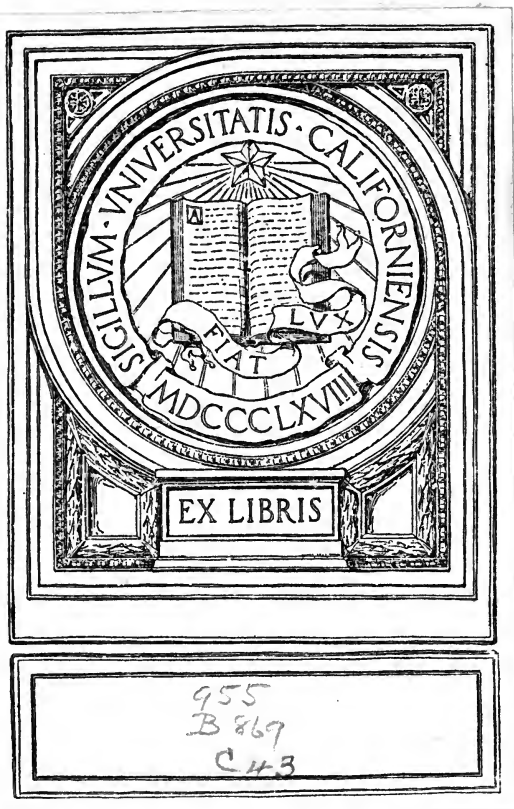


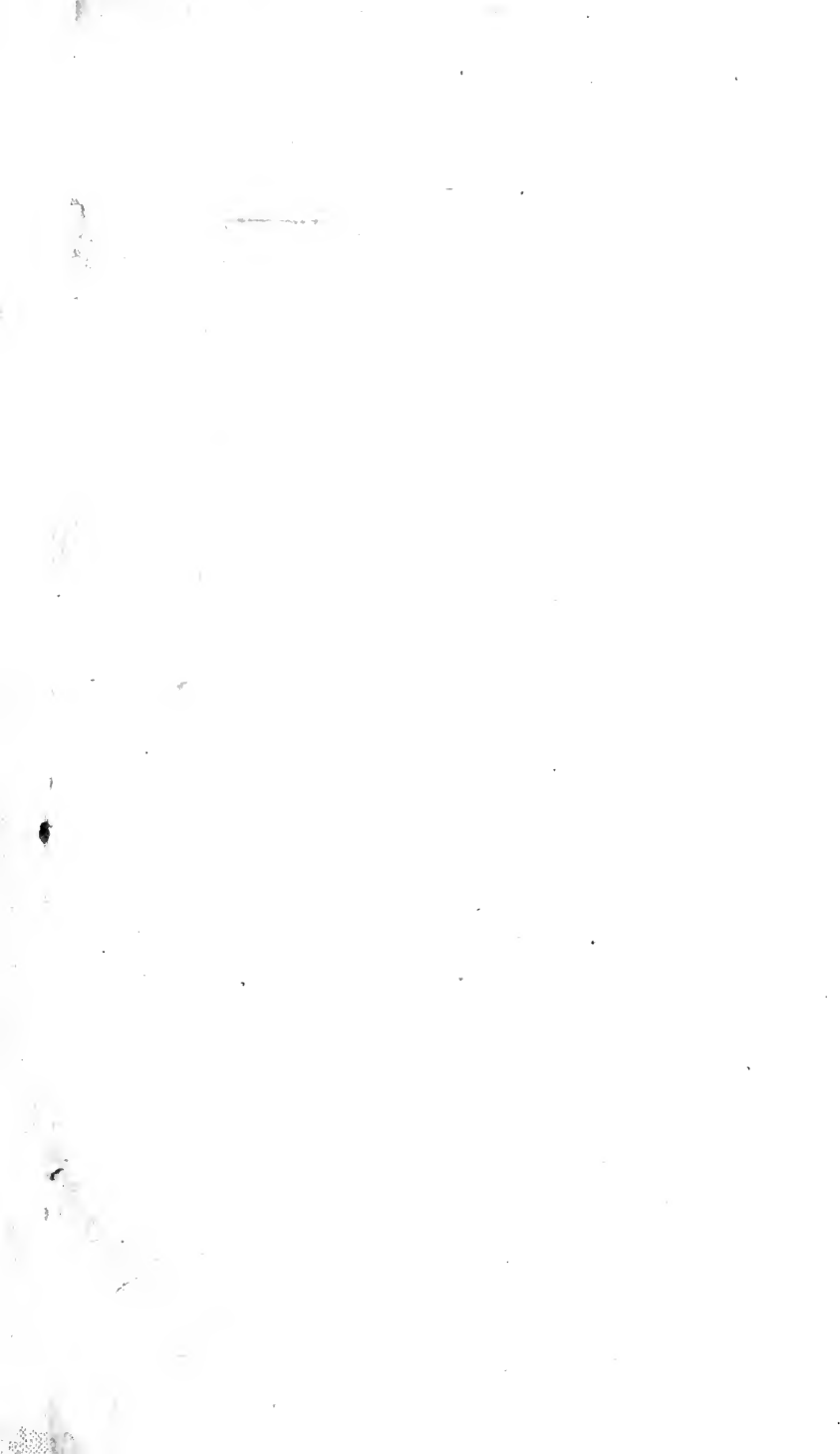
In the Footsteps  
of  
The Brontës

Mrs. Ellis H. Chadwick



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[Emery Walker.

Alleged portrait of Charlotte Brontë.

# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BRONTËS

BY

MRS. ELLIS H. CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF

"MRS. GASKELL: HAUNTS, HOMES AND STORIES," ETC.



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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
SOCIETY OF THE  
SACRED SCRIPTURES

TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY DAUGHTER,  
ELSIE MILLER CHADWICK,  
WHOSE BRIEF LIFE WAS SPENT  
IN HAWORTH.



## PREFACE

MY first copy of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was sent to me from Haworth, and some years afterwards fate decreed that I should go to live on the edge of the glorious moors, within bowshot of the Haworth vicarage. It mattered not to me that Mrs. Gaskell had described the moorland village as bleak, wild, and desolate; it was the home of the Brontës, and therein lay its charm.

After living in Haworth for nearly two years, I had the good fortune to reside for the next six years in two other districts closely associated with the Brontës, on the borders of the Shirley country, and within a pleasant walk of Woodhouse Grove. In those days—now nearly thirty years ago—there were many who had known the famous family at the Haworth parsonage, including Dr. Ingham, the medical adviser to the Brontës; the sexton's family; and Mr. Wood, the village carpenter, who never failed to tell visitors that he made all the coffins for the Brontë family except Anne's. Since those days, I have met many, in different parts of England as well as in Brussels, who knew Charlotte and Emily Brontë.

When opportunities offered I made repeated pilgrimages to every Brontë shrine, both in England and abroad. To be a devotee of the Brontës is to find an Open Sesame wherever true literature is valued, and it is one of the pleasantest recollections of my life to remember that in no single instance have I met with a refusal when seeking permission to see the interiors of houses and schools with which the Brontës have been connected. It is impossible to adequately acknowledge the uniform kindness which, as a stranger, I have received. Several who have so willingly helped me have passed away during the writing of this book: Miss F. Wheelwright, of Kensington; Mrs. Ratcliffe, of Haworth; and M. l'Abbé Richardson, of Brussels.

My thanks are due to Mr. Clement K. Shorter and Messrs.

Hodder and Stoughton for kind permission to quote from *The Brontës : Life and Letters* and *The Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*. In the study of these works I have found a wealth of information which has enabled me to throw new light on several controversial problems connected with the Brontës.

I am also indebted to the Rev. T. W. Story, M.A., of Haworth ; Mr. W. Scruton, of Bradford ; and Mr. W. W. Yates, of Dewsbury, for kindly allowing me to quote from their books.

For the generous assistance, by the loan of photographs, letters and other documents, I am especially grateful to Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Green, of Hastings ; Dr. Heger, and Mdlle de Bassompierre, of Brussels ; Miss White, of Banagher ; Lord Shuttleworth, of Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley ; Mr. J. J. Stead, of Heckmondwike ; Mr. J. Horsfall Turner, of Idle, Bradford ; Mr. Fred Shuttleworth, of Haworth ; Mr. J. Walton Starkey, of Woodhouse Grove ; and Mr. John Watkinson, of Huddersfield—the Chairman of the Council of the Brontë Society.

ESTHER ALICE CHADWICK.

*West Brac,  
Enfield,  
Middlesex.*



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# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BRONTËS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BRONTË IRISH ANCESTRY

1777-1802

THE ancestors of the Brontës—The claim that Ireland inspired the Brontë novels—The Irish Brontës—Birthplace of Patrick Brontë—His early training—Alice Brontë—Prunty, Brunty or Brontë—Patrick Brontë enters St. John's College, Cambridge—His pride in his Irish nationality.

SEVERAL attempts have been made to retrace the steps of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, the father of the famous authors of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, for the purpose of trying to discover if Ireland held the secret of the passionate novels written by Emily and Charlotte Brontë; but this research was not begun sufficiently early to meet with much chance of success. If Mrs. Gaskell had crossed the Irish Sea, when she was gathering the material for her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, she might possibly have been fortunate in obtaining some clue to the ancestors of the Brontës, which might have helped her to gauge the peculiar character of the famous sisters, whose novels differed so much from any that had been written previously.

Few novels have ever aroused so much curiosity with regard to their origin as *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. The scenes and characters in *Jane Eyre* have been traced to a certain extent, but there is little or nothing that can claim to be Irish. Ireland is mentioned but once, and then as the place where Rochester tells Jane Eyre that he will secure a situation for her when he marries Blanche Ingram. There is nothing

in *Wuthering Heights* that can be called peculiarly Irish, and it has not been proved that the foundation of the story owes anything directly to Irish tales, which have gathered round the names of the Brontës in Ireland.

