 Carlyle and Michelet compared as

 Historians and Men of Letters

"Men may construe things after their fashion, clean from the purpose of the things themselves."
The renaissance of historical studies and the consequent wide extension of historical knowledge forms one of the most important features of the nineteenth century, and marks it off sharply from its predecessor, when history was treated with contemptuous neglect. The reliance placed by eighteenth century thinkers on reason as the sole test to which all ideas and institutions must ultimately be brought, led them to despise the teachings of the past and to ignore the assistance which history gives in the investigation of social and political problems. But with the opening of the nineteenth century and near even earlier, the attitude of thinkers insensibly changed. The ideas of continuity and development began to assume importance and the application of historical methods completely transformed all departments of knowledge, literature, and philosophy, law and jurisprudence, each received a fresh direction and a new character.

The interest and enthusiasm aroused by the new historical studies is illustrated by the fascination they
possessed for literary men generally. The early
nineteenth century is distinguished not so much by
the growth of a body of specialised historians,
as by the eagerness with which men of letters
devoted themselves to the task of writing history.
We have numerous examples in Thiers, Gugat, Toise,
Staunton, Tocque, and many others. Whether
history really benefited from the attention paid to
it by those, who did not regard it as the main
business of their lives, is a doubtful point. But
without entering into this question, we may
recognise the fact that in England and France at
least (it might not be safe to make the same
assertion about Germany) the historian who
wrote history and nothing else was almost
unknown and that, in particular, the connection
between the mass of letters and the historian was
extremely close.
Examples of this intimate connection between
history and literature are found in the two authors,
who form the subjects of this essay. The general
Resemblance between Carlyle and Michelet cannot fail to attract notice. In style, temperament, and mental outlook, in the combination within each of the same qualities and the same defects, the similarity is striking and has frequently been the subject of comment by critics on both sides of the Channel. This identity of temperament was, of course primarily due to a like native endowment, but the careers of the two men provide at least a partial explanation of their strange and passionate natures.

Both were brought prematurely into contact with the stern realities of life; Michelet in "La Jeunesse" has related the story of his joyless youth, of the penury, the acute misery, sometimes the positive want, which marked his early years. This early bitter experience of the reality of suffering had permanent results on his character. It intensified his already keen sensitiveness, stimulated his imagination and sharpened his intellect, while no doubt strengthening his powers...
of will and endurance. But that was an un
healthy side to this development. The growth
of certain faculties was checked, especially
those which we associate with cleanness and
steadiness of judgment. In fact, Michelet's
mental balance appears to have been completely
upset. Speaking of some of the idiosyncrasies
and violations of good taste which disfigure
his later writings, Sainte-Beuve asks, "Serait-ce
que ceux, à qui la vraie jeunesse a montré
en sa saison, sont plus sujets que d'autres à
ces vices-repos et ces revers de jeunesse?"
Whatever we think of this suggestion, it is
undeniable that this early experience of hardship
had a most disastrous result on Michelet's highly-
strong nature. It accentuated the natural
feverishness of his temperament and tended to
destroy the faculty of calm, discriminating
criticism. Thus when Michelet closed his appren-
tice ship, and commenced author, he did so, it is
time, with mental powers of the highest order, but
at the same time, with serious mental deficiencies.
Boyle suffered from somewhat similar disadvantages,
but in his case, the responsibility must be accepted
not only to the hard circumstances of his early
youth and the long, painful struggle for
literary recognition, but also to the spiritual
and mental distress under which he laboured.
The burden of the world weighed heavily on
Boyle, far more heavily than on Mickle.
The obstinate questionings, the doubts and
pangeries which trouble every son of Adam,
pushed upon him with particular insistence,
leaving him no peace. Convincing of the
inadequacy of existing religions and philosophies,
to solve his doubts and satisfy the deepest needs
of his nature, he struggled to work out for
himself some creed, in which he could rest
securely, and which would give peace to his
troubled spirit. Such he professed to have
found in the Everlasting Year and the gospel
of work, but it is doubtful if his somewhat
nearly philosophy ever succeeded in treading his perplexities or relieving his soul of its anguish. Thus to the end of his life, the darkness never really lifted and his view of men and things reflected the gloom which enveloped his spirit. The steadiness of his judgment was constantly in danger of being disturbed by the emotional side of his nature. Of him too, we might say, as Jules Simon has said of Michelet, "Son caractère le condamne à être injuste, en dépit de sa volonté."

This both in Carlyle and Michelet, the imaginative and emotional powers dominate over the reason, the mystic triumphs over the rationalist. This peculiar combination is the source of qualities of the very highest order, but it is no less true that it produces intellectual blemishes of a most serious kind.

He may say categorically of Carlyle and Michelet that both were poets. This statement is not paradoxical because they wrote in prose.
Prinzip Sage has defined poetry as "the expression in beautiful form and melodious language of the best thoughts and the noblest emotions which the spectator of life awakens in the finest souls." and he continues: "This may be affected by prose as truly as by verse, if only the language be rhythmical and beautiful." Carlyle and Michelet are amongst the most perfect examples we have of the prose poet.

This may be seen if we examine their mental equipment. Each was endowed in the first place with an imagination of surpassing power, in their historical works this matchless gift attained the fullest scope. To recall to life, the characters and incidents of a bygone age was the task which they set before themselves. "L'histoire," said Michelet in words which are now engraved on his tomb, "L'histoire est une resurrection" and no more succinct expression of his aim as a historian could be desired.
This power of making the dead past live once more, with all the glow and sparkle of life has been enviously recognised by critics, otherwise unfavourably disposed to him. The ability to make the figures and the events of a remote period visible to the eye of the reader was his in a superlative degree. They were real to himself and he could make them real to others. His aim was to put it was "non pos de raconter seulement de juger, mais d'évoquer, de faire, ressusciter les âges." To French historians he had an equal measure of success in reconstructing the past.

