twenty years of age, I repeatedly tried to read the book and could not. I could not understand a single page of it. There were indeed sentences which dazzled and charmed my imagination, but I was not very sure what they meant. At the age of about twenty-five I tried to read the book again, with the same result; I could understand nothing, except what appeared to me somewhat religious in a narrow sense, and which therefore repelled me; for at that time I disliked everything religious very much indeed. But after reaching middle life, when I had read a great deal, and had been able to make some serious study of modern philosophy, I opened the book again, and every page was full not only of light but of lightning. Many times since I have re-read it, and each time it seems to me greater and wider and more astonishing. I shall now try to lecture about it in a general way; but the points upon which I am particularly anxious to dwell are the points in harmony with eastern philosophy and nineteenth century science. Wherever the two unite, you will find the full power of Carlyle as a thinker — there he has touched everlasting truth.

The book is eccentrically arranged as well as eccentrically written; and before attempting a summary, please to keep clearly in mind the fact that it has three main divisions; also that the second or middle division, which is autobiography, is quite independent of the other two parts between which it is inserted. Unless you remember this, your notes may become somewhat confused. Nevertheless, after having thought a good deal about the plan of this lecture, I have decided that it will not do to separate the autobiography from the philosophy, nor to adopt any other arrangement than that of the author.

The name of the book means "the tailor repatched," an extraordinary title, but not out of keeping with the extraordinary subject, which is the Philosophy of Clothes. And the meaning of the title becomes obvious before we read very far. To re-carpenter a carpenter or to re-tailor a tailor, means simply to do the man's work over again better than it was done at first. We now can see that Carlyle wishes it to be understood that he is going to do over again something which has not previously been well done — and that something is the philosophy of clothes. Here I may observe that it seems to me the whole idea of the book from beginning to end was inspired by a single stanza of the great poet Goethe—

In Being's floods, in Action's storm
I walk and work, above, beneath,
Work and weave in endless motion!
  Birth and Death,
  An Infinite Ocean;
  A seizing and giving
  The fire of Living;
'Tis thus at the roaring loom of time I ply,
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by.

This is the song of the Earth Spirit in "Faust," and it really contains the germ of all the philosophy in "Sartor Resartus," though only in potential form. The meaning of course is that the phenomenal universe is only the visible garment of the invisible infinite—a thought quite Buddhist in itself, and also quite true as a scientific fact, considering the mystery of matter. Nearly all the great thoughts of the world are thus in harmony; it is only in small ideas that I can find disagreement.

At all events, whether my theory is right or wrong, the philosophy of clothes appears in the very first chapter of the book; but it is not put forth as Carlyle's own invention. He pretended that it was the translation of a curious German book, written by an unknown philosopher with the extraordinary name of Teufelsdröckh, and he made the style exactly resemble a literary translation from the German, adopting many of the literary methods of Richter for the sake of their curious beauty. This is why the style of "Sartor Resartus" seems to us at first sight so strange.

By way of introduction we are told that although there have been countless books written about cloth and silk and all other textures, the most important of all textures has not been written about—"the only real tissue, which man's soul wears as its outmost wrapper and overall." Does this mean the body as the garment of the soul? Yes, to a certain extent. But if so, why should the writer say that the subject has been overlooked by science, since there are hundreds of thousands of books about the body? Well, Carlyle's thought is this: much has indeed been written about the body, as form or otherwise, but not about the body as the garment of the soul, not about the body as the symbol of an infinite mystery. That is why the work already done on the subject is so unsatisfactory. The most wonderful relation of man, the relation that he bears to the universe and to the unknown powers that made the universe, is never considered at all as it should be considered. Yet to a thinking man the miracle is all about it: "that living flood, holding the whole street, of all qualities and ages, knowest thou whence it is coming, whither it is going?" The ordinary man would answer, "Oh, those people are going home, or going to their business"; but the thinker's question requires a much larger answer. The true answer is that they come out of an absolute mystery, out of eternity, like the world itself, and that although they may seem to be going back to their own homes only, they are really all of them going back into the infinite mystery out of which they came. And what are they? Can anybody answer? They are spirits made visible by a garment or dress of flesh which they wear. That is all we know. The force within, the force that moves and thinks within each of us, no philosopher could ever tell us what it is. It is manifested to the senses only by means of its dress. We have reason to suppose that it is a part of the universal force, the universal mystery, but that is all. Thus the mere sight of a man walking down the street is really one of the most extraordinary, one of the most mysterious, and one of the most unexplainable things in this world. Yet very few people ever think about the matter. Is it not worth thinking about? Carlyle says that it is—wherefore he has written this book; a book about the mystery of the universe considered as a garment, as a dress. Just as the man appears to our eyes only because of the body or flesh that he has, so the only Reality, the Soul of all things, has been made manifest to us through the material universe, which is the robe that it wears.