The Brontë sisters wrote of places they had actually seen, and as none of them had visited Ireland before they wrote their novels, Irish life is not referred to at all, unless Charlotte's sarcastic reference to Ireland and the Irish in *Shirley* may be allowed to count. Here, it will be remembered, she designates her father's native place as "the land of shamrocks and potatoes," and she describes the Irish curate, Mr. Malone, as "a tall, strongly-built personage, with real Irish legs and arms, and a face as genuinely national: not the Milesian face—not Daniel O'Connell's style, but the high-featured, North American-Indian sort of visage, which belongs to a certain class of the Irish gentry, and has a petrified and proud look, better suited to the owner of an estate of slaves, than to the landlord of a free peasantry." Neither the nationality nor the brogue of the Irish curate, Malone, seems to have gained the respect of the author of *Shirley*, which is somewhat surprising, since she was the daughter of an Irish curate herself. "When Malone's raillery became rather too offensive, which it soon did, they joined in an attempt to turn the tables on him, by asking him how many boys had shouted 'Irish Peter!' after him as he came along the road that day (Malone's name was Peter—the Rev. Peter Augustus Malone); requesting to be informed whether it was the mode in Ireland for clergymen to carry loaded pistols in their pockets, and a shillelagh in their hands, when they made pastoral visits; inquiring the signification of such words as vele, firrum, hellum, storrum (so Malone invariably pronounced veil, firm, helm, storm), and employing such other methods of retaliation as the innate refinement of their minds suggested."

This incident was probably based upon Patrick Brontë's habit of carrying a loaded pistol and stout walking-stick in his early days when a curate at Dewsbury, for he was in Yorkshire during the Luddite riots.

Dr. Wright, in his *Brontës in Ireland*, did his best to give

Ireland the credit of being the background of the Brontë novels, but there has been very little to confirm the stories which he relates. It must, however, be recognised, that the Celtic fire of the Irish race glows in the tales, and the Brontë sisters had the fierce Irish temperament, which revolts against injustice and conventionality. Heredity must also claim its full share in moulding the Brontë character, for there is no doubt that the Rev. Patrick Brontë influenced his daughters more than anyone else in their early days, and it was from him that they inherited a love of literature. The books and magazines which he provided, though strong meat for young people, helped to make them mentally robust and imaginative, even when mere children.

Although Ireland cannot claim to have inspired the Brontë novels directly, yet the father of the famous sisters deserves more credit than it has been usual to accord to him. Much of what he published was of Ireland and the Irish people, and there is no doubt that he was in the habit of telling his children stories and legends of his native country. He was reared among Irish peasants and, in his day, "fairies, witches, goblins, spectres, magic wells and caverns, and haunted dells" were as real to the Irish peasant as any of the physical appearances with which he was daily confronted. It is not then a matter for wonder that the Brontë children coloured their stories with their vivid imagination.

Emily Brontë was the most imaginative of the trio, and she was always considered the most typically Irish of the family. In some respects she resembled her father in build and features—tall and lanky—"with a man's big stride, an oval face, shifting eyes, beautiful brown hair, and a proud and reserved manner."

The ancestors of Emily and Charlotte Brontë cannot be traced beyond their settlement on the banks of the Boyne.

Every effort has been made to prove that the Brontë sisters came of a literary stock, though it is not possible to do that without changing the Greek name of Brontë (which accounts for Charlotte Brontë in her early days signing herself Charles Thunder) to that of the Hibernian O'Prunty, which is

now considered to be the original family name, though this cannot be absolutely proved.

One of the most cherished items supposed to refer to the Irish Brontës has been unearthed by Dr. Douglas Hyde, who in 1895 published *The Story of Early Gaelic Literature*, in which he mentions an old Irish tale contained in a manuscript in his possession, written in 1763 by one Patrick O'Prunty, whom he assumes to be an ancestor of Charlotte Brontë. The romance is entitled *The Adventures of the Son of Ice Counsel*. According to Dr. Douglas Hyde there is a colophon on the last page in Irish, which invokes the blessing of the reader, in honour of the Trinity and of the Virgin Mary, on the author, Patrick O'Prunty. The tale tells of a fight which continued "from the beginning of the night till the rising of the sun in the morning, and was only just stopped, as Diodorus says battles were, by the intervention of the bards."

This Patrick O'Prunty is assumed to be the elder brother of Charlotte Brontë's grandfather, Hugh Brontë. In that case he must have written his manuscript some fourteen years before Patrick Brontë was born. That being so, it is somewhat singular that Patrick Brontë did not know of it, for, if he had, he would probably not only have told his children but also Mrs. Gaskell, when she was interviewing him to gain particulars of his early home and his forbears. It is well known that Mrs. Gaskell got very little information about the Irish Brontës, and she confessed that she was afraid both of Charlotte Brontë's Irish father and her Irish husband, and consequently she did not probe far, but was content with the scant information which Patrick Brontë supplied. It must, however, be remembered that Mr. Brontë at this time was nearly eighty years old, and his memory was failing; he was almost blind, so that, if he knew of any tradition, the absence of documents or letters referring to his early home would prevent him from proving his points with any degree of satisfaction; and, moreover, it was the *Life* of his daughter that Mrs. Gaskell was writing, so that the old man was justified in keeping his daughter's biographer to the strict bounds of her subject.

Patrick O'Prunty, author of *The Adventures of the Son of*

*Ice Counsel*, judging by his colophon, was evidently a Roman Catholic. On the other hand, Hugh Brontë appears to have brought up all his children as Protestants, and Patrick Brontë was ever a staunch defender of the Church of England, as was his daughter Charlotte.

Old Alice Brontë maintained that the Brontë family had always been Protestant, and she doubted if her mother at any time had been a Roman Catholic, for all the Brontës were bitter opponents of Roman Catholicism. It is strange that, with their well-known hatred of Roman Catholics, Charlotte and Emily Brontë should have been sent to be educated at a school in Brussels, which was under the care of Monsieur and Madame Heger, who were very strict Roman Catholics.

That the thoughts of the Brontë girls often turned to Ireland is proved by a small manuscript, still in existence in the Brontë Museum, which was written by Charlotte Brontë when she was but thirteen years of age; its title is *An Adventure in Ireland*. As was common in many of the Irish tales of that day, it tells of ghosts, and possibly it is based on one of her father's Irish fire-side stories. At fourteen, Charlotte Brontë wrote another fairy tale, *The Adventures of Ernest Alembert*, which has since been published in *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll. Instead of the usual title page, it has a kind of colophon on the last page—

“The adventures of Ernest  
Alembert. A Tale  
By Charlotte Bronte  
May the 25th,  
1830.”

The sixteen pages of this well-told fairy tale are stitched in a cover of rough brown paper, and it is noticeable that Charlotte Brontë does not use the double-dotted final in writing her surname.

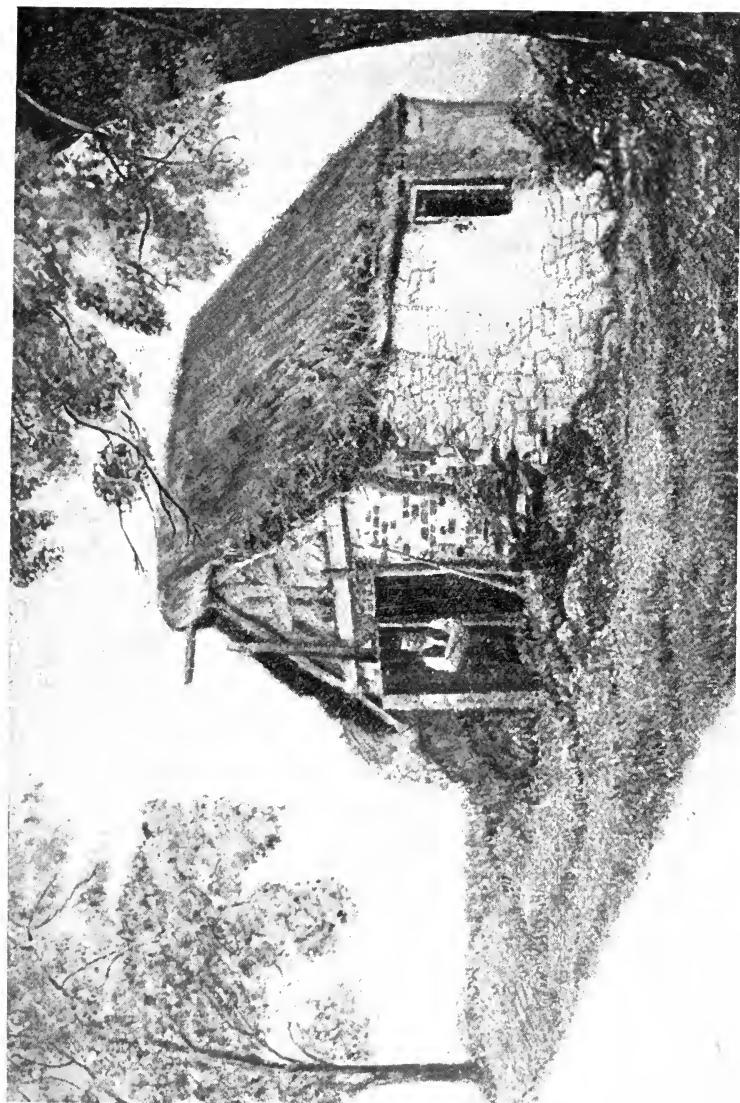
Devotees of the Brontës, in their eagerness to prove Charlotte Brontë's descent from a literary ancestry, have said that Patrick Brontë was named after his literary uncle, Patrick O'Prunty, and that in consequence he struggled hard to become

an author who would add lustre to his family. However desirable this may seem, it lacks all the elements of truth. It is quite sufficient to know that Patrick Brontë was born on St. Patrick's day, 17th March, 1777, and for those who are interested in figures, it is said that a child born on a date which contains so many sevens—seven being considered the perfect number—as could be crowded into the actual date, was destined to become famous. It has also been noted that Patrick Brontë died on the seventh day of June, 1861. Both Patrick Brontë and his daughter Charlotte were superstitious concerning numbers, and Patrick was proud to remember that he took his B.A. degree on 23rd April, 1806—Shakespeare's accredited birthday. His eldest daughter, Maria, was also christened on 23rd April, 1814. Charlotte Brontë and her life-long friend, Ellen Nussey, never failed to remember that their respective birthdays, one on 21st April, and the other on 22nd April, were so near to that of Shakespeare as in one case to be possibly the same date.