Of Carlyle an almost exactly similar account might be given. The creative imagination which enabled him to realise events of a period himself and then to portray it in glowing colours so as to make it live for his readers appears throughout all his historical and biographical writings.
The "French Revolution" is an example of it on a large scale. Closely allied with the power of imagination, which distinguish Balzac and Michelet, are their powers of sympathy. From this sympathetic insight, they derive the capacity to describe not merely the external affairs of a period but its immortal, not merely the outer life of a man, but his thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. In Michelet we have this faculty developed to its highest point. It is said that he had the power of sympathising with every age which he described. In the early volumes of his History of France, he succeeds in penetrate into the recesses of the medieval mind, comprehending as no modern had done, the religious fervour of the ages of faith, the enthusiasm which raised the towering Gothic cathedrals and the inspired Promontorium which sent mailed Christendom to west.
mited Palestine from the infidels. He
But when Chekelet arrived at the French
Revolution, he described it, not as a
medievalist but as a man of 1789. As
he advanced, his views developed and
when he reached 1793, he was no longer the
man of 1789, he had become a Pantonist.
If Carlyle lost this power of sympathy in quite
the same degree, still he has it and it is
especially notable in his character sketches.
Lowell said that while the figures of most
historians were like dolls, stuffed with corn,
Carlyle's were so real that if you pinched them
they bled. His ability to bring out by a few
short sentences and significant epithets, not
only the outward appearance but the salient
characteristics of a historical personality is
wonderful. We need only recall his portrait
of Mirabeau as an example.
But Carlyle's power of sympathy, it must be
confessed, are limited. He could sympathise
with certain types, especially the type which he chose to regard as heroic, i.e. the man of clear head, inflexible will and untiring energy, who could ride the whirlwind and drift the storm. But other men of better calibre and more complex nature, he could not readily comprehend and he is tempted therefore either to ignore them altogether or to pursue them with abuse.

These powers of imagination and sympathy, which we have seen are so conspicuous in the writings of both and Eachelde, are reinforced in each case by a remarkable style. Of each's style much has been written. To some critics, it is merely gibberish, Certainly it suggests its uncouthness, its odd phrases, its interrogation, and its apostrophe, its defiance of grammar and syntax render it something unique in literature. While there are certain types of mind, in which it arouses insurmountable repugnance, yet we cannot fail to realize its value for certain purposes.
There is nothing like Balyle's style for describing an incident of dramatic intensity, a scene of horror and confusion, the rush and tumult of a frenzied crowd, the animal fury of a mob. Take his account of the massacre of the Swiss in the month of August. No smoothly flowing easy prose could give the reader that sense of reality of being actually present at the very scene itself, which is produced by Balyle's spirited narration.

But Balyle's style is not suitable for every purpose. We cannot imagine it employed, for instance, in an exposition of constitutional principles or a scientific discourse. It is essentially dramatic and used in its descriptive events of a dramatic character it is admirable, but for other purposes it is unsatisfactory, and sometimes mischievous.

The similarity of style between Balyle and Chaucer is one of the most remarkable things in literature.
In Michelet, we find the same sort of effects: the broken sentences, the abrupt conclusions, the abrupt conclusions, which we saw were so prominent in Carlyle. But though this general resemblance exists yet on the whole, Michelet's power of expression is much weaker than Carlyle's. The French writer who described Carlyle's style as "Michelet à la quatrième puissance," correctly expressed the relation between the two.

These considerations enable us to understand why Carlyle and Michelet have been described as free poets. They also assist us to comprehend something of their strength and weakness. Take them as philosophers and thinkers.

Carlyle must always be recognized as one of the great forces of the nineteenth century. On the part of a generation deeply engrossed in the material things of life, prone to think that "good" meant "good to eat," or "good to wear," his voice, demanding self-denial and obedience to
duty, denouncing faithlessness and low ideals, fell like the blast of a trumpet. The complete change in the national temper, which occurred during the nineteenth century must in large measure be attributed to him. But while his success in this respect proved him to be a prophet, it did not, as many of his contemporaries believed, prove him to be a thinker. On the contrary, he belongs as he himself said of Goethe to "that class of persons who do not recognize the syllogistic method as the chief organ for investigating truth or feel themselves bound at all times to stop short when this light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient court of law, and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there." Carlyle worked by the method of intuition. By a flash of insight, he could see important truths, and express them in language, which carried conviction by its
burning eloquence and sincerity. But the prophet occasionally prophesies falsely. Carlyle's intentions were as likely to lead him to error as to lead him to truth. Thus he thundered against Christ's faith and to-day Christ's faith has been banished to Saturn. On the other hand, he supposed democracy, but the course of events has not justified his opinion. All we wish to insist upon is the fallibility of Carlyle's judgments. We can accept his gospel in its totality. It contained truth no doubt but inextricably mingled with error. His one-sidedness and blindness to certain aspects of life are astonishing. Take his doctrine of hero-worship. We would deny that at times the advent of the strong man, the Caesar, the Frederick, the Napoleon, is required in the history of the world. But it is not necessary on this account to express unqualified approval of slavery, or condemnation of democracy, or to worship the
memory of a Dr. Francia. Carlyle constantly falls into error by mistaking a half-truth for the whole truth.

