By the beginning of January the Life of Schiller was finished. Carlyle lingered in London for a few weeks longer. The London publishers had their eye on him, and made him various offers for fresh translations from the German; for a life of Voltaire; for other literary biographies. For each or all of these they were ready to give him, as they said, fair terms. He postponed his decision till these terms could be agreed on. Meanwhile he was as usual moody and discontented; in a hurry to be gone from London, and its "men of letters," whom he liked less and less.

To live in London and become enrolled in the unillustrious fellowship, Carlyle felt to be once for all impossible. But what was to be the alternative? Miss Welsh had condemned the farming project; but the opinion at Mainhill was not so unfavourable. If a good farm could be found, his brother Alexander was ready to undertake to set it going. His mother or a sister would manage the house and dairy. To his father, who was experienced in such matters, that Tom should take to them as he had done appeared neither wild nor unfeasible. He might, indeed, go back to Edinburgh and take pupils again. Mr. Buller was prepared to send his son Arthur to him, and go on with the £200 a-year. One of the Stracheys might come, and there were hopes of others; but Carlyle hated the drudgery of teaching, and was longing for fresh air and freedom.

The start of Schiller in the trade was less favourable than
had been looked for, and the offers from the booksellers for future work, when they came to be specified, were not satisfactory. Carlyle in consequence formed an ill opinion of these poor gentlemen.

He was more successful in making an arrangement with the publishers of *Wilhelm Meister* for further translations. It was arranged that he should furnish them with selections from Goethe, Tieck, Hoffmann, Jean Paul, and several others, enough to form the considerable book, which appeared in [early 1827], in four volumes, as *German Romance*. With this work definitely in prospect, which he felt that he could execute with ease as a mechanical task, Carlyle left London at the beginning of March, and left it with dry eyes. He regretted nothing in it but Irving; and Irving having taken now to interpretation of prophecy, and falling daily into yet wilder speculations, was almost lost to him. Their roads had long been divergent—Irving straying into the land of dreams, Carlyle into the hard region of unattractive truth, which as yet presented itself to him in its sternest form. The distance was becoming too wide for intimacy, although their affection for each other, fed on recollections of what had been, never failed either of them. Carlyle went down to Scotland, staying about [ten days] at Birmingham [with Badams], and [several more] at Manchester to see an old schoolfellow. When the coach brought him to Ecclefechan he found waiting for him his little sister Jane, the poetess, who had been daily watching for his arrival. "Her bonny little blush," he wrote long after, "and radiance of look, when I let down the window and suddenly disclosed myself, are still present to me."

His relation with his family was always beautiful. They had been busy for him in his absence, and had already secured what he was longing after. Two miles from Mainhill, on the brow of a hill, on the right as you look towards the Solway, stands an old ruined building with uncertain traditions attached to it, called the Tower of Repentance. Some singular story lies hidden in the name, but authentic record there is none. The Tower only remains visible far away from the high slopes which rise above Ecclefechan. Below the Tower is the farm-house of Hoddam Hill, with a few acres of tolerable land attached to it. The proprietor, General
Hoddam Hill, near Ecclefechan. The Carlyle family having outgrown the limited space at Mainhill, Mrs. Carlyle, with her sons Thomas and “Alick” and her two youngest daughters, moved in 1825 to a new farm, Hoddam Hill or Repentance Hill, where they were destined to remain only one year. “From the windows,” Carlyle wrote, “there is such a view as Britain or the world could hardly have matched.” James Carlyle stayed behind at Mainhill with the two oldest daughters. “With all its manifold petty troubles, this year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me; and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated Idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life.” Thus wrote Carlyle in his reminiscence of Edward Irving. In this year and at this home he largely emerged from the spiritual crisis vividly portrayed in Sartor. The Tower of Repentance ("fit memorial for reflecting sinners," Carlyle wrote to Jane Welsh) is visible at the far left. (Photograph by John Patrick, courtesy of the University of Edinburgh.)
Sharpe, was the landlord of whom the Carlyles held Mainhill. It had been occupied by General Sharpe’s factor; but the factor wishing to leave, they had taken it at the moderate rent of £100 a year for “Tom,” and Alick was already busy putting in the crops, and the mother and sisters preparing the house to receive him. They would have made a home for him among themselves, and all from eldest to youngest would have done everything that affection could prompt to make him happy. But the narrow space, the early hours, the noises inseparable from the active work of a busy household, above all, the necessity of accommodating himself to the habits of a large family, were among the evils which he reckoned that he must avoid. He required a home of his own where he could be master of everything about him, and sit or move, sleep or rise, eat or fast, as he pleased, with no established order of things to interfere with him. Thus Hoddam Hill was taken for him, and there he prepared to settle himself.