A robe, a dress, a covering of any sort for the body—what idea does it immediately suggest to you? You will think, even if you do not say, that the comparison does not at first sight seem satisfactory, because a dress is something that has often to be changed, something that wears out quickly and has to be thrown away. Yet if you will reflect for a moment that Time is only relative, you will recognize that the comparison is complete. The body of man is worn out quickly like his clothes, and has in the same way to be discarded. Death is our change of clothes, nothing more. But this is not all; the comparison is excellent even as applied to the entire universe, with all the millions of suns and planets and moons belonging to it. All of them wear out, just as surely as a dress wears out; the whole universe must decay and disappear, to be succeeded by a new universe, by another shining garment for the infinite spirit. The comparison is not even new, though Goethe happened to put it in a somewhat new way; it is enormously old; it is in the Bible—

> The heavens are the work of thy hands — they shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, *all of them shall grow old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.*
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> (*Psalms*, 102, 25-6)

Of course the Hebrew poet who wrote these magnificent verses did not know the universe as we know it to-day; he imagined the sky to be a solid arch or vault, and the lights of heaven to be like great lamps. But the beauty of what he said only continues to grow with time, because with all his limited knowledge he perceived in a dim way one eternal and tremendous truth,—the impermanency of all forms.

This is the real introduction to the book, or rather to the spirit of the book. We have then the first great statement, that all visible matter is but a garment or manifestation of the invisible; and that man's body itself is not a permanent reality, but only the symbol or covering of him. Yet the same thing might be said of the body of a horse, a cow, a fish, even a tree. All these too are but unreal symbols of one eternal reality. The great distinction between man and other animals or forms of life is that he has a double covering. Besides his body, the covering of all that is real within him, he has a second covering of clothes. Of course this is a fact that everybody knows; but how many think about it, and perceive what it really means?

In order to understand what it means, we must first try to imagine all humanity without clothes. It is scarcely possible to imagine a civilized society in which nobody wears any clothes. With grim humour, the author asks us to imagine a naked minister addressing a naked house of parliament, or a reception at some royal court, at which everybody should be absolutely naked. Of course the mere idea is absurd. But why should it be absurd? It is not easy to answer at once. A correct answer would require a considerable amount of thinking, and it is the thinking about this problem which forms a considerable part of the book, and which leads us to consider many other problems of an equally deep and strange kind.

Clothes, or clothing, the philosopher calls the Foundation of Society; he means of course that without clothes there could be no civilization of a high degree. He asks us how could one even carry money about him if he had no clothing, no pockets. I am inclined to think that his views here, at least his illustrations, are a little extreme. As a matter of fact, naked societies have existed, in which certain simple moral and religious codes were fully developed — Polynesian societies, for example, and certain African societies. Very barbarous and simple forms of society they were; but they were certainly societies, governed by rules of conduct. Again as to the question of no pockets and no money, in these societies — or at least in some of them — what represented money was worn round the neck fastened to a string, or attached to the body in some other way. But we may accept, as a general statement, the author's position that clothes are at least a foundation of true civilization; and that the present complicated forms of society could not very well exist without clothes, — even supposing the constitution of mankind able to bear all exposures to climate.

