

Carlyle and Democracy.

By W. G. McDONALD.

CARLYLE is often accused of being the Cassandra of the Nineteenth Century. That this will be the final verdict on his life's work is daily becoming more uncertain. True, his sentiments and opinions were in startling contrast to those held by any of the great political parties of his time; his attitude was one of pronounced antagonism to the general movement of his age; its modes of thought, its aspirations, its pursuits stirred within, what Horace and Burke call "splendid bile"; its falsity, its "gignaminy," its respectable shams, its stump-oratory, filled his soul with indignant scorn to which he gave expression in biting sarcasm, in bitter disdain, in contemptuous irony.

We are told by critics that he was a mere croaker, a Jeremiah, an unpractical visionary; that the march of events has falsified his predictions; that consequently half of what he has written is utterly valueless, except for its weird imagery, its striking metaphors, its rugged Gothic melody and rhythm; but that his fame will endure as the prophet of duty, the apostle of work.

A decade ago such criticism was considered sound doctrine, though signs were not wanting that the period of its orthodoxy was about to end. It was generally agreed that Carlyle had not understood the conditions of his age, and that when he parted company with his early friend, Mill, he stamped himself with the brand of eccentricity, and deliberately closed the door on a career of usefulness. When he laid aside his pen forever, and his voice was stilled in the tomb, Mill's

theory of government was in the ascendant. England, believing that the Land of Promise lay in the direction of the enfranchisement of the masses, was on the eve of granting practically manhood suffrage. From 1884, whether Liberals or Conservatives have held the reins of government, they have been under democratic influence.

Democracy, the "self-government of the multitude by the multitude," regarded by reformers as the final goal, the winning post of progress, has been reached, and we seem no nearer a solution of life's problems than we were before. The poor are still poor, the homeless require to be housed, the worker does not receive the just recompense of his labour, wretchedness and squalor abound in the midst of plenty, Ireland is still in a state of chronic rebellion; and, if we can trust the conclusions of competent observers, the House of Commons has failed to preserve its high level of intelligence and administrative ability, with the consequence that the power of the Cabinet is constantly increasing. Skill in debate is valued above real governing power, and an able parliamentarian is but a euphemism for an artful dodger. Outside of English-speaking peoples democracy is an acknowledged failure. Quite recently Italy, France, and Belgium have each enjoyed the luxury of riots; parliamentary government in Austria is at a deadlock, revolution being prevented only by the personality of the Emperor, and Germany is being skillfully engineered by the Kaiser back to mediæval ideals and conceptions.

All this was foretold years ago by Carlyle, when the movement to-