That Patrick Brontë was proud of his christian name there is no doubt, though in England it always pointed to the fact that he was an Irishman. In those days Ireland was not held in high esteem, especially by the inhabitants of Great Britain. Patrick Brontë, however, gave his christian name to his only son, who was considered in his early days the genius of the remarkable Brontë family. Though in his own home he was always called by his second name, Branwell—his mother's maiden name—yet everyone in Haworth knew him as Pat Bronte, the surname being pronounced as one syllable; others referred to him as "the Vicar's Patrick," and, though all the Brontë children were born in Yorkshire, they had no Yorkshire blood in their veins, and were always known as the Irish Parson's children.

There is little that is worthy of the name of a Brontë shrine in Ireland to-day, though the district in which Patrick Brontë spent his early years has not greatly changed. The little thatched cabin in Emdale, County Down, in which Patrick Brontë was born, has been demolished, and nothing definite remains to mark the birthplace of the much maligned father





PATRICK BRONTË'S BIRTHPLACE, EMSDALE



of the immortal Brontës. It was a lonely little cottage with its mud floor and its two tiny rooms—one used as a bedroom and the other as a kitchen and corn kiln ; the rent was said to be sixpence a week.

Patrick Brontë was very reticent about his early Irish home, and his poor relations. He told Mrs. Gaskell that he was a native of Aghaderg, but this was not quite correct, as Emdale is in the townland or parish of Drumballyroney-cum-Drumgooland, which adjoins the parish of Aghaderg. It must be said, however, that the parish boundary is not well defined, and Patrick Brontë's memory in his old age may have been at fault. The little cabin was on the Warrenpoint and Banbridge Road, at right angles to the Newry and Rathfriland Road, and about eight miles from Newry. Banbridge is still noted for its linen manufacture. The tiny cabin in which Patrick Brontë was born soon became too small for the growing family, and a second house, about half a mile away, in the Lisnacreevy Townland was taken, where all his brothers and sisters, except the youngest, were born.

Patrick Brontë was the eldest of a family of ten—five boys and five girls. He said that his father, Hugh Brontë, was a small farmer, and that he was left an orphan at an early age. He claimed that his ancestors had originally come from the South of Ireland and had settled near Loughbrickland. There was a tradition that Patrick Brontë's forbears, humble as they were, had descended from an ancient family of good position. Patrick Brontë always clung to this idea, and it is possible that this suggested to Emily the remark of Ellen Dean to Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. "Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth ; and the thoughts of what I was, should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer."

Of Patrick Brontë's mother little is known. It is clear, however, that her eldest son regarded her with affection, for he is credited with sending her twenty pounds the year after he left Ireland, and he kept up the practice all her life. She was known before her marriage as Alice McClory, "the prettiest girl in County Down, with a smile that would charm a mad

bull." In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë assigns that magic witchery to Shirley Keeldar, a character, she tells us, drawn from her sister Emily, and supposed to represent her as she would have been under the circumstances given in *Shirley*.

It is said that Emily Brontë resembled her paternal grandmother, as well as her father, for Patrick Brontë was tall and thin, though his father, Hugh Brontë, was described by his youngest daughter, Alice, as "not very tall and purty stout." Whilst Emily was the most like her father, Charlotte and Patrick Branwell Brontë were small in stature, like their Cornish mother, but with much of the Irish temperament, whilst the gentle Anne, the youngest child, was like her mother both in mind and build—so thought Miss Branwell, their aunt—and it was probably for this reason she was always looked upon as the aunt's favourite. This was shown in Miss Branwell's will, by which Anne received a valuable watch and chain, with the trinkets attached, whilst Charlotte only got a workbox, Emily a workbox and an ivory fan, and Branwell a Japan dressing box, though Mrs. Gaskell makes the mistake of saying that Branwell was left out of the will altogether.

Patrick Brontë's youngest sister, Alice Brontë, died on 15th January, 1891, at the age of ninety-four. She was interviewed during her later years by several Brontë enthusiasts, including the late Rev. Thomas Leyland, who said she liked to talk to him of her eldest brother Patrick, who was twenty years her senior. As he left Ireland for Cambridge when she was only a girl of five, and only returned to his native land once when she was a girl of eight, she knew very little of him, except to regard him as the clever member of the family, and that he was of a studious disposition, and loved reading. She was proud of being a Brontë, and she delighted to talk about the literary success of her clever nieces.

Patrick Brontë was first a hand-loom weaver, and it is said that whilst weaving he might often have been seen with a book propped up in front of him, trying to ply the shuttle and read a little at the same time, just as in later days Emily Brontë was accustomed to have a German book in front of her when ironing in the kitchen at the Haworth parsonage.

Patrick Brontë's parents were poor, and so far as is known they were quite illiterate, but he evidently got his first interest in learning from them and from the Presbyterian minister. When quite a boy, he had to earn his own living as a hand-loom weaver. Hence his great interest in later days in the hand-loom weavers of Yorkshire. He composed a poem which was intended to stimulate and encourage those of his parishioners who followed this form of employment. On the title page of the Cottage Poems the first verse is printed—

“ All you who turn the sturdy soil,  
Or ply the loom with daily toil,  
And lowly on, through life's turmoil  
For scanty fare :  
Attend : and gather richest spoil,  
To sooth your care.”

Patrick Brontë never forgot “ the rock from which he was hewn,” and his early literary efforts were reminiscent of his early days, when, to quote his poem,

“ My food is but spare  
And humble my cot.”

At the first exhibition in the Brontë Museum at Haworth, the Rev. J. B. Lusk, of Ballynaskeagh, lent a copy of a very old calico backed arithmetic by Voster, of Dublin, dated 1789. At this time Patrick Brontë would be a boy of twelve years of age. Inside the book are the following inscriptions : “ Patrick Pruty's book, bought in the year 1795.” The *n* in Prunty has been omitted.

Patrick Prunty his book and pen.

Patrick Prunty his book and pen (in red ink).

Patrick Brunty, (in larger letters).

Patrick Prunty, (large handwriting).

There is a geography, now in the Brontë Museum, which was printed in Dublin in 1795, and on page 129 is written “The Revd. P. Bronte.” There are also the names Walter Sellon and Walsh Bront, the latter name appearing several times, and in addition there is written, “Hugh Bronte His Book, in the year 1803.” Besides these are written on the inside of the cover some remarks on Irish characteristics which conclude by

saying that the Irish are "violent in affection." Also in a small copy of a New Testament is to be seen in faint writing the signature Alice, or Allie Brontë, which seems to point to the fact that it probably belonged to Patrick Brontë's mother, who was known as Alice, Allie or Ayles Brontë, though, according to the parish registers of Drungooland, her name was either Elinor, which appears three times in connection with the baptism of three of her children, or Eleanor in three other cases, whilst the surname is given as Brunty in every case but one, when it is entered as Bruntee, the handwriting probably being that of the minister or the parish clerk. All this helps to prove that the original name was Prunty or O'Prunty. Charlotte Brontë mentions a geography book "lent by papa" to her sister Maria, which was 120 years old in 1829.

As Patrick Brontë loved his books better than his handloom, he decided early in his teens to be a teacher. This meant much burning of the midnight oil—in his case a tiny rush-light. It was owing to his pursuit of knowledge under such unfavourable conditions that he injured his eyesight—a source of much trouble and pain in later life. By much self-denial, never allowing himself more than six hours sleep, he managed to pass the qualifying examination as a teacher, and at sixteen he was appointed master of Glascar Hill Presbyterian School. This appointment he kept for some five years.

According to Dr. Wright, a Presbyterian stickit minister, the Rev. David Harshaw, who had previously befriended the young teacher, assisted him in various ways, and especially by the loan of books. He was thus enabled to improve his qualifications, and he succeeded in being appointed master of the Church School at Drumballyronev.

Patrick Brontë was then a tall, handsome fellow of twenty-one, and he appears in his younger days to have been particularly fortunate in the guidance and help he obtained from ministers. Until he was able to manage his own affairs, "he hung on to the coat tails of a good minister," which, as Mrs. Gaskell says, "is as wise a thing as any young man can do in his youth."

The Rev. Thomas Tighe, Rector of Drumballyroney, was evidently much interested in young Brontë since he entrusted to him the education of his own children, and it was probably on the rector's advice that Patrick Brontë decided to become a clergyman, first seeking to qualify for this office by entering Cambridge University. Mrs. Gaskell says, "This proved no little determination of will, and scorn of ridicule." Why "scorn of ridicule" is not clear, for shortly after entering the University he gained three scholarships and several prizes, but he did not gain a scholarship before he entered Cambridge, as several writers have affirmed, but saved a sum of money and used it at Cambridge.

Although Patrick Brontë's children were born and reared in Yorkshire, they were all noted for their Irish brogue. Mary Taylor told Mrs. Gaskell that when she first met Charlotte Brontë at Roe Head School, Dewsbury, she was struck with her strong Irish accent.

The passionate revolt of the Irish race and their strenuous struggle for freedom are evident in the Brontë novels, and there is more of sadness than of joy in them. The violence of the storm, the fury of intense passion, the weirdness of a moonlight night, and the moaning of the wind across the moors appealed to their Celtic nature.

The mother of the famous Brontë sisters, Maria Branwell, a daughter of a respected Methodist from Penzance, has not been proved to have been a true Celt, and it is just as well, for a passionate nature such as Patrick Brontë possessed would not have mated well with one equally fierce. The youngest daughter—gentle, patient Anne—was most like her mother, and her novels are very characteristic, lacking the fire and passion of her sisters.

The Brontë shrines in Ireland are held in veneration, not because of Patrick Brontë's fame, but because he was the father of the famous novelists. The Brontë Glen, near Emdale, and the surrounding neighbourhood are rich in Irish relics.

There is a poem entitled "The Irish Cabin" in Patrick Brontë's first book, a small volume of poems, published in 1811. There are now very few copies of this book extant: one is in the

Brontë Museum at Haworth, and another at Knutsford, from which the following inscription in Patrick Brontë's handwriting is copied.

"The gift of the author to his beloved sister, Miss Branwell, as a small token of his affection and esteem.

"THORNTON, NR. BRADFORD,  
"March 29th, 1816."

Patrick Brontë had a sincere affection for his humble Irish home, and in this poem he writes—

"All peace, my dear cottage be thine !  
Nor think that I'll treat you with scorn ;  
Whoever reads verses of mine  
Shall hear of the Cabin of Mourne ;  
And had I but musical strains,  
Though humble and mean in your station,  
You should smile whilst the world remains,  
The pride of the fair Irish Nation."