 Michelet was never so great a moral force as Carlyle, but in the exaggerated, almost fantastic, nature of their philosophical creed, there is some likeness between them. Unsympathetic critics like Schœl er state that Michelet cannot be taken seriously. His views are a sort of medley of democratic beliefs and unfelt opinions, combined with certain prejudices, for example, against monarchy, against the English, against priests, and against the Bourgeoisie. Only connected theory he had, he owed to the Neapolitan Vico ("Je n'èus de maître que Vico.") In 1827, he translated the Scienza Nuova. Vico had made a close study of the history of Rome, from which he derived a philosophy of progress. Humanity, he considered, passes through three stages: (1) the divine age in which man made gods
of everything he sees; (2) the heroic age
in which force reigns and hero's rule; (3) the
human age, in which we have the growth of
laws, industries, commerce, art and science.
The progress of humanity was cyclical. Having
arrived at the end of the third age, it
went back to the beginning of the first, and
recommenced the process. Michelet accepted
this philosophy with the proviso that while
humanity moved in circle, yet the circles
were always growing wider, so that definite
progress was made. From Victor he also
derived the conception of history as the
expression of the divine ideas, a favorite
notion of Carlyle's, which he was never tired of
illustrating from the song of the Earth Spirit in
"Faust."

"Thus at the roaring doom of Time, I ply,
And weave for God, the robe thou seest him by:
Many of Michelet's ideas have a certain
grandeur and subtlety of their own, that
They are hopelessly impracticable and of no positive value except to illustrate the charities and mental outlook of their author.

Let us now turn to ask how far Carlyle and Michelet succeeded as historians. Gaizot has declared that the task of the historian is three-fold. He says: "The investigation of facts, the study of their relation, the reproduction of their form and motion, these constitute history, and every great historical work must be judged by these tests."

Let us take first the investigation of the facts. In this field, Carlyle did not specially distinguish himself. The study of sources was a task which he found particularly irksome and he appears to have lacked some of the technical abilities of an investigator. The capital instance of his defining in this respect is the case of the Squire Papers. These were forged as a
practical joke after the publication of the "Letters and Speeches of Cromwell," yet though
their fantastic character was more than
obvious, Bodley accepted them and inserted
them in later editions of his book.
But apart from this, Bodley had little
access to original sources; documentary
studies on a large scale only commenced
about 1830 and a struggling man of
letters was not in the position to command
entrance to the archives. The story
of his attempt to use the brother papers in the
British Museum is well known. In general,
he was compelled to confine himself to the
printed authorities, memoirs in particular.
But he spared no pains to arrive at the truth,
with the materials at his disposal. The utmost
he made for instance to secure correct
information on a small point, like the uniforms
of the Prussian soldiers, was extraordinary. He
ever went the length of collecting a library of
books on the subject.

 Michelet was in quite a different position from Balzac. After the July Revolution, he was appointed Director of the Historical Section of the National Archives. He has described the sensations of his first visit: "Pourtant, lorsque j’entrevois la première fois dans ces catacombes manuscrites, dans cette nécropole des monuments nationaux, j’aurais dit volontiers, comme cet Allemand entrant au monastère de Saint-Vanne: Voici l’habitation que j’ai choisie et mon repos aux siècles des siècles."

His monumental History of France was based on a thorough study of the sources to which he had such easy access. In his History of the Revolution, he was the first to use the minutes of the commune and the sections opposing in the Hôtel de Ville (and destroyed later during the Commune in 1871), while he explored the archives at Tours for
The history of the Vendean rising. In fact, Michelet claimed to be a pioneer in documentary studies.

"Avec des historiens remarquables de cette époque, des essais n'avaient senti encore le besoin de chercher les faits hors des livres imprimés, aux sources primitives, le plus part inédites alors, aux monuments de nos bibliothèques, aux documents de nos archives."

But in spite of the fact that Michelet had infinitely greater advantages as regards sources of information, yet in correctness and general historical truth, he is inferior to Carlyle. It remains a surprising fact that with all his tendency to exaggeration and high-pitched statement, Carlyle seldom loses truth for the sake of effect. The trial in his case was particularly severe when we think of his base-worship with the temptation to which it exposed him, of suppressing awkward facts connected with his hero. But Carlyle comes through this ordeal triumphantly. His most adverse critics
have to admit his strict fidelity to truth. The
earners of the blunders of his heroes are stated
unreservedly. Says Mr. Bunce, "If the
Protector makes a somewhat distant allusion
to the Barbadoes, Boyle is at your elbow to
tell you it means selling people to work as
slaves in the West Indies."
In addition, his general accuracy, apart from
such temptations to misrepresentation, is of a
high order. Not that he is faultless, but
it is curious how critics in their attempts
to point out mistakes in Boyle, so frequently
fall into error themselves. This is in his recent
work, Mr. G. P. Gough, referring to the "French
Revolution," accuses Boyle of accepting as
true the legend of the burning of the
"Vengeur." But this is quite incorrect, for
if anyone turns to the book itself, he will
find Boyle specifically stating that the
legend is an invention of Boreis's and "the
larget, most inspiring piece of blague, manufactured

for some centuries, by any means or notion, M. Michelet, however, with less excuse falls continually into mistakes. This appears to have been largely the result of temperament. Existential and imaginative, he readily succumbed to the temptation to sacrifice truth for dramatic effect. He is prone to supply deficiencies in knowledge by brilliant intuition and he delights in bold unfounded generalizations. Summing up the moral facts of the seventeenth century, for instance, he says, "Ils sont tous dans ces trois mots : sorcellerie, concert, assassiner, et ces trois n’en font qu’un ; ils signifient stérilité." As another example of his wild and unfounded statements, we may cite his astounding remark that the word "god," is not found in Shakespeare, or if it is, only rarely and without religious significance. He can parallel this with an equally astounding observation of Carlyle on Thiers: "History of the Revolution," Thiers has one reference and that
only to a book, not to a page or a chapter. The constitutional defect from which this fault springs, seems to have been inherited by both writers, but Carlyle was able to subdue it with greater success than Michelet.