Carlyle accepts the evolutional philosophy of clothes to a limited extent. Clothes began with the human desire for ornament. In those savage communities where clothes were not worn, it was at least the custom to decorate the body in some way or other; for example, the Polynesians tattooed themselves, and other peoples painted the body different colours. Eventually with the invention of the simplest industries of weaving, sewing, etc., garments of some kind were found to suit the purpose of decoration better than paint or tattooing. But in some cases, as among races of hunters, the skins of wild animals would have been the first kind of clothes. And in some tropical countries, the first clothing would seem to have been leaves taken from certain trees, for there are still tribes using only this kind of clothing. Before the use of clothing there could scarcely have been any distinction of classes, no real aristocracy or nobility; universal nudity would have proclaimed too powerfully the general equality of all. But I think that Carlyle goes too far in suggesting that there would have been no distinction whatever. There would have still been the distinction of strength, of activity, of experience, and cunning; and these would have been quite sufficient to make a class of rulers or chiefs, obeyed by the rest, and trusted in time of danger. It would be altogether wrong to think that the invention of cloth was a sudden thing, and that it produced sudden changes in the character of mankind. All changes have been gradual, and all evolutions have been very slow. There is a large truth here suggested by Carlyle, that a very important relation exists between the development of clothing and the development of social distinctions. Each must have had a powerful influence upon the other.

Another point upon which I think Mr. Spencer would not have agreed with Carlyle is the declaration that modesty was developed by the use of clothes. The statement is rather sweeping. We have plenty of evidence that among peoples and communities accustomed to nakedness, peoples who live in very warm climates, modesty has been very considerably developed. Indeed, among almost unclad tribes, there are some more virtuous in regard to sexual matters than the most highly civilized races. I mention this fact because it is important that you should not be deceived by some of the extreme opinions of Carlyle. Modesty must have developed according to intelligence, rather than according to the evolution of clothing; but it is very probable that clothing has much assisted in developing the ideal and the more delicate forms of the virtue. That is about as far as the modern thinker dare venture to go. Now, for the western nations at least, clothing has certainly a very large relation to habits of modesty, but I do not know that the hearts of the people are any purer because they happen to have more or less clothes. Very often the fact is the other way. At least, clothes have become not only the covering of the man, but the mask of his vices.

I have used the word mask — the subject of masks will presently be in order. It will introduce us to the third important point of the argument.

The second point is the relation between the development of society, of civilization, and clothes — the fact that social distinctions are indicated, if not made, by clothes in all countries; and that is a very important matter to think about. But why is it an important matter to think about? Because class distinctions cultivate in the first place self-respect, the honest pride of the man, the honest knowledge of his worth in relation to society at large. And this means also the development of effort, intellectual competition, indeed, competition of every kind through which a man can climb from a lower to a higher rank, and effort of every kind by which he can benefit his fellow men. In this sense Carlyle is quite right in speaking of clothes as the foundation of society, but you must not take his words too literally; here you may understand by "clothes," class-distinctions and social differences, with all that they imply.

And now we come to the third point in the argument, the point about masks. All clothing is a mask, for the body at least. I have said that clothing, considered as a mask, often helps men to hide their vices, their faults, their deficiencies of all kinds. In other words, we might call clothing a sort of material falsehood, a kind of hypocrisy. But at this point you should stop and ask yourselves the questions, "Is naked truth always respectable? Is it even always good, from any point of view? May it not sometimes be very bad? And falsehood, is it always bad? Is it not sometimes quite excusable? *Is it not sometimes good? Is it not sometimes not only good, but very good? Not only very good, but even divine?"*

The answers to these questions must depend a good deal upon your capacity for thinking—especially upon your capacity for thinking what falsehood means. It may mean many thousands of things. Truth may mean a great many thousand things. But I shall take, not out of Carlyle, a simple example. A person does you unintentionally a great wrong; and, as you understand that it was done by mistake, you pretend not to feel the injury at all, and you speak to the person who has injured you, as if nothing had happened. In this matter you are not acting quite truthfully; you are pretending to feel in a way that you cannot feel; you are acting falsely, or acting a falsehood. But from the moral point of view of all religions, you are acting nobly, kindly, generously. Any one of you can think of thousands of examples in daily life, in your own lives, in the lives of those you love most, in which things which are not true, and actions which are not true, are being constantly said or done for the kindest reasons and with the happiest results. But you can remember also a great many very unpleasant experiences in your lives, or in the lives of friends, caused by telling truth, caused by the truthful expression of hateful or resentful or envious feeling. I mean that you must have had a thousand proofs of the great fact that truth is often wickedness and that falsehood is often pure love and goodness.

