Having finished his college course, Carlyle looked out for pupils to maintain himself. The ministry was still his formal destination, but several years had still to elapse before a final resolution would be necessary—four years if he remained in Edinburgh attending lectures in the Divinity Hall; six if he preferred to be a rural Divinity student, presenting himself once in every twelve months at the University and reading a discourse. He did not wish to hasten matters, and, the pupil business being precarious and the mathematical tutorship at Annan falling vacant, Carlyle offered for it and was elected by competition in 1814. He never liked teaching. The recommendation of the place was the sixty or seventy pounds a year of salary, which relieved his father of further expense upon him, and enabled him to put by a little money every year, to be of use in future either to himself or his family. In other respects the life at Annan was only disagreeable to him. His tutor's work he did scrupulously well, but the society of a country town had no interest for him. He would not visit. He lived alone, shutting himself up with his books, disliked the business more and more, and came finally to hate it. Annan, associated as it was with the odious memories of his school-days, had indeed but one merit—that he was within reach of his family, especially of his mother, to whom he was attached with a real passion.

His father had by this time given up business at Eccle-
fechan, and had taken a farm in the neighbourhood. The
great north road which runs through the village rises gradu­
ally into an upland treeless grass country. About two
miles distant on the left-hand side as you go towards Lock­
erbie, there stands, about three hundred yards in from the
road, a solitary low whitewashed cottage, with a few poor
outbuildings attached to it. This is Mainhill, which was now
for many years to be Carlyle’s home, where he first learned
German, studied Faust in a dry ditch, and completed his
translation of Wilhelm Meister. The house itself is, or was
when the Carlyles occupied it, of one story, and consisted of
three rooms, a kitchen, a small bedroom, and a large one
connected by a passage. The door opens into a square farm­
yard, on one side of which are stables, on the other side op­
posite the door the cow byres, on the third a washhouse
and a dairy. The situation is high, utterly bleak and swept
by all the winds. Not a tree shelters the premises; the
fences are low, the wind permitting nothing to grow but
stunted thorn. The view alone redeems the dreariness of
the situation. On the left is the great hill of Burnswark.
Broad Annandale stretches in front down to the Solway,
which shines like a long silver riband; on the right is Hod­
dam Hill with the Tower of Repentance on its crest, and
the wooded slopes which mark the line of the river. Beyond
towers up Crieffel, and in the far distance Skiddaw, and Sad­
dleback, and Helvellyn, and the high Cumberland ridges on
the track of the Roman wall. Here lived Carlyle's father and
mother with their eight children, Carlyle himself spending
his holidays with them; the old man and his younger sons
cultivating the sour soil and winning a hard-earned living
out of their toil, the mother and daughters doing the house­
hold work and minding cows and poultry, and taking their
turn in the field with the rest in harvest time.

So two years passed away; Carlyle remaining at Annan.
Of his own writing during this period there is little pre­
served, but his correspondence continued, and from his
friends' letters glimpses can be gathered of his temper and
occupations. He was mainly busy with mathematics, but he
was reading incessantly, Hume's Essays among other
books. He was looking out into the world, meditating on the
fall of Napoleon, on the French Revolution, and thinking
Mainhill. James Carlyle's first farm, taken in 1815 and for ten years the home of the Carlyle family. Here Carlyle returned each summer from Edinburgh. "There with my best of nurses and hostesses—my mother; blessed voiceless or low-voiced time, still sweet to me," he wrote in his *Reminiscences*. (Photograph by John Patrick, courtesy of the University of Edinburgh.)
much of the suffering in Scotland which followed the close of the war. There were sarcastic sketches, too, of the families with which he was thrown in Annan. Robert Mitchell (an Edinburgh student who had become master of a school at Ruthwell) rallies him on having reduced "the fair and fat academicians" "into scorched, singed, and shrivelled hags"; and hinting a warning "against the temper with respect to this world which we are sometimes apt to entertain," he suggests that young men like him and his correspondent "ought to think how many are worse off than they," "should be thankful for what they had, and not allow imagination to create unreal distress."