So much for the investigation of facts, now for their explanation. It is just here that Carlyle and Michelet fail most conspicuously. They are almost totally deficient in the qualities necessary for this part of the historian's task. For Lé, imagination, fact, poetic inspiration, are unraveling. They are even a disadvantage. It is the logical, the scientific qualities of the mind that are important. Clarity of vision, steadiness of judgment, the power to detect hidden causes, to separate the important from the unimportant, to discern resemblances, to discover the principles which lie beneath the surface of the facts, these are the mental qualities which are most essential. In a word, we need the scientific, not the poetic mind.
A striking example of the type of historian is found in Guizot, and an almost perfect example of historical explanation in his History of Civilization in Europe. Here we have the history of fourteen centuries, with their multitude of facts, carefully analysed, the essential elements in European civilization singled out, their action and interaction described, and their combination to form the civilization of modern times, explained. This analysis at once throws a flood of light on the course of European history. Of course, it has been objected that Guizot's treatment is too logical and renders his history unattractive, but the scientific treatment of any subject is open to the same objection. Political economy analyses modern society as it is organised for the production of wealth. It cannot give a description exactly corresponding with the facts, but still the analysis is worth making, for it introduces order where
before there was class, and makes intelligible what was obscure. This is exactly the
justification of Guizot's scientific history.
Now you will find no trace of this kind
of historical explanation in Carlyle or Michelet.
They do give explanations of a sort, but
usually with reference to their misty philosophy
which do not furnish much information.
Take their explanations of the French Revolution.
 Carlyle says: “It is the end of the dominion of
Imposture (which is darkness and opaque
freedom); and the burning up, with un-
quenchable fire, of all the Gyps that are in
the Earth.” “Je définis la Révolution”
says Michelet: “l'avènement de la loi, la
résurrection du droit, la réaction de la
justice”. It cannot be said that their
statements really help us very much. If they
are anything, they are an attempt to stole
the place of the Revolution in the
Presidential order of the world, but such an
attempt in the present state of our knowledge is presumptions and bound to fail. But if the historian will be content with a less ambitious design, he can give an explanation of the facts which will really explain so far as it goes. To con discern, for instance, the political situation in France in the eighteenth century, point out the social problems, which were crying for solution, describe the revolutionary sentiment in fashion at the time and by these and similar means, give his reader some idea why a revolution broke out in France and why it broke out in 1789. This will mean of course regarding the Revolution, not as a portent from Heaven, but as an ordinary example of the action of cause and effect in human affairs.

This kind of explanation, Carlyle and Malthus seem to have been quite incapable of giving. They make bold to say that work insight into
the causes of the Revolution will be gained from Lecky’s chapters on the subject in his History of the Eighteenth Century, than from their many volumes.

Now we come to the third part of the historian’s task, “the reproduction of the form and motion of the facts,” and we think we had said enough already to show that in this department, Carlyle and Michelet stand unrivalled. Their terse literary qualities, their vivid imagination and their keen powers of sympathy stood them in good stead, and enabled them to give a picture of the pageant of history that has never been surpassed. It is unnecessary to repeat what we have said before, so we shall confine ourselves to quoting the opinion of two authorities on this point. Of Carlyle, Professor Santley says that no one before or since has had in the same degree, the “historic sense,” that is the
power of seizing and so of portraying a
historic character, incident or period, as if
it were alive, not dead, in such a manner
that the fut reader, whether he is convinced or not that the things ever did
happen, sees that they might and probably
must have happened,” while concerning
mélelet, Schröer asks, “Faut c’est le
lecteur de ses livres, qui n’ait conservé
devant les yeux, les Gébbs ou grand corps,
“mon bleu et blond”, les cathédrales du
XIIIᵉ siècle, les brouyantes et remuantes
ville de Flandres, la majesté chétienne,
de saintLouis, la virginale figure de
Jeanne d’Arc, Luther traitent les rois avec
un magnifique mépris d’eux et de Satan,
or buvant la bière avec son cher
élémethien?”

We see then, that the powers
of bodily and mental and his tormentors were
limited. It is only one kind of history that
they are really capable of writing. The
dramatic, the picturesque incidents of the
past, they can depict with unparalleled
power. But the duller facts of history, the
growth of constitutions, the development of
law, the organisation and administration
and finance. Carlyle was frankly hostile to
constitutionism in all its forms. Much
therefor that was of cardinal importance in
history was cost upon him. Hence there arises
that characteristic failing of both Carlyle and
Michelet, their tendency to dwell at
inordinate length on topics which interested
them and to neglect others of great intrinsic
importance. Their histories come to be
rather a series of toplease than a connected
narrative.

It might be desirable at this point to take a
short review of the historical work of each of
the two writers we are discussing.

In volume as well as in the extent of the
field over which he ranged, Michelet early takes precedence. He commenced his career as a historian by producing a Précis of Modern History, which by its freshness and originality drove all similar compilations from the field.