A shallow thinker is very apt to imagine that the value of truth is altogether absolute and unquestionable. But, as a matter of fact, we cannot live in human society by truth —I mean, we cannot live and act according to our own feelings and opinions. Every one of us must sacrifice his feelings occasionally for the sake of other people; and you cannot do this, you cannot perform the ordinary duties of life, without pretending a little to be what you are not. All this life of ours, in every country, is governed by rules that are often painful, tiresome, seemingly unjust, certainly difficult to obey; but we must obey them very cheerfully, so far as outward appearances are concerned. Every one of us must act a little, and must recognize that the world is indeed a great theatre, in which everybody must play a part, and must wear the mask of an actor, all for the good of the world and for the happiness of mankind.

Relatively speaking, nothing is so necessary to man as illusion, as the beautifully untruthful. Human ideals, human aspirations, have all been more or less based upon the impossible, the untrue. But how much good has been thus accomplished!

Now you will recognize the importance of the third point, of clothes as a means of hiding. Clothes are symbols of much more than rank or position; they are especially symbols of conventions. Conventions are false, in more respects than one. But society is founded upon conventions, is regulated by conventions, is policed by conventions, is protected by conventions, is evolved by conventions. The next best thing in this world to being good is to pretend to be good, to try to make people think that you are good. Why? Because the habit of trying to appear to be a little better than you are, really helps you at last to become better than you are. Now all the conventions of society represent a sort of universal discipline, by which all men and women are obliged to act as if they were a little better than they really can be. An ideal is set before them, like a lesson, and they have to learn that lesson, and try to obey its teaching; and as soon as the lesson has been very well learned, a new and harder lesson is given. Moral progress in this world has been very slow, indeed, compared with other kinds of progress; but such progress as we have really made has been accomplished by the wearing of the Clothes of Convention.

From this point you can already imagine what a variety of subjects the author is likely to touch upon — religion as one kind of clothing for the human mind, loyalty and selfsacrifice as other kinds, military regulations and activities as yet other kinds. And treated according to his most magical though eccentric method, these dry subjects are made to blossom in a wonderful manner.

Here I think I have said enough regarding the first part of the book; we may now begin to look at the second part —the autobiographical part. It comes, this Book II., like an interruption into the midst of the argument about clothes—but in a most interesting way. For it is thus introduced in order that the reader may understand how the author arrived at these convictions about the mystery of life and the mystery of all things. Wisdom comes chiefly from pain; and he is going to tell us how through great sorrow he became wise.

The philosophical value of the biography lies in the fact that it represents the experience of a great number of intelligent and generous-hearted persons able to think deeply. It is not because Carlyle paints his own history, so much as because that history is the history of many men. Nevertheless, some of the purely personal parts of it have their personal interest. The autobiographer speaks of his parents and their poverty, of his life as a peasant's child, of the mingled bitterness and sweetness of those years passed in his native village. He attributes all that is good in his character chiefly to the early teachings of his mother—only a simple peasant woman, but full of goodness and full of faith. Later on he tells us that he learned very little either from his teachers at various schools or from his professors at the university; they could give him only dry facts; they did nothing for his soul, for the better part of his nature. The only person who did that for him, was his mother. But her teaching does not appear to have always been very gentle. He was severely restrained in many directions, and taught at an early age that truth which it is a misfortune to have to learn later in life. There is a sentence in the second chapter of the Book II. in which the author sums up this truth after a very original fashion. "Too early and too thoroughly we cannot be trained to know that Would, in this world of ours, is as mere zero to Should, and for most part as the smallest of fractions even to Shall." Substitute for "should," the words "ought to" and for "shall" understand "purpose," "future intention" or "desire";—and understand for "would," "wish"—then you will see how excellent a statement this is. Or if we take "shall" in the sense of "must," still the meaning remains very striking; for even what we must do, is as nothing compared with what we ought to do. As for what we would do, what we wish to do, it is very seldom indeed that in this world we are allowed a chance to do it. The whole of the biography subsequently turns a good deal upon these maxims—illustrates them in powerful ways. The next striking discovery of the autobiographer was much later in life, at the university, perhaps,—the discovery that even untruth may have a very great value. "Probably," he says, "Imposture is of sanative, anodyne nature, and man's Gullibility not his worst blessing."* Later on he explains this much more fully. What are called by religious people pious frauds, pious falsehoods, pious devices—what are called in Buddhism *Hoben*—illustrate this fact; and the whole of the philosophy of clothes is based upon it in Carlyle's book. Whether in religion, or in politics, or in education, certain devices of not a really truthful, but nevertheless of an indispensable character, have been found to greatly assist progress. Of course such philosophical positions must be accepted with proper reservation, and must be acted upon with great moral caution. But the fact is a very important one, and a man who cannot learn it in his youth, is likely afterwards to make great mistakes in his struggle with the world. For example, the earnest, honest, strictly truthful man, who does not recognize the larger relations of life, is very apt to denounce in anger numbers of social conditions which he sees to be false, simply because they are false, without asking himself whether the false may not have, for the time being,