The very fact that Patrick Brontë published these poems, reminiscent of his Irish home, shows how mistaken Mrs. Gaskell was when she wrote that he dropped his Irish accent on leaving Cambridge, and had no further intercourse with his Irish relatives. She gives the impression that Mr. Brontë was ashamed of his Irish origin, which was not the case. Even to the day of his death he preferred Irish curates.

With the death in January, 1891, of Patrick Brontë's youngest sister Alice, the last link with Patrick Brontë's family was broken. Had it not been for the timely help of friends and relatives, old Alice Brontë would have spent her last days in poverty. When it was known that she was in actual need, after all her brothers had died, there were many who expected that the Rev. A. B. Nicholls would have allowed her a small income, seeing that he got all the money that his wife, Charlotte Brontë, left, and also the greater portion of what Patrick Brontë left, which together amounted to nearly £3,000. Added to this was the money he received from the Brontë furniture. It was with the Brontës' money that Mr. Nicholls was able to retire from preaching and settle as a gentleman farmer. Miss Ellen Nussey was indignant that Mr.



Nicholls did not come to the aid of the last of the Brontë aunts, and she also thought that Charlotte Brontë's publishers might have allowed the old lady something, though it is not certain that they were even approached on the matter. A former friend of the Brontës in Ballynaskeagh, Dr. Caldwell of Birmingham, who was always keenly interested in the Brontë family, collected a sum of money for Alice Brontë's immediate use. In 1882 he was also instrumental in securing for her an annuity of twenty pounds from the Pargeter's Old Maids' Charity Trustees, Birmingham, which allowance was continued until her death.

Only one of Patrick Brontë's brothers is known to have visited his relatives at Haworth, but the tales told of the castigation he administered to the reviewer of *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review* are not true. County Down and Haworth were too far apart in those days, and neither the Vicar of Haworth nor his relatives had money to spare for long journeys. Consequently, the Irish members of the Brontë family knew less of their illustrious relatives than the friends in England, and even to this day they know little except what is published. A great grandchild of Sarah Brontë, the only sister of Patrick Brontë who married, resided for some years at Oakenshaw, near Bradford. There is also an Emily Brontë, a descendant of one of Patrick Brontë's brothers, living in England to-day. It has been said that Patrick Brontë had little regard for his own native country, and that he was anxious to hide his Irish nationality, but this cannot be substantiated, for in 1836 he published *A Brief Treatise on the best time and mode of Baptism*, which was chiefly an answer to a tract issued by the Baptist Minister at Haworth. In this pamphlet, Patrick Brontë says: "One thing, however, I think I have omitted. You break some of your jokes on Irishmen. Do you not know, that an Irishman is your lord and master? Are you not under the king's ministry? And are they not under O'Connell, an Irishman? And do not you or your friends pay him a yearly tribute under the title of *rent*? And is not the Duke of Wellington, the most famous, and the greatest of living heroes, an Irishman? And dare you, or your adherents, take

one political step of importance without trembling, lest it should not meet the approbation of your allies in Ireland? Then, as an Irishman might say to you, refrain from your *balderdash* at once, and candidly own your inferiority."

In *The Maid of Killarney*—the only novel ascribed to Patrick Brontë—he describes the Irish as "free, humourous, and designing; their courage is sometimes rash, and their liberality often prodigal: many of them are interesting and original; so that he who has once seen them will not easily forget them, and will generally wish to see them again."

## CHAPTER II

### PATRICK BRONTË'S TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

#### *Cambridge, 1802-1806*

PATRICK BRONTË as a student at St. John's College—His industry and success—Value of the scholarships he won—His ordination as deacon by the Bishop of London and priest by the Bishop of Salisbury.

#### *Curacy at Wethersfield, 1806-1809*

Patrick Brontë's first curacy—Wethersfield in Essex—The Vicar of Wethersfield—Mary Burder—Patrick Brontë leaves Wethersfield.

#### *Curacies at Wellington and Dewsbury, 1809-1811*

His appointment as curate at Wellington in Shropshire—His next curacy at Dewsbury Parish Church—The Vicar of Dewsbury—Dewsbury in Patrick Brontë's time—References to Dewsbury in *Shirley*—His appointment as incumbent of Hartshead Church—Memorial tablet in Dewsbury Parish Church.

DURING Patrick Brontë's nine years' experience as a teacher, he saved enough to enable him to go to Cambridge, where, by means of scholarships and as sizar or servitor, he was able to be independent of help from anyone. He was probably recommended to St. John's because the fees were very low, and because he would be sure to find there others, like himself, who could only obtain a University training by practising the greatest frugality.

Whatever may be said of Patrick Brontë in later life, he was most exemplary in his student days, working almost night and day to improve himself, and showing a fine spirit of manly independence.

By the courtesy of the Master of St. John's College, I am allowed to copy the following particulars relating to Patrick Brontë's residence at Cambridge.

The first entry is, "Patrick Branty, born in Ireland; admitted sizar 1st October, 1802; tutors Wood and Smith." It is supposed that the men supplied the details to the Registrar

of the College verbally and in person, and that the Irish brogue led to the mistake. The butler kept the Residence Register, in which appears *Sizar* Patrick Branty (erased) Bronte. First day of residence, 3rd October, 1802: kept by residence the following Terms—

1802 Michaelmas.

1803 Lent, Easter, Michaelmas.

1804 Lent, Easter, Michaelmas.

1805 Lent, Easter, Michaelmas.

1806 Lent.

Admitted B.A. 23rd April, 1806.

In the Register of Scholars and Exhibitions, opposite the name of Patrick Bronte appears—

Hare Exhibition

February, 1803.

„ „

19th March, 1804.

„ „

March, 1805.

There is no mention of an Exhibition in 1806.

The Hare Exhibitioners received amongst them the annual value of the Rectorial Tithe of Cherry Marham, Norfolk. The rent was £200 which, if they shared equally, would give £6 6s. 8d. as the value of each exhibition.

At Midsummer, 1805, Patrick Brontë was elected a Dr. Goodman Exhibitioner; the value of the exhibition was £1 17s. 6d., and he appears to have held it only one year.

From Christmas, 1803, to Christmas, 1807, he held one of the Duchess of Suffolk's exhibitions of the value of £1 3s. 4d.

It is difficult to see how he managed to pay his mother £20 a year, during his stay at Cambridge, as stated by Dr. Wright, unless he made a fair income by acting as coach to other students. The three scholarships only brought him the sum of £9 7s. 4d. per annum, and it is evident that Dr. Wright did not know their small value, when he wrote in his *Brontës in Ireland*: "Brontë's savings were ample to carry him over his first few months at Cambridge, and the Hare, Suffolk and Goodman Exhibitions were quite sufficient afterwards for all his wants as a student." It is to be remembered that Patrick

Brontë was a sizar, or servitor, which involved status and the payment of very reduced fees both to the College and the University.

In the Registers of the Bishop of London is the following—

“Patrick Bronte, A.B., of St. John’s College, Cambridge, ordained Deacon 10th August, 1806, in the Chapel at Fulham.

“Patrick Bronte has letters dimissory dated 19th December, 1807, to be ordained Priest by the Bishop of Salisbury 21st December, 1807.”

Whilst at college, Patrick Brontë, in addition to his scholarship and exhibitions, gained two prizes at least, consisting of two quarto copies of *Homer* and *Horace*. “Homeri Ilias. Græce et Latine. Samuel Clarke, S.T.P. Impensis Jacobi et Johannis Knapton, in Cœmeterio D. Pauli, mdccxxix.” This book bears the College Arms on the cover, and has the following inscription :—“My prize book for always having kept in the first class at St. John’s College, Cambridge. P. Brontë, A.B. To be retained *semper*.”

“Horatius Flaccus, Rich. Bentleii. Amstelodami, 1728.

“Prize obtained by Rev. Patrick Brontë, St. John’s College.”

The two volumes were in the possession of the late Dr. Dobie, of Keighley, who purchased them from Mrs. Ratcliffe (Tabitha Brown), sister of Martha Brown, the servant at the old Haworth Vicarage. Like Robertson of Brighton, Patrick Brontë seems to have had a leaning towards a military life, and at St. John’s College he joined the Volunteer Corps, and boasted that he drilled side by side with the grandfather of the present Duke of Devonshire and with Lord Palmerston. He delighted afterwards in telling how the Cambridge Volunteers practised to resist the invasion of England by the French. In later days he corresponded with Lord Palmerston, but the friendship, if ever it amounted to that, was never kept up. Another student at St. John’s at that time was Henry Kirk White, the young poet.

After his ordination, he returned to his old home in County Down, and his sister Alice was fond of telling that he preached one Sunday at Ballyrone church to a crowded congregation

"with nothing in his hands," that is without using a manuscript, which in those days was considered a great feat. There is no record that he ever visited his Alma Mater again, but soon after leaving Cambridge he secured a curacy at Wethersfield in Essex, where his marked Irish brogue betrayed his nationality.

That Patrick Brontë took his high vocation seriously and in the true spirit of devotion there is no doubt. One of his poems, written after he left Cambridge, is entitled "An Epistle to a Young Clergyman," and is prefaced by the text, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

The seventh verse reads—

"Dare not, like some, to mince the matter—  
Nor dazzling tropes and figures scatter,  
Nor coarsely speak, nor basely flatter,  
Nor grovelling go:  
But let plain truths, as Life's pure water,  
Pellucid flow."

There are sixteen stanzas altogether. Though Patrick Brontë wrote many verses, he would scarcely rank as a poet, but the lines are interesting because they reveal the spirit of a truly Christian man, anxious to dedicate himself to the work of the ministry of the Gospel.

Mr. Brontë's first curacy was at Wethersfield in Essex, a south country village, where the soft speech of the Southerner was in great contrast to the young Irishman's brogue.