So this succeeded in 1831, the History of Rome, brought down to the death of Caesar. Niebuhr had already published his epoch-making work on the subject, but Michelet does not follow him slavishly. In discussing the origins of Roman history, he was able by his powers of intuition to make some happy suggestions, which in many cases, anticipated Mommsen. But the chief interest of the book is the manner in which he emphasizes the importance of the land and the soil as factors in history. "La terre fait l'homme," he said. (It is true that elsewhere he says, speaking of the Dutch, "l'homme fait la terre." But there on the sort..."
of things, we have to submit to from exile. He paid a visit to Italy, during which he gathered materials for the brilliant picture of the physical features of the country which forms the introduction to his work. The Roman History was written with remarkable power and, though it can no longer claim to be authoritative, it may even yet be read with profit. In 1831, Michelet published his Introduction to Universal History. The ideas of Vico are prominent throughout this book. History is regarded as the progressive realization of freedom, the triumph of man over nature. Beginning with the nations of the East, we see man entirely at the mercy of nature. As we proceed westwards, we meet in succession the nations who have contributed to the civilisation of man, rising higher and higher in the scale, till we reach France, whose privilege it is to inaugurate the era of democracy, that is,
liberty incarnate. The symbolism, which is so characteristic of Michelet makes its appearance. He regards the progress of civilisation as parallel to the progress of the sun, from east to west. This fanciful idea coincides roughly with the facts, but there are exceptions, which Michelet is compelled to notice. Thus he is forced to treat of Egypt before Judea, whereas if he had strictly to his idea, the latter should come first, since it is further to the east.

Michelet's magnum opus, the History of France, to which he devoted the greater part of his life, appeared in three parts. The first six volumes brought the history down to the death of Louis XI. Then departing from chronological order, he proceeds to deal with the Revolution and then finally he returned and wrote the history of the intervening centuries.

The first six volumes are undoubtedly his most enduring work. In these volumes Michelet is
most dispassionate, most restrained, most level
headed. The exaggerations, errors and fantastic
conceptions that disfigure his later work, do
not appear to the same extent. In the first
volume, he traces the history down to the Treaty
of Verdun (843 A.D.), and having discussed
the different races, which go to make up the
French nation, he proceeds in his second
volume to give his incomparable "Tableau de
France." He begins by presenting a general
view of France as a whole, and then traverses
each province in turn, Brittany, Artois,
Bretagne etc., discussing its characteristics
and its contribution to the national life,
concluding with his famous comparison i
"L'angleterre est un empire, l'italianque,
voyeux, une roce, la France est une
personne."
This famous description of France is one of
chefell's greatest achievements, and illustrates
once more his sense of the connection betw

geography and history, which had appeared so prominently in the Roman History.

With regard to the succeeding volumes, they constitute, as all chivalry's histories tend to do, a series of tableaux. Certain aspects of the middle ages, which aroused his sympathy and interest, he could treat with unrivaled power, and among these we may mention the Crusades, the fall of the Templars (whose documents he had edited) and above all, the episode of Jeanne d’Arc. He deals sympathetically with the Church. The monastery receives fair treatment at his intention hands, and his portraits of Louis IX and Louis XI are eminently just. He gives excellent accounts of medieval art and Gothic architecture. But the most remarkable feature of the work, to which we have already alluded, is the manner in which he has caught the very spirit of the middle ages and transposed it to his pages. The book was warmly received.
in Catholic circles, and obtained favourable notice from cholera
But within the next few years, along
with his colleague in the University, Guizot,
was engaged in a furious battle with the Jesuits.
The professors denounced their opponents in their
lectures and in "Priests, Women, and Families,"
Michelet vigorously attacked the confession
as the destroyer of the home and the family.
The controversy excited the greatest interest in
Paris and finally provoked the interference of
the chief minister, 

This quarrel with
the priests, combined with the outbreak of the
July Revolution in 1830, gave a fresh
direction to Michelet's thoughts. He determined
now to write the history of the French Revolution,
alluding that he could not understand the
monarchical centuries unless he realised within
himself "l'âme et la foi du peuple." In
reality, he was actuated solely by his interest
in recent politics.
The History of the French Revolution is decidedly inferior to the previous six volumes. The controversies in which he had recently been engaged, had left their mark on him. The attitude of detachment has entirely vanished and he makes not an attempt to judge the Revolution impartially. To him, it is the greatest event in history and he sets himself deliberately to compose its epic poem. He takes as his hero, the people, and sketches with incomparable dramatic power, the revolutionary scenes in which the people were the chief actors, such as, the fall of the Bastille, the Federation of July, 1790, (the supreme achievement of the People), the Ninth of August. But the work is marred by Michelet's unqualified approval of the deeds of the populace. He omits that darkness the memory of the Revolution, the September massacres, for instance, were not, he holds, the work of the people, but of someone else, the King, Marat, or Robespierre (of whom he gladly lets entertain}
a slow opinion). The absence of proportion in the book is noticeable, and there are numerous errors of fact. But Michelet has succeeded in penetrating to the very soul of the Revolution, and expressing, with burning eloquence, the faith that animated its supporters. The work has earned high praise from Chaulard, and Lord Acton has pronounced it strong enough to work a change and form an epoch in a reader's life. But it is pitched in too high a key to work as solid history. It is an eloquent apologia, a panegyric, written by one who regarded the Revolution as something divine.

The later volumes of the History of France, dealing with the period from 1685 to 1789 are the weakest of all. The faults of the first and second volumes are not entirely cured, and the power of pure criticism grows less and less. The author great events to the most trifling causes as the following quotations clearly illustrate: "Le règne de Louis XIV se portage en
deux parts : avant la fuite, après la fuite, avant l'abolit et les conquêtes, après Madame Beuron et les défaites, la proclamation de 500,000 
français. François I. vit le même : avant l' 
obéis, après l'obéis, avant l'alliance des 
Juros etc. Après l'élevation des guerres et le 
massacre des Vaudois, par lequel finira son 
regne : " Fermont Auguste avait ton, la Pologne 
était ivre."

