

To Thomas Carlyle

*date* 23 September 1828  
*from* Craigcrook  
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My Dear C—

I have been working at Glasgow and dawdling in Ayrshire – and only returned and found your letter, and packet last night – I write now, in the midst of some bustle, to assure you that it has come safely – and to set your heart at ease about proofs &c by informing you that as it is too late, and far too large for the present N<sup>o</sup> – (which [*will crossed out*] is finished indeed, and will be out in a few days) I shall be able without any inconvenience to let you have the proofs for the next – Tho' I only arrived last night, and had packets enough to look into I contrived to read through your paper before going to bed – some proof I think that I either liked it - or took an interest in the writer The truth is I do both – But it is distressingly long - you do not know how much I am abused, and by my best friends and coadjutors, about these long articles - and really you are diffuse this time, as well as long - I cannot venture to print 60 pages of such matter (and it would go to that) and it is the more provoking, because the article would be far better - more striking - more indicative of genius, and more effectual for your purpose, if it were condensed to half the size — I cannot reduce it so far - for it would require to be written nearly over again - but I must make some retrenchments<sup>1</sup> - and I will send you the proofs when that is done - The latter part is far the best - the best written and best conceived - I wish there had been less mysticism about it - at least less mystical jargon - less talk and repetition about entireness, and simplicity, and equipments - and such matters There is also much palpable exaggeration - and always the most dogmatism where you are either decidedly wrong or very doubtfully right - But there is a noble strain of sentiment - and kind and lofty feeling - and much beauty and felicity of diction - You will treat me as something worse than an ass I suppose when I say that I am firmly persuaded the great source of your extravagance, and of all that makes your writings intolerable to many - and ridiculous to not a few, is not so much any real peculiarity of opinions as an unlucky ambition to appear more original than you are - or the humbler and still more delusive hope of converting our English intellects to the creed of Germany - and being the apostle of another reformation — I wish to God I could persuade you to fling away these affectations - and be contented to write like your famous countrymen of all ages - as long at least as you write to your countrymen and for them — The nationality for which you commend Burns so highly might teach you I think that there are nobler tasks for a man like you than to vamp up the vulgar dreams of these Dousterswivels<sup>2</sup> you are so anxious to cram down our throats - but which I venture to predict no good judge

among us will swallow - and the nation at large speedily reject with loathing  
— But we will talk of this by and bye - I have no time now for it -

O yes - we are coming - do not expect to escape us - Yet I cannot exactly  
say when - but I think in less than ten days - I shall write to give fair warning  
- Must we come first to Dumfries, on our way from Edin'g? - give us an exact  
route - that we may not wander and be benighted in your desarts - Why does  
not my little cousin write to me? We think and speak constantly of her, and you  
— We are all well - except me and my throat occasionally - but it is no worse  
- if I could find time I should go to London for a proper consultation - and  
perhaps I may -

God bless you now - for I have much dull work before me - Ever yours

F. Jeffrey

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National Library of Scotland MS. 787, ff. 28-9.

1. *some retrenchments* Carlyle's response to Jeffrey's editing and abbreviating his article on Burns for the *Edinburgh Review* is recorded in a letter to his brother John in October 1828: "Jeffrey had clipt the first portion of it all into shreds (partly by my permission), simple [*for simply?*] because it was too long. My first feeling was indignation, and to demand the whole back again, that it might lie in my drawer and worm-eat, rather than come before the world in that horrid souterkin shape; the body of a quadruped with the head of a bird . . . However, I determined to *do nothing for three days*; and now by replacing and readjusting many parts of the first sixteen pages . . . I have once more put the thing into a kind of publishable state, and mean to send it back, with a private persuasion that probably I shall not soon write another for that quarter. Nevertheless, I will keep friends with the man; for he really has extraordinary worth, and likes me, at least heartily wishes me well" (*Carlyle Letters*, IV, 413-4).
2. *Dousterswivels* from the character Herman Dousterswivel, the fraudulent magician in Walter Scott's novel *The Antiquary*. "Dousterswivel" became a common term of abuse which Jeffrey and his circle applied to charlatans, especially those inhabiting that grey area between science and magic and between philosophy and mysticism. See, for example, John Gibson Lockhart: "Dr Spurzheim (or, as the Northern Reviewers very improperly christened him in the routs of Edinburgh, Dousterswivel)", *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*, third edition, in 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1819), II, 341.