To another friend, Thomas Murray, author afterwards of a history of Galloway, Carlyle had complained of his fate in a light and less bitter spirit. To an epistle written in this tone Murray replied with a description of Carlyle's style, which deserves a place if but for the fulfilment of the prophecy which it contains.

I have had the pleasure of receiving My Dear Carlyle your very humorous and friendly letter—a letter remarkable for vivacity, a Shandean turn of expression and an affectionate pathos—which indicate a peculiar turn of mind—make sincerity doubly striking and wit doubly poignant. You flatter me with saying my letter was good but allow me to observe that among all my elegant and respectable correspondents there is none whose manner of letter-writing I so much envy as yours. A happy flow of language—either for pathos description or humour—and an easy and graceful current of ideas appropriate to every subject characterize your correspondence. This is not adulation—I speak what I think. . . .

Your letters will always be a feast—a varied and exquisite repast—and the time I hope will come—but I trust is far distant—when these our juvenile epistles will be read—probably applauded—by a generation unborn and that the name of Carlyle at least will be inseparably connected with the literary history of the nineteenth century.7

Murray kept Carlyle's answer to this far-seeing letter.

—but O Tom! what a foolish flattering creature thou art! to talk of future eminence, and connection with the literary history of the Nineteenth century to such a one as me!—Alas! my good lad, when I and all my fancies, and reveries and speculation[s] shall have been swept over with the besom of oblivion, the literary history of No century will know itself one jot the worse.—Yet think not that because I talk thus, I am careless about literary
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fame. No! Heaven knows that ever since I have [been] able to form a wish—*the wish of being known* has been the foremost.®

These college companions were worthy and innocent young men; none of them, however, came to any high position, and Carlyle’s career was now about to intersect with the life of a far more famous contemporary who flamed up a few years later into meridian splendour and then disappeared in delirium. Edward Irving was the son of a well-to-do burgess of Annan, by profession a tanner. Irving was five years older than Carlyle; he had preceded him at Annan School; he had gone thence to Edinburgh University, where he had specially distinguished himself, and had been selected afterwards to manage a school at Haddington, where his success as a teacher had been again conspicuous. Among his pupils at Haddington there was one gifted little girl who will be hereafter much heard of in these pages, Jane Baillie Welsh, daughter of a Dr. Welsh whose surgical fame was then great in that part of Scotland, a remarkable man who liked Irving and trusted his only child in his hands. The Haddington adventure had answered so well that Irving, after a year or two, was removed to a larger school at Kirkcaldy, where, though no fault was found with his teaching, he gave less complete satisfaction. A party among his patrons there thought him too severe with the boys, thought him proud, thought him this or that which they did not like. The dissentients resolved at last to have a second school of their own, to be managed in a different style, and they applied to the classical and mathematical professors at Edinburgh to recommend them a master. Professor Christison and Professor Leslie, who had noticed Carlyle more than he was aware of, had decided that he was the fittest person that they knew of; and in the summer of 1816 notice of the offered preferment was sent down to him at Annan.

He had seen Irving’s face occasionally in Ecclefechan church, and once afterwards, as has been said, when Irving, fresh from his college distinctions, had looked in at Annan school; but they had no personal acquaintance, nor did Carlyle, while he was a master there, ever visit the Irving family. Of course, however, he was no stranger to the reputation of their brilliant son, with whose fame all Annandale
was ringing, and with whom kind friends had compared him to his own disadvantage.

In the winter of 1815 Carlyle for the first time personally met Irving, and the beginning of the acquaintance was not promising. He was still pursuing his Divinity course. Candidates who could not attend the regular lectures at the University came up once a year and delivered an address of some kind in the Divinity Hall. One already he had given the first year of his Annan mastership—an English sermon on the text “Before I was afflicted I went astray.” He calls it “a weak and flowery sentimental Piece,” for which, however, he had been complimented by “comrades and Professors.” His next was a discourse in Latin on the question whether there was or was not such a thing as “Natural Religion.” This, too, he says was “weak enough.”9 It is lost, and nothing is left to show the view which he took about the matter. But here also he gave satisfaction, and was innocently pleased with himself. It was on this occasion that he fell in accidentally with Irving at a friend’s rooms in Edinburgh, and there was a trifling skirmish of tongue between them, where Irving found the laugh turned against him.

