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After 1833 he wrote no more poetry. The remaining four years of his life were given to the crusade against slavery and against the gag of the press. He used his pen exclusively to fight these twin tyrannies, and his opposition became, in time, universally noted. Yet to the last he printed the lines of famous poets where such would aid his cause; and he went to the place of his martyrdom quoting the Psalms.

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MARGARET FULLER AND THE TWO SAGES

By Ray Cecil Carter

In the days when New England was flowering, Margaret Fuller was probably the most fascinating, the most famous, and certainly the most astonishing of American women — and this in spite of the fact that she was morbidly self-critical because of her lack of beauty. But plainness was no barrier to her becoming the leading feminist of her day, for she early became the leader of the famous “Conversations” for the women of Boston and the author of the first feminist tract in the New World. She was, however, destined for broader and more positive influence upon her time. Gamaliel Bradford said of her: “Margaret has so many selves that you can peel her like an onion.”

Thus this brilliant bluestocking, brought up by an eccentric father to be a boy and learned far beyond her years, in due time became one of the most powerful leaders of the Transcendentalists and editor of their immensely influential journal, the Dial. She was the intimate of the great personalities of her day and the special confidante of Emerson. She was the Zenobia of Hawthorne’s novel of Brook Farm, The Blithedale Romance. A competent writer, she became Greeley’s first columnist for the New York Tribune; steeped in literature, she was an authority on Goethe; and, according to one eminent contemporary, she was, “save Poe, the foremost literary critic of America.”
In 1846, Miss Fuller left the Tribune for a trip to Europe, during which, in London, she matched wits with Thomas Carlyle; in Paris, sat at the feet of George Sand; and, from Rome, sent back to the Tribune vivid dispatches on the struggle for Roman freedom. While in Rome, she was swept off her feet by an Italian marchese, Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, whom she secretly married and with whom, along with her child, she was tragically shipwrecked off Fire Island on her return to America, an incident to which Robert Browning referred as “the dreadful loss of dear, brave, noble M.F.”

One of the most eventful visits of Margaret Fuller abroad was with Thomas Carlyle, who had been admonished by his friend Emerson in a letter of introduction: “You must not fail to give a good and faithful interview to this wise, sincere, accomplished, most entertaining, and noblest of women, an exotic in New England, a foreigner from some more sultry and expansive clime . . . our citizen of the world by special diploma.” The Sage of Chelsea was greatly pleased with the American visitor, whom he found to be “a strange, lilting, lean old maid, not nearly such a bore as I expected.” He wrote to Emerson that Margaret had “a true heroic mind; — altogether unique, so far as I know, among the Writing Women of this generation; rare enough too, God Knows, among the Writing Men. She is very narrow, sometimes; but she is truly high: honor to Margaret, and more and more good-speed to her.” Margaret, on the whole, was equally charmed by Carlyle:

**MISS FULLER WRITES TO MR. EMERSON FROM CHELSEA**

*(October 1849)*

Once, when we were walking Concord’s paths,   Engaged in idle chatter, which you thought   Profaned the hours, but which was my device   For doing Mrs. Emerson’s behest   To cheer you up, because, as she remarked,   You had, through mental toil, “almost lost   The capacity to laugh,” you said to me   That I must take my “gossipy tutelage”   To Mr. Carlyle, when I should come to England,   For he was much in need of similar therapy.
But I have found him not to be amenable; He does not yield to laughter. This indeed I perceived at once, when, having read your letter, He called to invite me to Cheyne Row for dinner; Though, on that meeting, I thought his wit and pathos Were delightful, and his noble earnestness Brought back the charm that is upon his writing. I was enraptured by his native Scotch And the flowing manner in which he sang his sentences, Like stanzas of a ballad, they were so great And full; but so devoid of pause that I Could not respond, except by, now and then, A change in my position. But first impressions May be deceiving. I did not think him then, Though voluble, to be at all disdainful; But later I was to get a different view. For at the Cheyne Row dinner, a heaviness Prevailed, accentuated by an oppressive Highland-cattle odor of homespun and a shaggy Scotch mist of tobacco smoke, and relieved Only by the presence of the witty, flippant Lewes, Invited because of our common concern for Goethe, But as ill-fitted to write a life of that poet As his irreligion and shallowness could make him. Mazzini, too, was there, whom I regretted To hear Carlyle unpleasantly rebuke Because of his "rose-water imbecilities"; For I admired Mazzini's heroic deeds And thought him the most beauteous person I had seen. You said that I would find your friend complaisant, And I was not prepared for his harangue For hours upon the faults of English poets: The vanity of Tennyson and the falsity Of Burns, and, what was worse, Shakespeare's error In rejecting prose, having not the poet's art. I thought such proclamations most offensive. But one could not remonstrate, for the worst Of hearing the great master is that he brooks No interruption; you are a perfect prisoner. None but the sparkling effervescent Lewes
Was suffered to interpose, and he only
Because he told a story so admirably.
But the slightest intervention would cause Carlyle
To raise his voice and bear down, as though,
With marvelous penetration, he saw the disclaimer
In your mind. But silence was not easy.
Sometimes, however, unconscious humor broke
The tension when he talked. Once he spoke
Of Petrarch and of Laura, and whenever
He pronounced “Laura,” which I think he did
Some fifty times, with an ineffable drawl of sarcasm,
He jutted out his chin, his eyes glowed,
And his face was like the beak of a bird of prey.

If I have falsely called your friend arrogant,
I claim for him no trace of littleness,
For he is truly the untamable Siegfried of England,
Who, great and powerful, if not invulnerable,
Has both the will and energy to crush dragons.

On that oppressive evening, he occasionally
Gave light and witty sketches of Englishmen,
And related some sweet homely stories of things
He knew so well among the Scottish peasants.
Of you he spoke with hearty kindness, and told,
With beautiful feeling, how some poor farmer
On Sundays, in the country, lays aside
The cark and care of that dirty world, and sits
Reading the Essays and looking upon the sea.
And this I thought perhaps you would like to know.