A hundred and seven years ago, Wethersfield, with its copper spired church dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen, was a small village, with a few cottages here and there, and a number of country mansions, where the county families lived. It is little more than that to-day, for Wethersfield has changed less than most villages during the last century. Even now, it is almost as difficult to approach as in Patrick Brontë's day, for the nearest station, Braintree, is seven miles away. Cut off by the network of railways, it is just one of those old world places, which seem never to have awakened from their long sleep. The people, kind and hospitable, are employed mainly in raising garden seeds. Very rarely wandering far from their



*Photo by*

WETHERSFIELD CHURCH

*H. T. Larson*

CCC C L L L C C C  
C C C C C C C C  
C C C C C C C C

C C C C C C C C C C C C  
C C C C C C C C C C C C  
C C C C C C C C C C C C



home, their isolation gives them something of the sterner independence of the North, and the countryside is typical of the hilly part of the county, so that Patrick Brontë must have rejoiced in the beauty of this English village, where he began the serious business of life, full of hope and with an Irishman's determination to succeed.

It was a favourable place in which to start his ministerial life, for the Vicar, the Rev. Joseph Jowett—a Yorkshireman—was Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge, and was a non-resident vicar of Wethersfield, so that much of the work of the parish devolved on the young handsome curate. In the old church register may be seen Patrick Brontë's first signature, which was written on 12th October, 1806, on the occasion of a baptism.

Patrick Brontë stayed in this small agricultural village about two years, the last entry in his own handwriting being 1st January, 1809, when he evidently officiated at a funeral. It was not until 1887 that the information concerning his residence at Wethersfield was brought to light by Mr. Augustine Birrell. In his *Monograph on Charlotte Brontë* in the "Great Writers' Series," he gathered together some interesting particulars from the daughter of Mary Burder, Patrick Brontë's sweetheart at Wethersfield.

This daughter, Mrs. Lowe, wrote an account for Mr. Birrell of her mother's love story, which adds much interest to Patrick Brontë's residence at Wethersfield, but the early love letters are not forthcoming.

It is, however, quite certain that the love story of the young curate and the pretty niece of his landlady would never have been published had not Patrick Brontë become the father of the famous novelists. It is said that the young curate, on his arrival in the village, found lodgings in a house opposite the church, where lived Miss Mildred Davy, whose niece, Mary Burder, "a pretty lassie of eighteen, with blue eyes and brown curls," sometimes came from her home, known as "The Broad"—a large, old-fashioned farm-house across the fields. On one occasion, having brought a present of game for her aunt, she was busy in the kitchen with her sleeves rolled up,

winding up the roasting-jack, when the new curate, seeing her thus occupied exclaimed, as told by her daughter, "Heaven bless thee! Thou hast the sweetest face I ever look'd on." In the *Cottage Poems*, published by Patrick Brontë in 1811, are "Verses sent to a Lady on her Birthday," and from the following verse, which gives the lady's age as eighteen, it is probable that the poem was addressed to Mary Burder. After speaking of "Your rosy health and looks benign" he writes—

"Behold, how thievish time has been!  
Full eighteen summers you have seen,  
And yet they seem a day!  
Whole years, collected in time's glass,  
In silent lapse, how soon they pass,  
And steal your life away!"

It was a case of "love at first sight," and Mary was often to be found at her aunt's home, where the course of true love ran smoothly for a time. Mary's relatives, however, were prejudiced against an Irishman, and both Mary and her kinsfolk were disappointed because they could not obtain from Patrick Brontë himself any particulars of his "ain folk." The consequence was that they treated him with suspicion, and it was arranged that one of Mary's uncles living at a distance should invite her to stay with him for some time; and letters sent to her by her lover were intercepted. When Mary Burder returned to her home, the love-sick curate had fled, after being compelled to return her letters. It is said that he left his portrait inscribed with the words, "Mary; you have torn the heart; spare the face." Fourteen years afterwards she received a letter in the handwriting she once treasured. It was from the Rev. Patrick Brontë, asking her to become his second wife and the stepmother to his six motherless bairns, but she declined, and a year afterwards married the minister at the Dissenting Chapel at Wethersfield, the Rev. Peter Sibree.

On 1st January, 1809, Patrick Brontë shook the dust off his feet and left Wethersfield.

For many years there was a hiatus in the calendar of Patrick Brontë's life, so far as it was generally known. The Church

Register at Wethersfield shows that he ceased to be curate there in January, 1809, and the date of his entering upon his duties as curate at Dewsbury in December of the same year is fixed by an entry of marriage on the 11th of the month, in Dewsbury Parish Church register, signed by Patrick Brontë.

There is little to record, but it is now known that he spent the interval between January and December of the year 1809, in serving as curate at Wellington, near Shrewsbury. Wellington was far from being so congenial as Wethersfield; it was a small town given to mining, and Patrick Brontë only stayed one year.

In the matriculation register of St. John's College, Cambridge, for the year 1802, appears the name of John Nunn, written in a bold, round hand, and standing next but one in order to Patrick Brontë's rather effeminate signature. Mr. Nunn became a curate at Shrewsbury, and, after he left college, he seems to have kept up a regular correspondence with Patrick Brontë. It is probable that, when he heard of his friend's troubles at Wethersfield, he advised him to apply for the vacant curacy at Wellington. The vicar was the Rev. John Eyton, whose son, Robert William Eyton, was an antiquary and historian.

It is said that Patrick Brontë quarrelled with his old friend John Nunn, on hearing that he was about to be married, for the Wellington curate had arrived at very definite conclusions with regard to the subject of marriage after his experience at Wethersfield. It is surely the irony of fate which gave to Patrick Brontë the duty of joining in matrimony many of the couples married at Dewsbury Parish Church—his next curacy—for, on examining the register of this old church, which dates from the year 1538, it may be seen that Mr. Brontë officiated at most of the weddings from 1809 to 1811.

It is interesting to know that it was during his curacy at Wellington that he first became acquainted with the Rev. William Morgan, who was his fellow curate, and afterwards his cousin by marriage.

It is now more than a century since Patrick Brontë went to be curate to the Rev. John Buckworth, M.A., at Dewsbury Parish Church. Young Brontë was fortunate in his vicars,

and to them, perhaps, may be traced his anxiety to become an accredited author, and even his famous daughters, who wrote so much before they succeeded in publishing anything, may owe something to their father's literary vicars. The Rev. Dr. Jowett, of Wethersfield, published at least one volume of sermons, and Mr. Buckworth was known as a capable hymn-writer, and the author of a volume of Devotional Discourses for the use of families. A copy of this work was included among Patrick Brontë's books sold in 1907, and it bears the inscription: "To the Rev. P. Brontë, A.M. A Testimonial of Sincere Esteem from the Author."

The neighbourhood of Dewsbury, like many other industrial centres, has lost most of the charm it once possessed. It is now a busy woollen manufacturing district, but in Patrick Brontë's days it was a typical Yorkshire country town. The winding Calder, upon whose banks, according to tradition, Paulinus stood and planted the Gospel Standard in 627, is now a muddy, polluted stream. Even when Charlotte Brontë was at school at Dewsbury, it was a picturesque rural spot, rich with sylvan beauty, the heights of Crackenedge and Westboro' crowned with woods, and little farmsteads dotted here and there, whilst below were grassy meadows and little cottages, each with its weaving shed situate in the valley through which the then clear Calder wended its way.

Dewsbury was a place to revel in, so far as its scenery went, but Patrick Brontë arrived at a troublesome time, just before the Luddite riots, and the people of the district were lawless and coarse. There was plenty for the curate to do with such a population as he found in Dewsbury, for bull-baiting, badger-baiting and dog-fighting were the common amusements of many of the lower classes, and such sports generally ended in drunken brawls and brutal fights. The vicar—the Rev. John Buckworth—supposed by some to be the original of Dr. Boulton in *Shirley*, though others assume that the Rev William Morgan, Patrick Brontë's brother-in-law, was the prototype—did not fail to denounce this lawlessness from his pulpit, as the testimony of his printed sermons proves. The Yorkshire temperament and pugnacity found its match in the young Irish curate, and

several stories are told of his prowess in those days, the most commonly remembered having found its way into his daughter's novel, *Shirley*, where she gives a graphic description in Chapter XVII of a Sunday School procession on Whit-Monday, though she need not have gone further than Haworth for a parallel incident, except that she mentions that "the fat Dissenter," who gave out the hymn, was left sitting in the ditch. The Dewsbury story differs slightly from the one associated with the history of Haworth. At Dewsbury, it is said that the Sunday School procession, on the anniversary day, was on its way to sing on the village green, when a half-drunken man attempted to bar the way. The young curate rushed forward, seized the man by the collar, and threw him into the ditch on the road-side, after which the procession continued in peace. On its return, the man, somewhat sobered, and resenting the indignity to which he had been subjected, waited to "wallop the parson." He, however, thought "discretion to be the better part of valour," when he saw the tall, athletic curate at the head of the procession, and he wisely made no attempt to interfere with its progress.

Another tale which has lingered in the Calder Valley tells of the parish bell-ringers practising on the Sunday morning for a forthcoming contest, and how the young curate rushed up the belfry stairs with his shillelagh in his hand, and drove them all out with a stern rebuke ; but perhaps the best known story is of the rescue of a boy from drowning in the river Calder. Mr. Brontë jumped into the stream in his clerical attire, and after rescuing the boy, took him home and saw that he was attended to, before he thought of his own wet garments.

Mr. W. W. Yates, in his book *The Father of the Brontës*, tells us that Patrick Brontë, when in Dewsbury, resided in the old vicarage, close by the church, having his own rooms. The house has since been demolished. Descendants of the old inhabitants, who knew him, speak of Mr. Brontë as not being very sociable, but he did his work well, and was considered a good preacher, taking a special interest in the Sunday Schools. The frugality of his early life in Ireland followed him into

Yorkshire, and he is said to have lived mostly on oatmeal porridge and potatoes, with a **dumpling** by way of dessert after dinner. If report is to be credited, he wore a blue linen frock coat, and carried a shillelagh, like a true son of Erin. His vicar had an illness during his curacy, and the young Irishman felt constrained to send his sympathy in verse, and no fewer than twenty-nine six-line stanzas found their way to the vicar. It is not poetry, but it satisfied Patrick Brontë, and must have amused the recipient. One verse reads—

“ May rosy Health with speed return,  
And all your wonted ardour burn,  
And sickness buried in his urn  
Sleep many years !  
So, countless friends who loudly mourn,  
Shall dry their tears ! ”

Patrick Brontë's reason for leaving Dewsbury is one which showed his Irish independence. It is said that, having been caught in a thunderstorm, he requested the vicar to take his place at the evening service, when one of the church officials remarked, “ What ! keep a dog and bark himself.” This so annoyed Patrick Brontë that he decided to resign his curacy. This apparently did not interfere with his friendly relations with the Vicar, for the living of Hartshead Church, a short distance away, was vacant at this time, and, as Mr. Buckworth had the right of presentation, he rewarded his hard-working curate, who thus became incumbent of Hartshead in 1811.