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Pedagogy, Book II, chap. iii.

a certain value of truth. And what is the reason why the world has always refused to listen even to the greatest men who attacked religion on the ground that religion is not true? In spite of all arguments, humanity feels that even religious fables have their worth; and that it is wrong to attack them or ridicule them until they prove themselves to have become obstacles in the way of moral or intellectual development. We shall have to return to this subject later; it is treated very interestingly in the third part of the book.

But although, in learning these two things, the young man had learned much, he was destined to pass through many severe trials before he could learn any higher truths. He had yet to learn really to understand the lesson of life, and the meaning of the world. He learned it chiefly through the consequences of his first love-affair. Love being the most powerful of passions and emotions, it is the one through which a man can receive the greatest moral and mental pain. The story is very well told, and there is nothing at all extraordinary in its circumstances. The young university graduate, poor and without any great prospects before him, falls in love with the daughter of a rich house, who makes him believe that she returns his affection and will marry him. But, at an unexpected moment, he is clearly given to understand that he was foolish even to think of such a thing, that he is of inferior rank, that he is poor and therefore contemptible in the eyes of the girl's family, and that he must not make his appearance at the house any more. This is of course a severe blow both to the love and to the pride of the man, but a strong man must be able to bear blows like this without flinching. What makes it hard in this case, however, is an act of treachery that accompanies it. The man who is really responsible for the whole trouble, the man who really is guilty of cruelty, and who gets the girl and marries her, happens to be the best friend of the sufferer, his university friend, a rich student, who has the advantage of wealth and social position. So the jilted lover suffers at once in his love, in his pride, and in his sense of friendship. His intellectual studies have further rendered his mind sceptical in religious matters; and with these misfortunes upon him, everything seems at once to crumble about him—love, ambition, religion, and friendship, all abandoned and disbelieved in. With a heart full of bitterness, and empty of faith in anything, he wanders about the world for a good many years, before he can recover some degree of wisdom. At last indeed it comes to him through further experience with pain, through a new sense of sympathy with the suffering of humanity in general; for pain teaches the sufferer how to understand pain in others. This is the experience of most generous minds; it is by their own suffering that they first really learn what the suffering of mankind is, and then they learn to think of the best way to answer the Riddle of Life. All religions have tried to answer that riddle; and although many religions appear to contradict each other in various ways, all of them agree upon one great truth, the truth of Pain as Duty. All religions teach suffering—tell us that the world is not a place of pleasure, but a place for suffering; and that not only should a man learn to bear pain, but he should even invite and welcome pain in certain ways. Thus the fundamental Religion of Religions is the religion of pain; and when a man discovers this great truth, whether he believes in doctrines and dogmas or not, he learns to respect every great form of religion, for there is this truth in all of them which is as old as the world, and doubtless eternal.

Eternal—because there is another truth to be learned, after having learned this one, which explains it. Without Evil there could be no Good. Good exists only as the result of the struggle against evil. The one is necessary to the other as shadow to light in the vision of a landscape.

And there is yet a third truth in which the autobiographer puts faith, and which he learned when learning the others. Happiness is impossible to man, because as a Form, or Individual, he is finite and limited in all his capacities, while the mysterious Life that wells up within him is a part of the Infinite Being. Confined within the narrowest limits by his body, he remains infinite by his mind. Therefore nothing can possibly satisfy him. Give him the world for a plaything, give him a hundred worlds; after having had possession long enough to understand something about them, he would still be dissatisfied and want more. He would want the whole universe, and would even then not be satisfied. Religious philosophy here tells us how this dissatisfaction should be met. I understand that Buddhist philosophy teaches that it is our duty not to wish for anything finite or limited, but only for the infinite. Some Christian philosophy contains a kindred teaching—not quite so profound, I think, but equally good for religious purposes — that the ultimate Absolute, as a Person or God, is the only subject of holy wishing. For deep thinkers this disposition is not satisfactory, because Christianity insists upon this continuance of individuality after death and through all time as part of its doctrine; while oriental philosophy more rationally teaches the melting or merging of all individuality into the Absolute. Carlyle's position in "Sartor Resartus" is very close to oriental philosophy; and it is very beautiful in its way.