Miss Welsh had promised that as soon as he was settled she would pay him and his mother a visit at Hoddam, that she might become acquainted with her future relations, and see with her eyes the kind of home which he was inviting her to share with him. His own imagination had made it into fairyland. [Living in] a country home among his own people was already telling on the inmost fibres of his nature, and soothing into sleep the unquiet spirits that tormented him.

I avoid as far as possible quoting passages from the Reminiscences, preferring the contemporary record of his letters which were written at the time; and because what is already there related does not need repeating. But in this year, when he was living among his own people, the letters are wanting, and one brief extract summing up the effects and experiences of the life at Hoddam may here be permitted.

A neat compact little Farm, rent £100, which my Father had leased for me; on which was a prettyish-looking Cottage for dwelling-house . . . and from the windows, such a “view” (fifty miles in radius, from beyond Tyndale to beyond St. Bees, Solway Frith and all the Fells to Ingleborough inclusive) as Britain or the world could hardly have matched! Here the ploughing etc. was already in progress (which I often rode across to see); and here at term-day (26th May 1825) I established myself; set up my Books and bits of
implements Lares; and took to doing German Romance as my daily work; "ten pages daily" my stint, which, barring some rare accident, I faithfully accomplished. Brother Alick was my practical farmer; ever-kind and beloved Mother, with one of the little girls, was generally there,—Brother John, too, oftest, who had just taken his degree;—these, with a little man and ditto maid, were our establishment. . . . This year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me; and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated Idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life. I lived very silent, diligent, had long solitary rides (on my wild Irish horse "Larry," good for the dietetic part);—my meditatings, musings and reflections were continual; thoughts went wandering (or travelling) through Eternity, through Time, and through Space, so far as poor I had scanned or known;—and were now, to my endless solacement, coming back with tidings to me! This year I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-Gods of my Epoch.

The industry which Carlyle describes did not show itself immediately on his settlement at Hoddam. The excitement of the winter months had left him exhausted; and for the first few weeks at least he was recovering himself in an idleness which showed itself in the improvement of his humour.

Carlyle could not long be idle. The weariness passed off. He took up his translating work, and went on with it as he has related. An accident meanwhile precipitated the relations between himself and Miss Welsh, which had seemed likely to be long protracted, and, after threatening to separate them for ever, threw them more completely one upon the other.

When Irving first settled in London he had opened the secrets of his heart to a certain lady [Mrs. Anna D. B. Montagu] with whom he was very intimately acquainted. He had told her of his love for his old pupil, and she had drawn from him that the love had been returned. She had seen Irving sacrifice himself to duty, and she had heard that his resolution had been sustained by the person to whom the surrender of their mutual hopes had been as bitter as to himself. The lady was romantic, and had become profoundly interested. Flowing over with sympathy, she had herself commenced a correspondence with Haddington. To Car-
HODDAM CHURCH. "The sound of the Kirk-bell, once or twice on Sunday mornings (from Hoddam Kirk, about a mile off on the plain below me), was strangely touching,—like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years," Carlyle wrote in 1866 (Reminiscences). (Photograph by John Patrick, courtesy of the University of Edinburgh.)
lyle she wrote occasionally, because she really admired him. To Miss Welsh she introduced herself as one who was eager for her confidence, who was prepared to love her for the many excellences which she knew her to possess, and to administer balm to the wounds of her heart.