Vichellis imagination takes an unhealthy turn. 
He greedily swallows the scandal of memoir - 
writers and presses considerations of psychology 
and heredity into service to explain political 
acts. He has not abandoned his habits of minute research, 
but his conclusions are vitiated by the passion 
which possesses him. He is still inspired with 
enthusiasm for the democratic cause and his 
power of sympathy fail him in describing 
monarchical France. His mastery of detail is 
as great as ever, but the work as a whole is 
marr by a singular lack of judgment and
good taste.

The two volumes, however, dealing with the Renaissance and the Reformation, are among the most brilliant of his writings. That on the Renaissance shows how far he had travelled from his early mediævalism. He admits that his previous view of the Middle Ages was too favourable and throughout his tone is decided anti-Christian.

In the Reformation, he sees the forerunner of the Revolution. Luther is his hero and in a lesser degree Edgington, but he cannot find it in his heart to condemn the Catholic League, since it was not Protestant, it was at least democratic.

Even in the later volumes, there are magnificent portraits of Villers, of Vendôme, and of the Regent Orleans, while his descriptions of the Revocation of Winters and the speculative mania started by Fouc, are in his best style. But nothing can compensate for the want of elaboration.
reflection on open-mindedness and mental balance. As Taine says: "m. Michelet a laissé grandir en lui l'imagination poétique. Elle a couvert un étoffe les autres facultés qui d'abord s'étaient développées de couvrir avec elle."

These later volumes remain a melancholy testimony to the decay of Michelet's powers.

Lastly, we may just mention the "Bible of Humanity," in which each civilization is regarded as a writing of a verse in the book of civilization. The work possesses certain merits but cannot claim to be treated seriously as history.

Turning now to Bossyce, we notice first his History and Heresy Worship. In this book, he deals with important historical characters, but his main is chief ethical and polemical, not the attainment of historical truth. It is important, however, for the light it throws on Bossyce's conception of history. In his early essays, he had made various statements regarding the duty of the historian, such as the
following: "From of old it was too often observed that the dwelt with disproportionate fondness in senate-houses, in battle-fields, noy, even in kings' ante-chambers, forgetting that far away from such scenes, the mighty tide of thought and action was still rolling on its course, that in its thousand remote villages, a whole world of existence was blooming and fading, while the famous victory was won or lost. But no one more habitually offended in this manner than Carlyle himself. He made little attempt to relate the life of the nameless poor, and "dwelt with disproportionate fondness" on the careers of the epoch-makers, Cromwell, Frederick, or Napoleon. His history must be pronounced in essence the biography of great men. In the early part of "Past and Present", he presents us with a vivid picture of the life of a medieval life, founded on the chronicle of Jocelyn de Brakelond. The outstanding figure here is that of the Abbé Samson, a man after
 Carlyle's own heart. The life of the Middle Ages is painted with astonishing power, but throughout the historian is constantly in danger of being subordinated to the pamphleteer. The book was a political manifesto and though Carlyle does not unduly idealise the Middle Age, he tends to use it as a foil to expose the rottenness of modern civilisation. The book cannot therefore be reckoned as pure history.

The History of the French Revolution is Carlyle's best known work and has acquired a European renown. He had already devoted considerable attention to the eighteenth century and the results of his studies were embodied in the early essays in which he discussed Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists, and told for all time the story of the Diamond Necklace. These sketches of the Spanish Regime serve as an introduction to his history of the Revolution. The "French Revolution" cannot be judged by the ordinary canons of historical criticism, still recognised...
this when he called it "not so much a history as an epic poem." Carlyle's "stereoscopic imagination" as Emerson termed it and his brilliant powers of insight, enabled him to paint a picture of the Revolution which is only rivaled by that of Michelet. In two respects, he excelled. In spite of his contempt for the multitude, no one, unless it be Michelet, has described more vividly the external aspect of the French mob; its movement, its passion, its animal fury. And no one has given us such living pictures of the great actors in the drama. There are exceptions of course. He could not comprehend Louis XVI and he admitted late that he had underestimated Robespierre. But his portraits of the Juan, Mirabeau, Danton ete, are still remarkable for their essential truthfulness. For English readers, no book can give such a concrete representation of the Revolution as Carlyle. You have the impression of being present watching the progress of events with your own
The work is not a contribution to knowledge. As we see, Carlyle had not access to original documents and he relied chiefly on memoirs. Despite of this, his general accuracy is astonishing.

But with all its merits, the book can never rank as an adequate history of the Revolution. For one thing, it is too disproportionate. Looking in proportion, dramatic incidents, which lend themselves to picturesque narrative receive lengthy treatment at the expense of others more fundamentally important. Constitutional and financial questions are, of course, neglected. Foreign policy and the influence of the war on the course of the Revolution are not adequately treated. Too much attention is paid to events in the capital.

Finally, there is no attempt at political explanation. Nothing could reveal more clearly Carlyle's weakness in this respect than his statement that the whiff of grapeshot blew the Revolution into
space. The fact is that the quick shift of
opposition was really a victory for the
revolutionaries over the royalists and imposed
on a check & reaction. In any case, the political
effect of the Revolution did not exhaust
itself till 1793 or later, while its social
consequences are felt in France to this day.
Bodile's view of the Revolution was too negative.
To him, it was simply a wholesale destruction
of thorns. He could not comprehend its
constructive side, could not realise its
importance for the subsequent history of Europe.
The external aspect of the Revolution, no one has
described better, but its inner spirit was beyond
his comprehension.