I do not think I need speak more here of the mere story of the autobiography, beautiful as it is; these are the principal points of interest in it. Let us sum them up again before turning to the third part of the book.

The first wisdom, after a mother's teaching, that a young man learns is usually learned through pain. But the first effect of great pain is to create a kind of selfish despair, to harden instead of to soften and expand character. Then, perhaps, comes a period of scepticism during which the young man believes in nothing — neither in love, nor in friendship, nor in religion, nor in honesty, nor in truth. More pain is necessary for one in this condition, and if he happen to be of a kind heart, it will certainly come. But new pain, terrible pain, will at last compel sympathy with the suffering of other men, and will force a person to think about all human experience in relation to pain. As human experience of this kind is chiefly recorded by religion, such thinking will force a man to perceive that even if all religions are false in some small matters, they are all true in some very great matters; and then he has learned to respect religion. In like manner he learns to respect humanity, with all its sins and failings, because he understands now how bitter life is, and how bravely mankind have in all times borne the burden of it, and struggled successfully from lower to loftier states of being. Then finally he comes to know, by thinking, that man is limited and weak only in one direction. For the life within him is certainly part of one universal life; he has been through all the past; he is related, though indirectly, to all the present; he will be related, without any question, to all the future. And so in place of the religion that he lost, he wins a larger faith. Instead of the friendship that he lost, he gains a new feeling of friendship and of love for all humanity. Instead of the pleasure he lost, he obtains a new capacity to bear pain, and comprehends that only through pain can higher wisdom ever be gained. And finally, just as he has discovered that pain and evil are necessary, so he discovers that many things which at one time seemed to him falsehoods, defections, follies, are of incalculable value, and really form the outer husks, or masks, or visible garments, of invisible truth. This is the principal teaching of the biographical part of the book. But there is very much more in the book than I have been able thus to indicate to you. Every line of it is worth reading not once, but many times; and now we can turn back again to the philosophy of clothes, which is resumed in the third and last portion of the book.

The first chapter of the third part need not concern us in the present lecture, for it is introductory, and something in the nature of a digression. But the next chapter, on church-clothes, introduces us to one of Carlyle's most interesting theories. By church-clothes, you must not understand Carlyle to mean only the dresses worn by priests and nuns, and so forth; he means all the outward symbolism of a religion as well — its buildings, images, paintings; also its ceremonies, its prayers and music, its incense; also even its traditions, doctrines, dogmas, laws, precepts. For all of these, together or singly, Carlyle does not consider to be Religion itself. Religion itself he thinks rather to be in the heart of man—I am using the word heart here in the sense of mind; and for such religion as this there is no temple large enough, not even the sky, or the whole hollow universe. But what men commonly call religion, the philosopher here calls only the outward signs and symbols of religion, only its garments, its clothes. All clothes must wear out, and be thrown away, to be replaced by new clothes. So all forms and doctrines of religion must change according to time and civilization, and be replaced by new forms and new doctrines. While garments are new and good and respectable, we must prize them; we do not neglect or show contempt for them until they are worn out and useless. So again with all outward religion. Necessarily the outward part of religion is not in itself any more true than the outer clothes of a man are truly a part of his own body. But they represent and cover truth. Whenever the outward forms of religion correspond with some inward moral truth, the religion endures. But when the truth is gone, then the clothes can be of no possible use at all. That is the time in which they must be thrown away. There is, however, a danger always in appearances, the danger of mistaking them for truth, or at least of imagining a truth behind them; for we never can see the absolute truth, and can only find its whereabouts through the appearances which cover it.