Miss Welsh did not respond very cordially to this effusive invitation. It was not her habit to seek for sympathy from strangers; but she replied in a letter which her new friend found extremely beautiful, and which stirred her interest still deeper. The lady imagined that her young correspondent was still pining in secret for her lost lover, and she was tempted to approach closer to the subject which had aroused her sympathies. She thought it would be well slightly to disparage Irving. She painted him as a person whose inconstancy did not deserve a prolonged and hopeless affection. She too had sought to find in him the dearest of friends; but he had other interests and other ambitions, and any woman who concentrated her heart upon him would be disappointed in the return which she might meet with.

The lady’s motive was admirable. She thought that she could assist in reconciling Miss Welsh to her disappointment. In perfect innocence she wrote confidentially to Carlyle on the same subject. She regarded him simply as the intimate friend both of Miss Welsh and Irving. She assumed that he was acquainted with their secret history. She spoke of the affection which had existed between them as still unextinguished on either side. For the sake of both of them she wished that something might be done to put an end to idle regrets and vain imaginings. Nothing she thought could contribute more to disenchant Miss Welsh than a visit to herself in London, where she could see Irving as he was in his present surroundings.³

Miss Welsh had for two years never mentioned Irving to Carlyle except bitterly and contemptuously; so bitterly indeed that he had often been obliged to remonstrate. Had he been less singleminded, a tone so marked and acid might have roused his suspicions. But that Irving and she had been more than friends, if he had ever heard a hint of it, had passed out of his mind. Even the lady’s letter failed to startle him. He mentioned merely, when he next wrote to her, that the writer laboured under some strange delusion
about her secret history, and had told him in a letter full of eloquence that her heart was with Irving in London.

Miss Welsh felt that she must at least satisfy her ecstatic acquaintance that she was not pining for another woman's husband. She was even more explicit. She had made up her mind to marry Carlyle. She told her intrusive correspondent so in plain words, desiring her only to keep her secret. The lady was thunderstruck. In ordinary life she was high-flown, and by those who did not know her might have been thought affected and unreal; but on occasions really serious she could feel and write like a wise woman. She knew that Miss Welsh could not love Carlyle. The motive could only be a generous hope of making life dearer, and want of health more endurable, to an honest and excellent man, while she might be seeking blindly to fill a void which was aching in her own heart. She required Miss Welsh, she most solemnly adjured her, to examine herself, and not allow one who had known much disappointment and many sorrows to discover by a comparison of his own feelings with hers that she had come to him with half a heart, and had mistaken compassion and the self-satisfaction of a generous act for a sentiment which could alone sustain her in a struggle through life. Supposing accident should set Irving free, supposing his love to have been indestructible and to have been surrendered only in obedience to duty, and supposing him, not knowing of this new engagement, to come back and claim the heart from which an adverse fate had separated him, what in such a case would her feeling be? If she could honestly say that she would still prefer Carlyle, then let her marry him, and the sooner the better. If, on the other hand, she was obliged to confess to herself that she could still find happiness where she had hoped to find it, Irving might still be lost to her; but in such a condition of mind she had no right to marry anyone else.

With characteristic integrity Miss Welsh, on receiving this letter, instantly enclosed it to Carlyle. She had been under no obligation, at least until their marriage had been definitively determined on, to inform him of the extent of her attachment to Irving. But sincere as she was to a fault in the ordinary occasions of life, she had in this matter not only kept back the truth, but had purposely misled Carlyle.
as to the nature of her feelings. She felt that she must make a full confession. She had deceived him—wilfully deceived him. She had even told him that she had never cared for Irving. “It was false,” she said. She had loved him—“once passionately loved him.” For this she might be forgiven. “And if I showed weakness in loving one whom I knew to be engaged to another, I made amends in persuading him to marry the other and preserve his honour from reproach.”