In the Hartshead Church register, the first entry made by the new vicar is on 3rd March, 1811, where he signs himself “ Patrick Brontë, minister,” and on the 11th of March in the same year he signs himself in the Dewsbury church register, “ P. Brontë, curate,”

He had been a curate for six years, and he now realised his ambition in securing a church of his own. That the “ Irish curate ” had made a name for himself is evidenced by the fact that members of the Dewsbury church often walked over to Hartshead to hear him preach. He had, what was considered at that time a rare accomplishment, the gift of being

able to preach without reference to his manuscript, which counted for much among the Yorkshire folk. In January, 1899, a brass plate was unveiled in Dewsbury Parish Church to the memory of Patrick Brontë with the following inscription—

“ IN MEMORY OF  
THE REVEREND PATRICK BRONTË B.A.  
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE  
BORN AT EMDALE COUNTY DOWN  
ST. PATRICK'S DAY 1777  
DIED AT HAWORTH PARSONAGE  
JUNE 7TH, 1861  
CURATE OF WETHERSFIELD ESSEX 1806-1809  
WELLINGTON 1809. DEWSBURY 1809-1811  
INCUMBENT OF HARTSHEAD 1811-1815  
THORNTON NEAR BRADFORD 1813-1820  
HAWORTH 1820-1861  
ERECTED BY ADMIRERS OF HIM AND HIS TALENTED  
DAUGHTERS CHARLOTTE, EMILY AND ANNE BRONTË.”

Had he not been the father of the famous novelists, it is certain his memory would not have been thus honoured.

Dewsbury figures in *Shirley* as Whinbury. It was noted for its Sunday Schools, which were established even before the movement by Robert Raikes. Twenty-five years after Patrick Brontë left Dewsbury, his daughter Charlotte came to live in the parish, being then twenty years of age. She had accepted the appointment of governess in Miss Wooler's school, which had just been transferred from Roe Head, Mirfield, to Heald's House, at the top of Dewsbury Moor. Whilst here, she attended the Dewsbury Parish Church, where her father had formerly been curate. Some of the older inhabitants used to speak of her as a shy little person, very short and dumpy, but with very expressive eyes and a most attentive worshipper in church. It was whilst teaching there that she had a bad attack of hypochondria, and the doctor told her, as she valued her life, to leave Dewsbury and get home to Haworth. In *Villette* she mentions this serious attack, connecting it with Lucy Snowe, and in one of her letters she speaks of Dewsbury as “a poisoned place for me.”

## CHAPTER III

### THE REV. PATRICK BRONTË AT HARTSHEAD

1811-1815

THE village of Hartshead-cum-Clifton—St. Peter's Church, Hartshead—The Nunnely Church in *Shirley*—The Rev. Hammond Roberson—The Luddite riots—The Red House, Gomersal—Mary Taylor—Apperley Bridge—The Woodhouse Grove Academy—The Rev. John Fennell—Maria Branwell—Patrick Brontë's marriage in Guiseley Church—Centenary anniversary of his wedding—His love letters—Publication of his *Cottage Poems*—His second volume of poems—*The Rural Minstrel*—He exchanges livings with the Rev. Thomas Atkinson of Thornton, near Bradford.

HARTSHEAD-CUM-CLIFTON is about four miles from Dewsbury, so that Patrick Brontë did not find much difference either in the type of people or in the district after he left Dewsbury. Hartshead Church was in the same parish, and is dedicated to St. Peter. It is known in *Shirley* as Nunnely Church, and is beautifully situated on a hill overlooking the valley of the Calder. Near the church gates are the old stocks, which were often in use in Patrick Brontë's days. The church, though altered and renovated since Mr. Brontë's time, still retains its ancient appearance. The square tower, the oldest remaining portion of the church, was formerly surmounted by an old, weatherbeaten ash tree, which had its roots in the roof of the tower. In the vestry are portraits of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, the Rev. Thomas Atkinson, who followed Mr. Brontë and was the godfather of Charlotte Brontë, and his successor, the Rev. Thomas King.

The registers of the church go as far back as 1612. They have lately been of service to the old inhabitants who wished to claim their old-age pension. In addition to the signature of Patrick Brontë there is to be seen the certificate of baptism of Patrick Brontë's eldest child, Maria Brontë, who was born in 1813, but not christened until 23rd April, 1814, Shakespeare's birthday, and the anniversary of Mr. Brontë's Degree day at



Cambridge. The christening ceremony was performed, as the register shows, by Patrick Brontë's relative, the Rev. William Morgan, of Bradford Parish Church.

Patrick Brontë found lodgings at a farm, known in his day as Lousey Thorn, but now called by the more euphonious title of Thorn Bush Farm. The tenants of the farm, when he stayed there, were Mr. and Mrs. Bedford, who had at one time been servants at Kirklees Hall. According to the church register, Mr. Brontë entered on his duties at St. Peter's Church, Hartshead, on March 3rd, 1811, and not in July, as has been frequently stated, for there is an entry in March signed—Patrick Brontë, minister. The new incumbent had been preceded some ten years previously by the noted Rev. Hammond Roberson, M.A., a Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, who had also been one of Patrick Brontë's predecessors as curate of Dewsbury Parish Church. Mr. Roberson, in many ways, resembled Patrick Brontë, for he was a bold and fearless preacher, with a strong personality, a stalwart Tory of the old school, a man of indomitable will, and self-sacrificing and generous in his nature. After resigning his curacy at Dewsbury, he started a boys' school, renting for the purpose Squirrel's Hall on Dewsbury Moor. He afterwards transferred the school to Heald's Hall, and such was his success that he saved enough to enable him to build Liversedge Church, which cost over £7,000, and where he became vicar in 1816. Charlotte Brontë has portrayed him in *Shirley* as Parson Helstone, "the old Cossack," as she calls him, but he must have resembled her father very much, for those who knew Patrick Brontë in later days recognised him in the delineation of Mr. Helstone; no doubt something from both clergymen helped to build up the character. Charlotte Brontë, in a letter to Mr. Williams, says that she only saw the original of Mr. Helstone once when she was a girl of ten, at the consecration of a church on September 4th, 1827, which Ellen Nussey referred to as St. John's on Dewsbury Moor.

The description given in *Shirley* of Mr. Helstone—the clerical Cossack—fits Mr. Roberson.

"He was not diabolical at all. The evil simply was—he had

missed his vocation : he should have been a soldier, and circumstances had made him a priest. For the rest he was a conscientious, hard-headed, hard-handed, brave, stern, implacable, faithful little man : a man almost without sympathy, ungentle, prejudiced, and rigid : but a man true to principle—honourable, sagacious, and sincere.”

Mr. Roberson was building his church at Liversedge at the time that Patrick Brontë was incumbent of Hartshead, and he was a prominent character during the Luddite riots, an account of which Charlotte Brontë heard from her father and the people in the neighbourhood when she came to live there. Mrs. Gaskell gives a very good account of Mr. Roberson, of whom she heard much when visiting Miss Wooler and Ellen Nussey. The more eccentric the character, the more Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed writing about it.

Heald's Hall, the residence of Hammond Roberson, was the largest house in the neighbourhood, and must not be confused with Heald's House, where Charlotte Brontë was teacher with Miss Wooler. In the Liversedge church is a stained-glass window, erected to the memory of Hammond Roberson, with an inscription, “ To the glory of God and in memory of the Rev. Hammond Roberson, M.A. ; founder of this church in 1816, and its first incumbent, who died August, 1841, aged 84 years.” In the adjoining graveyard is a very small gravestone, about half-a-yard high, with just the name, age, and date of burial. The vicar advocated one small gravestone to each person, and he insisted on all stones being uniform. It is said that one parishioner erected a head-stone larger than the others, and the vicar had it taken up and thrown into the hollow at the bottom of the churchyard.

Another grave in the Liversedge churchyard which merits attention is that of William Cartwright, the original of Robert Gerard Moore, of *Shirley* ; on it is a simple inscription, “ William Cartwright of Rawfolds, died 15th April, 1839, aged 64 years.”

In the year after Mr. Brontë became incumbent of Hartshead, the whole of the West Riding of Yorkshire was in constant turmoil. Sixty-six persons were tried at York for various

offences connected with the Luddite rising against the introduction of machinery. Seventeen were executed, and six were transported for seven years. The two big mill-owners in the Hartshead district—Cartwright of Rawfolds, Liversedge, and Horsfall of Marsden—were considered by the workpeople to be the chief offenders in the district, for both had decided to stock their mills with machinery. Parson Roberson took the side of the mill-owners, and had no sympathy with the workpeople, preaching from the pulpit against the Luddites, and doing all he could to make the workers bend to their employers. Mr. Brontë also took the same view, and Mary Taylor, writing to Mrs. Gaskell in 1857 from New Zealand, acknowledging a copy of the first edition of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, says : “ You give much too favourable an account of the black-coated and Tory savages that kept the people down and provoked excesses in those days. Old Roberson said he would wade to the knees in blood rather than the then state of things should be altered, a state including Corn Law, Test Law, and a host of other oppressions.”

Charlotte Brontë describes the Luddite riots in *Shirley*. For this purpose she got the loan of a file of copies of the *Leeds Mercury* covered by the period ; her father also was able to give her material assistance from the standpoint of an eye-witness of some of the stirring events, and her old school-mistress, Miss Wooler, used to tell her pupils of her recollections of some of the scenes when taking the girls for their daily walks around the neighbourhood.

The rendezvous of the Luddites of the district was not far from Patrick Brontë's home in Hartshead. It was by the Dumb Steeple—a monument without an inscription, hence its name. Here the men met at midnight. Near by was the inn known as “ The Three Nuns,” where they adjourned after taking the oath and learning the pass-words, which were said to be “ go ” and “ inn.” The men were also drilled in the use of certain signs which were quite masonic.