The same thing is true of the clothing of the military power. The military world, like the religions, has its trappings of splendid colour, its symbols of rank, and its machinery of force. But woe be to those entrusted with the defence of a nation, who mistake these appearances for reality. The forms remain when the body is dead, when the spirit has vanished; and then a people may find themselves suddenly at the mercy of other peoples. For example, just before the great war with Germany, France appeared to be the greatest military power in the world; the appearances, the garments of militarism, were all there; but when the phantom was touched it crumbled down. There is a story by Edgar Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," which tells us about a suit of clothes and a mask walking solemnly through the midst of a ballroom, with nobody inside of them. Such a thing is an army without spirit, moral discipline, or real reserve of power. Such a thing was China, before her military phantom was blown to pieces by Japan. It is interesting to remember here that Carlyle was especially a historian, and his great histories, especially the history of the French Revolution, were all written from the standpoint of this philosophy of clothes. Yet you will find how very closely he touches the truth by reading the evidence of Taine and others in regard to the conditions of the monarchy before the Revolution became possible. There was the army and all forms of government, but they were all of them shams and masks.

Politics, domestic politics, afford the subject for some other chapters of the book in the same connection. You will perhaps be less interested in these chapters, since they relate especially to foreign conditions, to the state of the rich and poor in England and Ireland. I will only observe that the philosophy of clothes is equally applied to economical machinery, to the exterior facts of domestic government. Finally we have also chapters upon social shams — the conventions of extravagance in dress, extravagance in selfish deeds, extravagance in all kinds of luxury. But these chapters, too, treat particularly of the crying evils of English society, and need only be mentioned. The great value of the whole work is in its treatment of universals; and although truths of the universal class are to be found scattered through every page of the third part of the book, this part is less valuable and less useful to you than the other two books. It is written particularly by way of appeal to English thinkers; the best part of the volume is that of which I have already given a summary.

Now for a few general considerations. I suppose that you have observed from the summary made that "Sartor Resartus" is a book of which the merit is largely in suggestion. It is a book written to make people think, rather than to teach them how to think; and its subject is the most important of all subjects—life, and the conduct of life. It is a book also calculated to correct a certain way of looking at great problems, great riddles, especially social riddles. Now many thousands of thousands of good men get through life very well with only a few simple ideas about right and wrong and duty; and they do not trouble themselves to think about the reason of things. It is indeed better that they should not; for it could only make them unhappy. But an ever-growing class of educated men cannot go through life in this innocent way; they are forced by duty or by other circumstances to think very profoundly, sooner or later, about the mystery of the universe. It is for such as these that the book is useful. It turns the thoughts to the best direction from which many problems can be studied. The statesman entrusted with the welfare of his people, the educator or religious teacher entrusted with the task of alleviating human sorrow or directing human efforts, the poet or man-of-letters whose mission is to teach the beautiful and cultivate the noble emotions or the generous idea—these are the men who cannot think about life in the old simple way. All must think about it in a larger fashion, in a fashion in accord with the present great expansion of human knowledge. And these classes of minds are largely furnished by the world's centres of learning; even here, the statesmen and teachers and men-of-letters of the future must come from the universities. I cannot help thinking that it is almost the duty of every university student, who feels capable of the feat, to read "Sartor Resartus," not once but many times. There are things in it with which he may not be pleased; there are extravagances in it at which some practical philosophers may smile. But the worth of the reading is in its after-effect; it forces big thoughts, and compels the recognition of new aspects of common things. You might ask me whether works of pure philosophy, scientific philosophy, ought not to have the preference. I should say in answer that this would depend very much upon the mind of the student. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, practical science could not give you one element that you will find in this book — the emotional element. If a man has a very powerful imagination, as well as a very large sympathy, the study of science alone will give him everything that he needs. He can get the water of emotion out of any desert of dry facts. But such men are very rare; it usually happens that the scientific faculties are fully developed in unemotional minds, so that we find the scientific faculty to be usually associated with a certain hardness of character. This hardness eventually corrects itself to some degree through emotional experience, but it is nearly always there. The scientific student would do well, I think, not to take his science without a fair amount of emotional reading, such as may serve to keep the more generous faculties warm.

There is one part of the book that I think ought to interest you more than the philosophy of clothes itself—the part that deals with the author's first painful experiences of life. I have given you a digest of this part. But there is one paragraph which I should wish to especially call your attention to in closing this lecture. It is the paragraph treating of the real obstacles to success in life.