Next we come to the Letters and Speeches of Cromwell.
Bodile had already made a study of the early
Stuart period, and had written some character
sketches, which were published after his death. They
have been favourably noticed by Mr. G. H. Evelyn.
After the publication of the "French Revolution," he
returned to the study of the Protector era. He contemplated writing either a history of the time or a life of Cromwell, but soon abandoned the idea. Finally he limited himself to making a collection of the Protector’s letters and speeches. This considerably lightened his task, since he had now only to select the letters and supply introductions and connecting links. Of Boyly’s abilities as an editor, we have already spoken. He took great liberties with the text, altering and modernising where he thought fit, but all in subordination to his main object, the presentation of a living portrait of Cromwell. From this point of view, the work was a triumphant success. The Bolanian, which was tuck into Boyly’s very first piece, gave him exceptional insight into the character of the Protector soldier, in whom he imagined he had discovered the highest type of the Leven-born hero. In the introductions and connecting pieces, his power of word-painting took full scope,
and his description of the night before Dunbar
and of the scene in the Protector's death-chamber
are amongst his masterpieces.

The book had one immediate and enduring
result. It rehabilitated Cromwell's character.
The verdicts of historians on the Protector had
hitherto been singularly inexact. To Blunden he
was "a brave, wicked man" to Hume, "a
frantic enthusiast", and hosts of lesser men
swelled the chorus of detraction. But
Basilye made it perfectly clear that whatever
were Cromwell's faults, want of sincerity was
certainly not one of them. The charge of
dissimulation and hypocrisy was triumphantly
refuted and, except by some of the High Church
School like Angley and Bushell, has never been
revived. Lord Acton has observed how constantly
the number of really great men is being reduced
by implacable research. He would therefore owe
a debt of gratitude to Basilye for clearing
away the cloud of calumny that rested on the
memory of one of them and restoring him to his rightful place in the estimation of posterity. But in other respects, the "Life and Letters" is open to criticism. Carlyle's reading of the political situation is faulty. Having no sympathy with constitutionalism himself, he could not understand the objection of men like Vane and Laud to the rule of the Protector. Further, not only was he blind to Cromwell's weakness in statesmanship, but he entirely misjudged his attitude. He credited him with his own views on the rule of the strong man and depicted him deliberately sweeping away the remnants of Parliamentary rule and substituting a form of autocracy. But the publication of the Blake Papers by Professor Firth shows how misleading this account is. They prove how reluctantly Cromwell was driven by the stress of events to grasp supreme power, how much respect he entertained for constitutional government, and how eagerly he desired to obtain a
Parliament that would work along with him. His failure to establish a system of settled government, which would have preserved the fruits of the Pudent Revolution, fully justified the opposition of the civilian wing of the Pudent party, and brought into relief his deficiency in constructive statesmanship.

Lastly, we come to the History of Frederick the Great. Little was known of Prussian history in England. Macaulay’s essay was of little value. In Prussia, von Helakis published his “Nine Books of Prussian History,” a colourless and unsparing narrative, possessing however solid value. Carlyle set himself the congenial task of reproducing the personality of the Great King. His History of Frederick has the kind of defects we might expect. It needs no great penetration to see that it is too long and wants proportion. The sketch of Prussian history previous to Frederick is on too large a scale. The greater number of the volumes is devoted to the period
1740 to 1763, and the last twenty-three years of the reign, the era of peace, when Frederick was rebuilding his shattered kingdom are dismissed in half a volume. As usual, his power of political explanation is limited. The unjustified approval which he accords to the actions of Frederick is an unsatisfactory feature of the book, though he is perfectly frank about the blemishes in his hero's character. But Frederick, as he found, really proved a most unsatisfactory hero, and he took more delight in the plant, forest, boar, of Frederick William I.

The merits of the book consist first in the incomparable descriptions of Frederick's campaigns. Carlyle had visited Germany in 1852 and 1858 and knew every inch of the ground. Proust tells us that his volumes were used to instruct German officers, till the General Staff compiled its own history. But the supreme merit of the work lies in its
characters sketches. The reader is introduced to a multitude of historical celebrities, from the early Elector of Brandenburg down to Voltaire and the wits of the eighteenth century, all depicted with unparalleled freshness, insight and humour. This superb gallery of portraits will preserve the book from oblivion, long after its strictly historical value has become negligible.

If we wish to discover a ground of comparison between Boling and Michelet, we find it in their treatment of the French Revolution. Other periods and incidents were treated by both alike but not usually on the same scale, and so do not invite comparison. But their histories of the French Revolution naturally suggest the question as to which should be accorded the first place.

On this point, opinion is divided. Professor Santelme, decides for Boling. Speaking of Michelet's history, he says: "In picturesque..."
general veracity of picture, it cannot approach Balder's. On the other side, may be cited Frederic Hoxie and Professor Flint. Hoxie animadverts on Carlyle's History and declares: "Michelet is the one historian, who has given us not only the intellectual and religious elements of the Revolution but also the heads of its relation to modern Socialism." Professor Flint's opinion is more authoritative. "Carlyle's imagination worked wholly from without, helping neither himself or his reader to get in the least below the surface, the outward confusion of the scene, so that the Revolution appears a mere imbroglio, bankruptcy, etc."

It is Carlyle's failure to appreciate the constructive side of the Revolution, that constitutes the chief flaw in his work. Michelet, deep sympathy with popular aspirations, helped him to understand the significance of the Revolution in the history of democracy, and to
foresee its enduring importance for the future. It is on this ground, principally, that critics are inclined to grant the first place to Michelet, though in this respect, such as descriptive power and general accuracy, he may have been inferior to Carlyle.