A few months after came Carlyle’s appointment to Kirkcaldy as Irving’s quasi rival, and perhaps he felt a little uneasy as to the terms on which they might stand towards each other. His alarms, however, were pleasantly dispelled. He was to go to Kirkcaldy in the summer holidays of 1816 to see the people there and be seen by them before coming to a final arrangement with them. Adam Hope, one of the masters in Annan School, to whom Carlyle was much attached, and whose portrait he has painted, had just lost his wife. Carlyle had gone to sit with the old man in his sorrows, and unexpectedly fell in with Irving there, who had come on the same errand.

If I had been in doubts about his reception of me . . . he quickly and for ever ended them, by a friendliness which, on wider scenes, might have been called chivalrous. At first sight he heartily shook my hand; welcomed me as if I had been a valued old acquaintance, almost a brother; and before my leaving . . . came up to me again, and with the frankest tone said, “You are coming to Kirkcaldy to look about you in a month or two: you know I am there; my house and all that I can do for you is yours;—two Annandale people must not be strangers in Fife!”—The “doubting Thomas”
durst not quite believe all this, so chivalrous was it; but felt pleased and relieved by the fine and sincere tone of it; and thought to himself, "Well, it would be pretty!"\textsuperscript{10}

To Kirkcaldy, then, Carlyle went with hopes so far improved. How Irving kept his word; how warmly he received him; how he opened his house, his library, his heart to him; how they walked and talked together on Kirkcaldy Sands on the summer nights, and toured together in holiday time through the Highlands; how Carlyle found in him a most precious and affectionate companion at the most critical period of his life—all this he has himself described. The reader will find it for himself in the \textit{Reminiscences} which he has left of the time.\textsuperscript{11}

Correspondence with his family had commenced and was regularly continued from the day when Carlyle went first to college. The letters, however, which are preserved begin with his settlement at Kirkcaldy. From this time they are constant, regular, and, from the care with which they have been kept on both sides, are to be numbered in thousands. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, all wrote in their various styles, and all received answers. They were "a clan­nish folk" holding tight together, and Carlyle was looked up to as the scholar among them. Of these letters I can give but a few here and there, but they will bring before the eyes the Mainhill farm, and all that was going on there in a sturdy, pious, and honourable Annandale peasant’s household.

Mrs. Carlyle could barely write at this time. She taught herself later in life for the pleasure of communicating with her son, between whom and herself there existed a special and passionate attachment of a quite peculiar kind. She was a severe Calvinist, and watched with the most affectionate anxiety over her children’s spiritual welfare, her eldest boy’s above all. The hope of her life was to see him a minister—a "priest" she would have called it—and she was already alarmed to know that he had no inclination that way.

The letters from the other members of the family were sent equally regularly whenever there was an opportunity, and give between them a perfect picture of healthy rustic life at the Mainhill farm—the brothers and sisters down to the lowest all hard at work, the little ones at school, the
EDWARD IRVING. "A man of noble faculties & qualities; the noblest, largest and brotherliest man, I still say, whom I have met with in my Life-journey," Carlyle wrote in the Reminiscences in 1866, more than thirty years after Irving's death. "But for Irving, I had never known what the communion of man with man means." This portrait hung in Carlyle's dressing room in Cheyne Row. (Courtesy of the Carlyle House, Chelsea.)
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elders ploughing, reaping, tending cattle, or minding the dairy, and in the intervals reading history, reading Scott's novels, or, even trying at geometry, which was then Carlyle's own favourite study. In the summer of 1817 the mother had a severe illness, by which her mind was affected. It was necessary to place her for a few weeks under restraint away from home—a step no doubt just and necessary, but which she never wholly forgave, but resented in her own humorous way to the end of her life. The disorder soon passed off, however, and never returned.