But she had disguised her real feelings, and for this she had no excuse. She who had felt herself Carlyle’s superior in their late controversy, and had been able to rebuke him for selfishness, felt herself degraded and humbled in his eyes. If he chose to cast her off, she said that she could not say he was unjust; but her pride was broken; and very naturally, very touchingly, she added that he had never been so dear to her as at that moment when she was in danger of losing his affection and, what was still more precious to her, his respect.

If Carlyle had been made of common stuff, so unexpected a revelation might have tried his vanity. The actual effect was to awaken in him a sense of his own unworthiness. He perceived that Miss Welsh was probably accepting him only out of the motives which Mrs. Montagu suggested. His infirmities, mental and bodily, might make him an unifit companion for her or indeed for any woman. It would be better for her once for all to give him up. He knew, he said, that he could never make her happy. They might suffer at parting, but they would have obeyed their reason, and time would deaden the pain. No affection was unalterable or eternal. Men themselves, with all their passions, sank to dust and were consumed. He must imitate her sincerity. He said (and he spoke with perfect truth) that there was a strange, dark humour in him over which he had no control. If she thought they were “‘blue devils’” or “weak querulous wailings of a distempered mind,” she would only show that she did not understand him. In a country town she had seen nothing of life, and had grasped at the shadows that passed by her. First, the rude, smoky fire of Edward Irving seemed to her a star from heaven; next, the quivering ignis fatuus of the soul that dwelt in himself. The world had a thousand noble hearts that she did not dream of.
What was he, and what was his father's house, that she should sacrifice herself for him?

It was not in nature—it was not at least in Miss Welsh's nature—that at such a time and under such circumstances she should reconsider her resolution. She was staying with her grandfather at Templand when these letters were interchanged. She determined to use the opportunity to pay the Carlyles her promised visit, see him in his own home and his own circle, and there face to face explain all the past and form some scheme for the immediate future. Like the lady in London, she felt that if the marriage was to be, or rather since the marriage was to be, the sooner it was over now the better for everyone. Carlyle was to have met her on the road, and was waiting with horses; but there had been a mistake. She was dropped by the coach the next morning at Kelhead Kilns, from which she sent him a little characteristic note.

Good morning Sir— I am not at all to blame for your disappointment last night— The fault was partly your own and still more the Landlady's of the Commercial Inn as I shall presently demonstrate to you viva voce. In the mean time I have billeted myself in a snug little house by the wayside where I purpose remaining with all imaginable patience till you can make it convenient to come and fetch me, being afraid to proceed directly to Hoddam hill in case so sudden an apparition should throw the whole family into hysterics. If the Pony has any prior engagement never mind[,] I can make a shift to walk two miles in pleasant company— Any way pray make all possible dispatch, in case the owner of these premises should think I mean to make a regular settlement in them— Yours Jane

The great secret, which had been known from the first to Mrs. Carlyle and suspected by the rest, was now the open property of the family; and all, old and young, with mixed feelings of delight and anxiety, were looking forward to the appearance of the lady who was soon to belong to them.

She stayed with us above a week, happy, as was very evident, and making happy. Her demeanour among us I could define as unsurpassable; spontaneously perfect. From the first moment, all embarrassment, even my Mother's as tremulous and anxious as she naturally was . . . fled away without returning. Everybody felt the all-pervading simple grace, the perfect truth and perfect trustfulness of that beautiful, cheerful, intelligent and sprightly
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creature; and everybody was put at his ease. The questionable visit was a clear success on all hands.

She and I went riding about; the weather dry and grey,—nothing ever going wrong with us;—my guidance taken as beyond criticism; she ready for any pace, rapid or slow; melodious talk, of course, never wanting. . . .

Of course she went to Mainhill. . . . She made complete acquaintance with my Father (whom she much esteemed and even admired now and henceforth, a reciprocal feeling, strange enough!), and with my two eldest Sisters, Margaret & Mary,—who now officially "kept house" with Father there. On the whole, she made clear acquaintance with us all; saw, face to face, us, and the rugged peasant element and way of life we had;—& was not afraid of it; but recognized like her noble self, what of intrinsic worth it might have, what of real human dignity. She charmed all hearts; and was herself visibly glad and happy,—right loth to end those halcyon days; 8 or perhaps 9, the utmost appointed sum of them.?