In *Ben O' Bill's, the Luddite*, Mr. D. F. E. Sykes, LL.B., a native of Huddersfield, quoting from old manuscripts of the days of the Luddites, says : “ Mr. Cartwright was more of a

foreigner nor an Englishman. A quiet man with a cutting tongue. Had ne'er a civil word for a man, an' down on him in a jiffy if he looked at a pot o' beer. Drank nowt himself. . . . Was sacking the old hands and stocking Rawfolds with machines ; and Parson Roberson was worse nor him."

The Luddites were more favourable to Mr. Horsfall of Marsden, as he was a Yorkshireman, out and out, and, according to Mr. Sykes' narrative, a coin was tossed to decide which mill was to be attacked—heads for Horsfall, tails for Cartwright. The coin fell with the head uppermost, but the tosser, pretending to take the coin to the light of the fire, turned the penny over, so that it was against Mr. Cartwright.

" ' I'm glad it fell on Cartwright,' I said to my cousin, as we doffed our things that night. ' Aw thought tha would be,' said George. ' It wer' a weight off me when it fell tails,' I added."

" ' But it were a head,' said George, with a quiet smile.

" ' A head ! ' "

" ' Ay, a head. But I knew tha wanted tails, so I turned it i' th' palm o' mi hand, when I stooped over th' fire.' "

And yet men talk about fate, says the teller of the story.

The attack on Cartwright's mill at Rawfolds, Liversedge, took place on Saturday, 11th April, 1812, according to the *Leeds Mercury*. The military were called out to defend the mill, and on the following Saturday a court martial was held on one of the soldiers who had acted in an unsoldierly manner. It is recorded that he refused to fire for fear of hurting his own brothers who were attacking the mill, and he was condemned—so the account says—to three hundred lashes for his breach of military discipline.

Mr. Cartwright returned home by way of Bradley Wood, near Huddersfield, and was fired at by two men who were hiding in the plantation. The shots missed fire and Mr. Cartwright—the original of Robert Moore—escaped uninjured.

Charlotte Brontë does not follow absolutely the facts in this part of her novel, for in Chapter XXXI of *Shirley* she tells the story of Moore being shot. " Miss Keeldar read the note : it briefly signified that last night Robert Moore had been

shot at from behind the wall of Milldean plantation, at the foot of the Brow; that he was wounded severely, but it was hoped not fatally: of the assassin or assassins, nothing was known—they had escaped. . . .”

Briarmains had its original in the Red House, Gomersal, said to date from 1660. It was the old home of Mary Taylor, Charlotte Brontë's friend. Evidently some stranger had been admitted to the house in circumstances somewhat similar to those related of Moore in Charlotte Brontë's novel, for Mary Taylor refers to the matter in her letter acknowledging the copy of *Shirley*, and mentions “the handsome foreigner” who was nursed in her home when she was a little girl, but she points out to the novelist that she has placed the wounded man in the servant's bedroom.

When the writer was privileged to go over the Red House, now occupied by Dr. Waring Taylor, in October, 1908, the room in which “the handsome foreigner” was lodged was shown. The house has fortunately been preserved, and is now much the same as it was in Charlotte Brontë's day. The beautiful stained-glass windows in the family sitting-room which Charlotte Brontë noticed are still there.

Some pictures which attracted Charlotte Brontë are in the old library still; there is the miniature of old Joshua Taylor—the Hiram Yorke of *Shirley*—painted at Rome in 1802; and there are also souvenirs that he brought home from Italy and other places on the Continent. The Red House is well worthy of notice, and the descendants of the Taylors are very proud of the account given in *Shirley*. Hiram Yorke is a very true representation of Joshua Taylor, a very intelligent manufacturer, who could speak French fluently, and yet loved to talk in his rough Yorkshire dialect. Rose and Jessy Yorke of *Shirley* were the two daughters, Mary and Martha Taylor. One of Mr. Taylor's sons was allowed to read the part of *Shirley* that refers to the Taylor family before it was published, and he was well satisfied with the account.

This Yorkshire family of strong Radicals and Dissenters had a meeting-house, known as Taylor's Chapel, near their residence. It is now a cottage and a joiner's shop. Only one

gravestone can be identified, and the inscription is scarcely legible. Some little distance from the house is the Taylors' private burial-ground in Fir Dene Wood. It is still used, a child of the family being buried there a few years ago.

Although it was only by a trick that Cartwright's mill at Rawfolds came to be the one selected for attack, Mr. Timothy Horsfall, of Marsden, the other manufacturer in the district who had opposed the Luddites and who did all he could to trace the ringleaders in the attack on Cartwright's mill, was the one to lose his life. On Tuesday, 28th April, 1812, he was shot on Crossland Moor, not far from the Warren House Inn, and died the next day. For this murder, three men were hanged at York in the following January, and the fourth turned "King's Evidence."

In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë gives a graphic description of the attack on Hollows mill, but she does not mention the Horsfalls of Marsden. Cartwright was evidently considered to be the more interesting character. Her description of Caroline Helstone trying to go to the help of Robert Gerard Moore reminds the readers of a somewhat similar event in *North and South*, where Mrs. Gaskell describes a Manchester mill riot and Margaret Hale defends Thornton, the owner of the mill. *North and South*, however, was written after *Shirley*, though there are parts of *Shirley* which owe something to *Mary Barton*. Indeed, it was said in Haworth that Charlotte Brontë wished to write a story of the Chartists, but that Mr. Butterfield, of Keighley, persuaded her not to do so. He was proud of telling the story of his walk with Charlotte Brontë from Keighley to Haworth, when he used the opportunity to persuade her not to write on the subject of the Chartists, but rather to deal with the Luddite riots as being a more suitable subject.

The most exciting scene in the novel is the graphic description of the storming of the mill; and it is interesting to know that Mrs. Gaskell, in her *North and South*, has a somewhat similar scene.

" 'Shirley—Shirley, the gates are down! That crash was like the felling of great trees. Now they are pouring through.

They will break down the mill-doors as they have broken the gate : what can Robert do against so many ? Would to God I were a little nearer him—could hear him speak—could speak to him ! With my will—my longing to serve him—I could not be a useless burden in his way. I could be turned to some account.’ ” . . .

Mr. Cartwright earned the goodwill of the manufacturers in the district for his firm stand against the Luddites. In the Brontë Museum at Haworth is the actual testimonial, written on parchment, which was presented to Mr. William Cartwright, of Rawfolds mill, by influential inhabitants of the West Riding of Yorkshire on 17th May, 1813. The writing is very faded, but a typewritten copy of the inscription has been made.

It was during such times as these that Patrick Brontë was in charge of a church in the district, and it is not to be wondered at that he became morose and melancholy. Life was cheap in Yorkshire, and the young Irish clergyman needed all his courage and discretion to manage the people. The rich and poor were poles asunder, and the misery and suffering on the one hand was matched by fear and cruelty on the other.

“ Misery generates hate : these sufferers hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them : they hated the buildings which contained those machines ; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings,” says Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley*. Though the workers were prejudiced against the machines, the hand-loom disappeared in time, and the factories, with their noisy machinery, flourished, and the looms, once a feature of so many artisans’ cottages, were broken up. Charlotte Brontë was at a disadvantage compared with Mrs. Gaskell who wrote of the “ hungry forties,” because she did not actually witness the scenes she describes.

In the second year of Patrick Brontë’s residence at Hartshead, and at the time of the Luddite riots, a Wesleyan Academy was built at Woodhouse Grove, Apperley Bridge, near Leeds and Bradford ; a tablet on the old part of the building is inscribed “ Wesleyan Academy, opened January 8th, 1812.” It was intended for the education of the sons of Wesleyan ministers, whose length of stay in any one circuit is usually

not more than three years. Mr. H. Walton Starkey, in his *Short History of Woodhouse Grove School*, says that the first headmaster and governor was Mr. John Fennell, and his wife was responsible for the household arrangements; their joint salary was £100 a year. The school started with eight boys, but by the end of the year there were seventy names on the books. Mr. and Mrs. Fennell remained about a year, as Mr. Fennell decided to take orders in the Church of England, and that becoming known, he was required to leave. There were also complaints as to Mrs. Fennell's management of the household.

Subsequently the Rev. Jabez Bunting secured the appointment for his brother-in-law, the Rev. Thomas Fletcher, who was the grandfather of "Deas Cromarty."

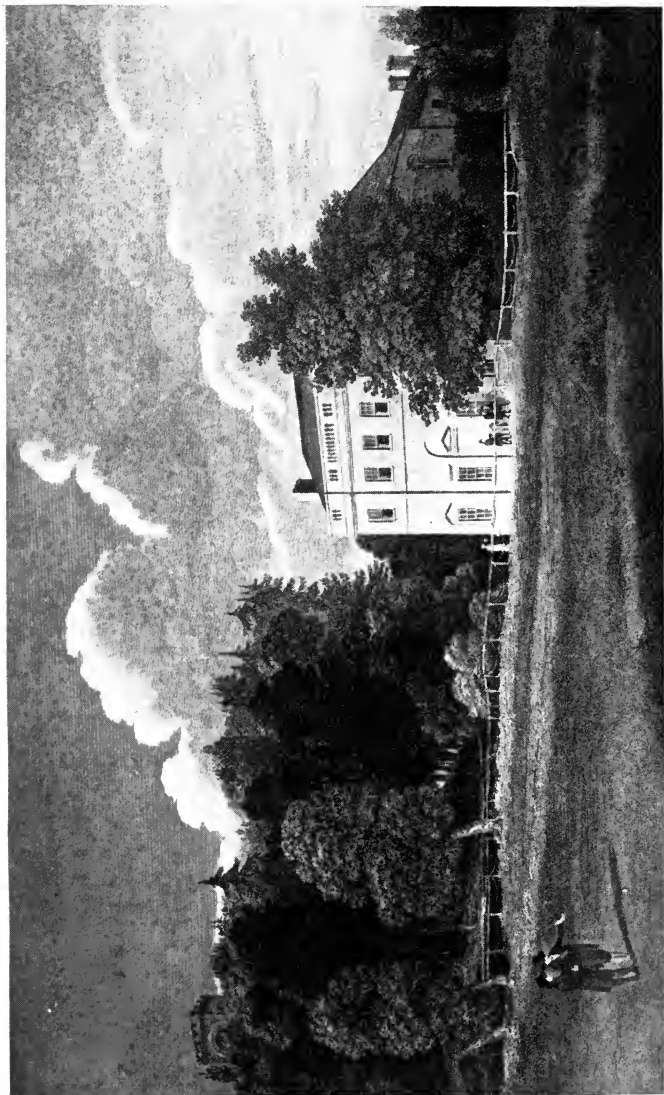
Mr. Fennell became a curate at the Parish Church, Bradford, and later was appointed Vicar of Cross Stones, near Todmorden.