Meanwhile Carlyle was less completely contented with his position at Kirkcaldy than he had let his mother suppose. For one thing he hated schoolmastering, and would, or thought he would, have preferred to work with his hands, while except Irving he had scarcely a friend in the place for whom he cared. His occupation shut him out from the best kind of society, which there, as elsewhere, had its exclusive rules. He was received, for Irving's sake, in the family of Mr. Martin, the minister; and was in some degree of intimacy there, liking Martin himself, and to some extent, but not much, his wife and daughters, to one of whom Irving had, perhaps too precipitately, become engaged. There were others also—Mr. Swan, a Kirkcaldy merchant, particularly—for whom he had a grateful remembrance; but it is clear, both from Irving's letters to him and from his own confession, that he was not popular either there or anywhere. Shy and reserved at one moment, at another sarcastically self-asserting, with forces working in him which he did not himself understand, and which still less could be understood by others, he could neither properly accommodate himself to the tone of Scotch provincial drawing-rooms, nor even to the business which he had especially to do. A man of genius can do the lowest work as well as the highest; but genius in the process of developing, combined with an irritable nervous system and a fiercely impatient temperament, was not happily occupied in teaching stupid lads the elements of Latin and arithmetic. Nor were matters mended when the Town Corporation, who were his masters, took upon them, as sometimes happened, to instruct or rebuke him.

Life, however, even under these hard circumstances, was
not without its romance. I borrow a passage from the *Reminiscences*:

Some hospitable human firesides I found, and these were at intervals a fine little element; but in general we were but onlookers (the one real "Society," our books and our few selves);—not even with the bright "young ladies" (what was a sad feature) were we generally on speaking terms. By far the cleverest and brightest, however, an Ex-pupil of Irving's, and genealogically and otherwise (being poorish, proud, and well-bred) rather a kind of alien in the place, I did at last make acquaintance with (at Irving's first, I think, though she rarely came thither); some acquaintance;—and it might easily have been more, had she, and her Aunt, and our economic and other circumstances liked! She was of the fair-complexioned, softly elegant, softly grave, witty and comely type, and had a good deal of gracefulness, intelligence and other talent. . . . To me, who had only known her for a few months, and who within a twelve or fifteen months saw the last of her, she continued for perhaps some three years a figure hanging more or less in my fancy, on the usual romantic, or latterly quite elegiac and silent terms, and to this day there is in me a goodwill to her, a candid and gentle pity for her, if needed at all. She was of the Aberdeenshire Gordons . . . "Margaret Gordon," born I think in New Brunswick, where her Father, probably in some official post, had died young and poor,—her accent was prettily English, and her voice very fine. . . . A year or so after we heard the fair Margaret had married some rich insignificant Aberdeen Mr. Something; who afterwards got into Parliament, thence out "to Nova Scotia" (or so) "as Governor;" and I heard of her no more,—except that lately she was still living about Aberdeen, childless, as the "Dowager Lady,"—her Mr. Something having got knighted before dying. Poor Margaret! Speak to her, since the "good-bye, then" at Kirkcaldy in 1819, I never did or could. I saw her, recognisably to me, here in her London time (1840 or so), twice, once with her maid in Piccadilly promenading, little altered; a second time, that same year or next, on horseback both of us, and meeting in the gate of Hyde Park, when her eyes (but that was all) said to me almost touchingly, "Yes, yes; that is you!"

Margaret Gordon was the original, so far as there was an original, of Blumine in *Sartor Resartus*. Two letters from her remain among Carlyle's papers, which show that on both sides their regard for each other had found expression. Circumstances, however, and the unpromising appearance of Carlyle's situation and prospects, forbade an engagement between them, and acquit the aunt of needless harshness in peremptorily putting an end to their acquaintance.