

“A. G.,” was the author of over 650 entries for the original *Dictionary of National Biography*. This enormous production of biographical sketches added to the 90 items for *N&Q* suggests that sheer exhaustion may have prevented Gordon from writing any books.

In 1860, when the Carlyle/Newman incident is said to have occurred, or better still in 1861, when Gordon recalls that Martineau related the anecdote, Gordon would have been only twenty years of age. Not that such relative youth would preclude a meeting of a bright student, brought up in the Unitarian faith, with the leading Unitarian voice, James Martineau, nor might it refute necessarily the possibility that Martineau entertained young Gordon with such a confidence about Carlyle and Newman. In 1861, Martineau was teaching at Manchester New College, then affiliated with the University of London. (In 1889, Manchester New College was moved to Oxford and was renamed Harris Manchester College.) According to Alan Ruston in the *ODNB*, Alexander Gordon prepared for the ministry at Manchester New College from 1859 to 1862.

It must be remembered that Carlyle regularly shunned social occasions during those years in “the valley of the shadow of Frederick,” limiting his outings severely while pleading the pressures of “endless Prussian sand.” Still, the lack of any mention of James Martineau among the Carlyles’ letters in 1860 and 1861 need not be taken as ultimate proof contradicting the occurrence of a meeting with Newman.

DS

## The Massons

DAVID MASSON (1822–1907; *ODNB*) MET JANE CARLYLE IN 1843 AND then Thomas Carlyle a year later, as recounted in his wonderful reminiscence, *Memories of London in the Forties* (London: Blackwood, 1908). This brilliant Scots editor and educator—like Carlyle the son of a stonecutter—was a great favorite of both of the Carlyles and was a frequent guest at 5 Cheyne Row until 1865. In that year he returned to Scotland to succeed Professor

Aytoun at Edinburgh University in a lineage of scholars that would, over time, include professors Saintsbury, Grierson, and Fielding. Though there may have been scores of letters exchanged between Masson and the Carlyles, only three are documented: two in published sources, and one in holograph at National Library of Scotland. His daughter Rosaline Masson published prolifically on many subjects including further family reminiscences, and she was an authority on the works of Robert Lewis Stevenson. Another daughter, Flora, edited the aforementioned *Memories* and was an authority on the Brontës. A son, David Orme Masson (1858–1937; *ODNB*), emigrated to Australia, where he achieved prominence as a professor of chemistry. The editors of *CSA* are particularly keen to trace living descendents of this family in order to learn if there is further Carlyleana in their possession.

The following anecdotes are from Rosaline Masson's *Poets, Patriots, and Lovers* (London: Clark, 1933).

DS

[“The Old Man Great and Good”]

I think I can remember Thomas Carlyle standing by my table stooping as he spread golden syrup on a slice of bread for me at my breakfast. It is a very hazy memory—so hazy that, were it not because it includes a hand that shook, so that the thin line of gold descended from the spoon like a zig-zag of forked lightning, I might imagine my treasured memory to be after all only an image impressed by the telling, till it had become actually real. It must have been during one of Carlyle's visits to my parents in Edinburgh.

We lived in Regent Terrace in those days—one of that open sweep of three Terraces—light grey stone and great pillars with long windows set deep behind them—that encircle the base of Calton Hill. . . .

Another visit of Carlyle's had its humorous side. There was a letter-box on the front door at Regent Terrace, with name and prefix on it. This publicity had its drawbacks, for all the plausible fraternity in temporary straits owing to delayed remittances had a habit of ringing the bell and asking in

friendly tones: "Is the Professor at Home?" One day a new maidservant had been carefully instructed about this, and told that appearances were often deceitful, and that it was her duty to exercise discernment, and detect beggars, even did they know the name to ask for. "Please, Ma'am, there's a beggar in the hall—and he *won't* go away!"

My mother went out into the hall: and there she saw a picture she never forgot—Mr. Carlyle, standing leaning on his stick, beside the pedestal that held his own bust; an uncouth figure that entirely exonerated the poor maidservant—shabby and shaggy, in loose clothes, with an old Panama hat with a black ribbon, and shoes with untied laces.

"Oh, Mr. Carlyle!" my mother cried, going forward with outstretched hands to meet him—for nothing could be said. And Carlyle, benign and gentle, as she always remembered him, looked down at her with ineffable kindness and affection, fully sympathising with her distress, fully seeing the whole situation, and most fully enjoying its humour.

My mother was always tenderly fond of the gentle old sage, moved by reverence as well as pitiful affection for him. For indeed, though surrounded by comfort and dutiful care, he was a sad and solitary old man in his later days, wifeless and childless. An idolized "prophet," a great writer influencing his generation by his writings, is inevitably lonely of soul. My mother, who knew him well, and realised all he was, constantly, in speaking about him long after his death, used the words "gentle," "simple," "pure," "dignity."

And I also remember my father, speaking of Carlyle long after his death, calling him, in reverent voice, "the old man,—the old man great and good."

How different these impressions of Carlyle from that carelessly and cruelly given to the world!