Carlyle's remark is this in substance: "Many people think that success in life, for a man of talent and energy, chiefly depends upon working patiently and steadily, acting honestly in all things, doing one's very best in whatever one undertakes, and always performing one's duty, when duty is required. This means a great deal — it means an almost perfect conduct of life. But a man who believes that this is enough, is under a very great and very sad mistake. Unfortunately the obstacles in life which are really serious, are not to be overcome, either by energy or by one's own work, nor by honesty, nor by duty, nor by faith, nor by anything purely good. For these obstacles are the wickedness and the folly and the ignorance and the envy and the malice of other men." This is the substance of Carlyle's teaching; and I believe that you are all still too young to understand how large and how terrible is the truth that is behind this statement. Everybody with a good heart, who has been brought up in a good home, under the teaching of good parents, and afterwards of good instructors, is apt to enter the world with a high moral sense of duty, and an innocent faith in the goodness of his fellowmen. Of course his school life teaches him that there are great differences of character, that not all people are equally good. But there is yet no competition in schools of the sort that reveals the full depths, bad and good, of human nature. It is in the struggle of life that this is first fully learned, and the result is a very painful surprise. Instead of thinking that one has only to do one's duty, a young man soon finds himself obliged to think how he can do that duty. Presently he will find that it seems as if all society were in conspiracy against him, trying to prevent him from performing his duty. He learns that to be good in this world is a very difficult thing, a very difficult thing indeed, not because he feels within himself any difficulty about being good, but because other people make the difficulty for him. Almost daily he has to choose between his interests and his morals; almost daily he has to decide whether he will do what is wrong or do what is right; and this goes on for years and years and years, until every fibre of moral strength that is in him has been tested to the uttermost. He has to understand that the real world is but very imperfectly influenced by moral teachings in small matters; that everything is regulated by interest, by advantage. If he be very intelligent and far seeing, he may soon learn to accept things as they are, without enquiring too much why they should be so, and without allowing himself to become angry about them. But no matter how intelligent he may be, he will discover that more than intelligence, and more than energy, and more than morality is necessary for him. He must not try to avoid trouble; he must be a fighter—that is, he must be able to oppose, to overcome, even to give pain when necessary, without caring about the consequences. It is not enough to be good — it is much more important, so far as success goes, to be strong; but the best kind of man is the man who is both good and strong, who knows how to be harsh and stern at certain times. All men cannot be all this; very few good men can be all this. Yet success greatly depends upon it; the higher the society, and the more intellectual the world in which a man's lot is cast, the more bitter and wicked the opposition that must be faced. In this country as yet social conditions have not reached by any means those extremes which they have reached in European societies, where the difficulties of success in life are simply tremendous, and every year increasing; but even here, I think, you will all recognize at some time or other that to be good and to work hard is by no means enough to get along with, and the battle is best won by the man able to meet moral obstacles with superior intelligence and with positive force. Self-respect, the respect that compels a man not to yield to what he believes to be wrong, no matter how great the power behind the wrong — this is the most important of possessions. Yet it does not always obtain its deserts; it must be an aggressive self-respect to get them. I remember a singular case in America where this kind of self-respect was not altogether successful. The man was a civil engineer employed by an immense railway company at a moderate salary. His prospects were bright; the directors liked him, his fortune was almost in sight. One day the chief director of the company ordered him to make plans for a railway construction upon a certain piece of ground. He went to the ground to study it, and came back and said to the director, "We cannot use that ground in the way that you want — a space about two feet wide and about three hundred feet long belongs to other people." The director answered, "If we put the building up quickly, it will never be noticed until too late, and then we shall have the law in our favour." "But that would be stealing," the engineer answered, "and I will not do it." For this he was discharged; and the railroad company, being very influential, influenced nearly a dozen other railroad companies against him, so that he could not for more than ten years obtain any employment even in the United States as a railroad engineer. But at last, after long waiting and suffering, his case was heard of by men who could understand the real business value of such character; and he was placed in a position worthy of his talents.

Nevertheless, he will never be a rich man. He might have been rich, if he had not said no, when several hundred millions of dollars wanted him to say yes. I have no doubt that all of you will find yourselves, not once, but many times in life, asked to say yes, when you feel that you ought to say no. The reading of such a book as "Sartor Resartus" will perhaps at such a time materially help you with the "no." It is the "no" at last that makes the highest quality of human progress, both moral and material.