Little needs to be said of Carlyle and Michelet as men of letters. Their histories, it need hardly be said rank as literature. Written with calm, judicial impartiality, but from a personal point of view, coming "direct and flaming from the heart" of the author, and expressing every emotion that pass'd over his soul, they possess all the characteristics that distinguish literature from mere

It remains to speak of their non-historical writings. In the case of Michelet, if we set aside his controversial works, which, in spite of his high opinion of them, have little permanent value, these consist chiefly of his books on natural
history, ill-health drove him to Italy in 1854, and there, in a valley of the Appennines, far from manuscripts and books, his attention was drawn to the world of nature around him. This was the origin of his series of nature books, L'Oiseau, L'Insecte, L'Arbor, La Montagnes.

It is difficult to characterize these works. They are not scientific treatises. But they present the facts of science as seen by the eye of a poet. As in the case of his histories, Cuvier spent no pains to discover the facts. His books are not only the result of patient observation, but of wide reading, assisted by visits to museums and conversations with celebrated scientists. But he does not confine himself to the ordinary methods of reasoning. He proceeds by intuition, hypothesis, imagination. Thus he regards the birds, for instance, as having souls (a pantheistic idea) and he seeks to trace the development of this soul from its first manifestation in the
her best species, through the many varieties, till it culminates in the highest, "L'oeuf est donc, en peul oiseau, c'est tout le livre, mais, à travers les variétés de sa destinée, se faisant, s'accommodant aux meilleures conditions de la terre, ou meilleures vocations de sa vie ailleurs."

The approximation of these views to the theory of evolution is at once apparent, but it is not for their scientific truths that Michelet's nature books will be read, but for their unusually vivid descriptions of nature, the sea in storm and calm, the heron dreaming by the marsh, the flight of the nightingale to warmer climates, the labours of the bee. These books are unique, no other writer has succeeded in so combining exact observation with poetic imagination. Perhaps the only other work of Michelet's worth mentioning is his stimulating treatise on education, "Nos Enfants."

Turning to Baudelaire, we may omit in his case also...
controversial writings like Reformation and the
Lettiday Pamphlets,
leave us with Bostor Resatue, which gives
the most complete exposition of his social
philosophy. The idea of the philosophy of clothes
came from Swift, who suggested it in his
Isle of a Tke. The book contains a good
deal of autobiography and was written the
first example of the full-blown Carlyle style.
The deficiencies of Carlyle's gospel, its neglige
charms, its weakness in positive suggestion
are generally recognised now. Of Bostor itself,
we may assume that Carlyle's observation when
he had finished reading it, to contain the
truth: 'very dear, this is a work of genius';
yet there is a certain class of mind to which a
book like Bostor Resatue can make no
appeal.
The life of John Sterling is of a very different
character. Its instantaneous success was a hint
to Carlyle that the public preferred his
stores to his sermons. In the art of story-telling,
Burgle had no superior, and the book is
celebrated not only for the sympathetic account
of John Sterling, but for the sketches of his
friends and contemporaries, especially the famous
picture of Coleridge.

Finally we may refer to his work as a critic.
English criticism before his time was as broad
as it possibly could be. It was narrow,
superficial, insular. Burgle was among the
first to take a wider view and to employ the
comparative method in criticism. He left on
one side the rigid standards laid down by
the prevailing school and strove to enter into
the spirit of what he was sought to criticise.
His critical work is not absolutely faultless.
It has been pointed out by Mrs. Vaughan for
instance, that "never was there a critic whose
standards of judgment were in the ordinary
sense so little literary." But minor faults
may be overlooked when we remember the debt
which English criticism owes to the stimulating influence of Bodkye. Some of his judgments have still to be reckoned with. His essay on Burns takes its place as a masterpiece of character delineation. Never has the personality of the Scottish poet been depicted with greater literary power and sympathetic insight.

In comparing our two authors, we find that the chief points of resemblance lie in their method of treating history. In pure literature, they won distinction in different fields. Their outlook on life was not quite the same, and though we saw that their temperament and character are in many respects identical, yet there was never much sympathy between them. This is how Michelet refers to Bodkye in a footnote to his Historical View of the French Revolution: “No, there is no change in the heart of the English. Read Bodkye, one of their first, one of their best. In that entirely imaginative and outward review that he makes of men and things, there is no
solitude about right—the basis of ideas—the generative link of facts. Accordingly, there is nothing organic in that book; it is the work of an artist, but not a work of art. He looks upon the Revolution as the burial-ground in Yorlet. He takes and weighs those shells with a bitter smile, in which there appears too often a self-satisfied pity. This is the shell of a madman, that of a buffoon. No word wanting is that word of the heart, “Alas, poor Yorleia!” God preserve me from handling the bones of my enemies with such hardness of heart.

The special characteristics of Balyle and Javellet as historians have been made sufficiently clear. They consist in superb power of describing picturesquely the life of the past, a certain weakness of political judgment and a want of interest in some of the larger but cardinal important aspects of history. Thus they are not perfect historians, according to the ordinary view, but, as has been said, one great man may
be worth several immaculate historians. This must be our verdict with regard to Bossy
and Michelet. For the power of political explanation and the technical qualifications of
the historian are within the scope of men of ordinary talent. But the ability to write
history which possesses the sublimity, the grandeur, and the essential truth of a drama,
is given to few, for it requires that raresst and most precious of gifts, the gift of genius.