Two little anecdotes she used to tell of this visit, showing that under peasant's dresses there was in the Carlyles the essential sense of delicate high breeding. She was to use the girls' room at Mainhill while there; and it was rude enough in its equipments as they lived in it. Margaret Carlyle, doing her little best, had spread on the deal table for a cover a precious new shawl which some friend had given her. More remarkable was her reception by the father. When she appeared he was in his rough dress, called in from his farm work on the occasion. The rest of the family kissed her. The old man to her surprise drew back, and soon left the room. In a few minutes he came back again, fresh shaved and washed, and in his Sunday clothes. Now, he said, if Miss Welsh allows it, I am in a condition to kiss her too. When she left Hoddam, Carlyle attended her back to Dumfries.

Miss Welsh had now seen with her own eyes the realities of life in a small Scotch farm, and was no longer afraid of it. She doubtless distrusted as much as ever Carlyle's fitness in his own person for agricultural enterprises. But if his brother would take the work off his hands he could himself follow his own more proper occupations. She had recognised the sterling worth of his peasant family, and for her own part she was willing to share their method of existence, sharply contrasted as it was with the elegance and relative
luxury of her home at Haddington. It was far otherwise with her mother. Mrs. Welsh's romantic days were not over. They were never over to the end of her life; but she had no romance about Carlyle. She knew better than her daughter how great the sacrifice would be, and the experience of fifty years had taught her that resolutions adopted in enthusiasm are often repented of when excitement has been succeeded by the wearing duties of hard every-day routine. She was a cultivated, proud, beautiful woman, who had ruled as queen in the society of a Scotch provincial town. Many suitors had presented themselves for her daughter's hand, unexceptionable in person, in fortune, in social standing. Miss Welsh's personal attractions, her talents, the fair if moderate fortune which, though for the present she had surrendered it, must be eventually her own, would have entitled her to choose among the most eligible matches in East Lothian. It was natural, it was inevitable, independent of selfish considerations, that she could not look without a shudder on this purposed marriage with the son of a poor Dumfriesshire farmer, who had no visible prospects and no profession, and whose abilities, however great they might be, seemed only to unfit him for any usual or profitable pursuit. Added to this, Carlyle himself had not attracted her. She was accustomed to rule, and Carlyle would not be ruled. She had obstinate humours, and Carlyle, who never checked his own irritabilities, was impatient and sarcastic when others ventured to be unreasonable. She had observed and justly dreaded the violence of his temper, which when he was provoked or thwarted would boil like a geyser. He might repent afterwards of these ebullitions; he usually did repent. But repentance could not take away the sting of the passionate expressions, which fastened in the memory by the metaphors with which they were barbed, especially as there was no amendment, and the offence was repeated on the next temptation. It will easily be conceived, therefore, that the meeting between mother and daughter after the Hoddam visit, and Miss Welsh's announcement of her final resolution, was extremely painful. Miss Welsh wrote to Carlyle an account of what had passed. His letter in reply bears the same emblem of the burning candle, with the motto,
"Terar dum prosim," which he had before sketched in his journal. He was fond of a design which represented human life to him under its sternest aspect.8 After the bright interlude of Miss Welsh's visit to Hoddam, life soon became as industrious as Carlyle has described. The mornings were spent in work over the German Tales, the afternoons in rides, Larry remaining still in favour notwithstanding his misdemeanours. In the evenings he and his mother perhaps smoked their pipes together, as they used to do at Mainhill, she in admiring anxiety labouring to rescue his soul from the temptations of the intellect; he satisfying her, for she was too willing to be satisfied, that they meant the same thing, though they expressed it in different languages. He was meditating a book, a real book of his own, not a translation, though he was still unable to fasten upon a subject; while the sense that he was in his own house, lord of it and lord of himself, and able if he pleased to shut his door against all comers, was delightful to him.