The first inspector at the Woodhouse Grove School was the Rev. Patrick Brontë, who examined the pupils at the end of the summer term.

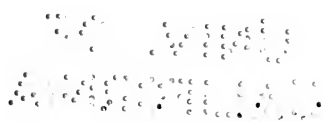
It is probable that the Rev. William Morgan knew that Patrick Brontë had been a successful teacher in County Down. His report on the school has never been quoted and research has failed to find it.

The Woodhouse Grove Academy, or school as it is now called, is on the north bank of the Aire, just below the bridge; it is delightfully situated in its own grounds, and the governor's house adjoins the school. Whether Patrick Brontë had been to Woodhouse Grove Academy before he went as an examiner we are not told, but before August, 1812, was out, he was sending love letters to the Headmaster's niece, Maria Branwell daughter of Mr. Fennell's wife's brother. Evidently Mr. Brontë's warm-hearted Irish temperament would not allow him to remain a woman-hater for long. The engagement appears to have taken place in July, and the nine letters which have been published point to times of happiness and pleasure, referring to country walks to the historic spots around Apperley, to Calverley and to Kirkstall Abbey; the





WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL  
1812



latter place inspired Patrick Brontë to write a poem on the old abbey.

Maria Branwell was a refined and cultured woman of thirty ; she was making a long visit from her home in Penzance to her aunt and uncle at Woodhouse Grove. Her cousin, Jane Fennell, was engaged to the Rev. William Morgan, and it was only natural that Patrick Brontë, with his capacity for falling in love, should be captivated by the quiet, modest Cornish lady, who had all the qualifications for making a good and capable clergyman's wife, although she was a Wesleyan Methodist. As Patrick Brontë had been disappointed before, he did not mean to have a repetition. He was now thirty-five, and in addition to being Vicar of Hartshead, was known in a limited circle as a poet and an author, having already published his *Cottage Poems*. He could also point to a good record at the places where he had served as curate. The only objections hitherto raised against him were that he was an Irishman and little was known of his relatives. These, however, do not appear to have been serious obstacles in his wooing of Maria Branwell, who reciprocated his love. A long courtship was out of the question, and on the 29th of the following December, the marriage was celebrated at Guiseley Parish Church, where the marriage certificate may be seen. Next to it is the certificate of marriage of the Rev. William Morgan and Jane Fennell.

The two clergymen did not seem anxious to have a third to help to tie the knots, for Mr. Morgan officiated at the marriage of Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell, and Patrick Brontë united in wedlock William Morgan and Jane Fennell, the wives acting as bridesmaids to each other, whilst Mr. John Fennell gave both brides away. It is recorded that as he had the responsibility of giving the brides away, he could not marry them ; but he was then only a Wesleyan local preacher, and therefore was not qualified to officiate in church. It is remarkable that, at the very hour and on the same day, two cousins of the two brides, Joseph and Charlotte Branwell, were married at Madron, the parish church of Penzance, so that two sisters and four cousins were married on the same day.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1813, is an entry recording the Yorkshire marriages : " Lately at Guiseley, near Bradford, by the Rev. William Morgan, minister of Bierley, Rev. P. Brontë, B.A., minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, to Maria, third daughter of the late T. Branwell, Esq., of Penzance. At the same time, by the Rev. P. Brontë, Rev. W. Morgan, to the only daughter of Mr. John Fennell, Headmaster of the Wesleyan Academy near Bradford."

Guiseley, in Wharfedale, is about three miles distant from Woodhouse Grove. In Slater's *History of Guiseley* is a list of the rectors from 1234 ; one of the rectors, Robert Moore—whose name appears in *Shirley*—built the rectory, and placed a curious Latin inscription over the doorway, which translated reads : " Anno domini 1601. The house of the faithful pastor, not of the blind leader ; not of the robber ; the house of Robert Moore, rector of the church, founder of the house."

The parish registers, which date from 1556, contain several entries referring to the ancestors of the famous American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The name is still preserved in the village, and a pedigree with notes is to be found in Margerison's *Calverley Registers*.

Of Mrs. Brontë, little is recorded. Mrs. Gaskell's informant described her as " extremely small in person ; not pretty, but very elegant, and always dressed with a quiet simplicity of taste, which accorded well with her general character." This description would apply also to her famous daughter, Charlotte, in her later years. Mrs. Brontë's quiet personality seems to have been quite overshadowed by her husband, and the fact that she died eight years after her marriage left little chance of obtaining much authentic information ; but all that is known proves her to have been worthy of being the mother of Emily and Charlotte Brontë. Maria Branwell was the daughter of Thomas Branwell of Penzance, who had been a member of the Corporation of that town. She had been educated with care, and in religious matters she had been trained in the tenets of the Methodist faith. She had a private income of £50 a year, her parents having died a little more than two years before her marriage. In order to avoid the trouble and

expense of a long journey to Cornwall, she decided to send for her personal property and be married in Yorkshire. Unfortunately the boxes were lost at sea, and in a simple and charming letter she told Mr. Brontë of the disaster.

The descendants of the Branwells were proud of their connection with the Brontës, and one of the last survivors was named Thomas, after Charlotte Brontë's maternal grandfather, and Brontë in honour of the family connection. Miss Charlotte Branwell, the sister of Thomas Brontë Branwell, named her house *Shirley*, and so kept in remembrance her connection with the Brontës. Mrs. Brontë's mother's maiden name was Carne, and both on the father's and mother's side the Branwell family was sufficiently well descended to enable them to mix in the best society of which Penzance at that time could boast. Miss Elizabeth Branwell, Mrs. Brontë's elder sister, who went to live at Haworth in 1822, bears this out, for Miss Ellen Nussey says: "She talked a good deal of her younger days; the gaieties of her native town, Penzance, in Cornwall, the soft warm climate, etc. The social life of her younger days she used to recall with regret; she gave one the idea that she had been a belle among her one-time acquaintances." Mr. and Mrs. Brontë commenced housekeeping in a three-storied stone-built house in Clough Lane; Hightown, Liversedge, there being no fixed parsonage. The house is still standing; the stones are blackened by the smoke of the district and the weather, but otherwise it is in good condition. The centenary anniversary of this Brontë wedding was celebrated the 29th of December, 1912, but, alas! there were no descendants to join in the celebration of the wedding of the parents of the famous novelists, but some of the love letters which Maria Branwell wrote to Patrick Brontë have been published in Mr. Shorter's *The Brontës: Life and Letters*. They are modest, sincere and sensible, and they show that the writer had the saving grace of humour; especially when addressing "My dear, saucy Pat."

Possibly Mrs. Brontë would have objected to her love letters being made public. Mrs. Gaskell was allowed to see them, but she refrained from publishing more than extracts.

Charlotte Brontë says she read them with a sense of reverence, regretting that she had but a dim recollection of her mother.

The marriage was fortunate in many respects, and, whatever may have been laid to the charge of Mr. Brontë in later years, the early years of his married life were happy and prosperous. He had a salary of some £320 per annum, which to him must have appeared both enough and to spare. He has been blamed for giving so much time to authorship during his early married life, to the neglect of his wife, but it is quite probable that she was ambitious and urged him to spend much of his time in his study, for, in one of her published letters, she says: "Let me not interrupt your studies, nor intrude on that time which ought to be better associated to better purposes."

The Rev. William Morgan, who lived not far away at Bradford, was also a writer, and the two young wives may have been anxious to have their husbands known for their literary output as well as for their preaching, for both clergymen were prolific writers, though their literary efforts were of little value. Mrs. Brontë seems to have cherished the desire of being an author herself, for she has left just one little essay on *The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns*, which was written with a view to publication in some periodical. It was reverently treasured by her husband, and it has now been published, after having been written nearly a hundred years ago.

Patrick Brontë must have enjoyed the part of *Shirley* which related to his first incumbency, for he loved to tell stories of those stirring times. In spite, however, of the tumult which surrounded Hartshead, he found time to prepare a small volume of poems, some of which were probably written in Ireland.

His volume of *Cottage Poems* is prefaced by a long didactic sermon to his readers, which makes rather amusing reading. His concluding remarks are written in the third person.

"The Author must confess, that his labours have already rewarded him by the pleasure which he took in them.

"When released from his clerical avocations, he was occupied in writing the *Cottage Poems*; from morning till noon, and from noon till night, his employment was full of real, indescribable

pleasure, such as he could wish to taste as long as life lasts. His hours glided pleasantly and almost imperceptibly by : and when night drew on and he retired to rest, ere he closed his eyes in sleep, with sweet calmness and serenity of mind, he often reflected that, though the delicate palate of Criticism might be disgusted, the business of the day, in the prosecution of his humble task, was well pleasing in the sight of God, and might, by his blessing, be rendered useful to some poor soul, who cared little about critical niceties, who lived unknowing and unknown in some little cottage, and whom, perchance, the Author might neither see nor hear of, till that day, when the assembled universe shall stand before the tribunal of the Eternal Judge. . . .”

In 1813, whilst still at Hartshead, Mr. Brontë published a second volume of poems, *The Rural Minstrel*, described as a miscellany of descriptive poems, by the Rev. P. Brontë, A.B., minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, near Leeds, Yorkshire. One of the poems is entitled *Lines addressed to a Lady on her Birthday*, which in this case was to his future wife, Maria Branwell. Probably Mr. Brontë lost money on his publishing ventures ; hence his warning to his daughter in later years.

Mr. and Mrs. Brontë lived at the tall house in Clough Lane, Hightown, for a little more than two years ; and their two daughters, Maria and Elizabeth, were born there.

In 1815 he removed to Thornton, some twelve miles away, exchanging livings with the Rev. Thomas Atkinson. One reason for the change was that his wife, who was delicate, wished to be nearer her cousin Jane, who had married the Rev. William Morgan, vicar of Christ Church, Bradford. Also her uncle, Mr. John Fennell, had joined the Church of England, and was a curate at the Bradford Parish Church. As Thornton was only some three miles from Bradford, it was possible for the relatives to meet frequently. Another reason suggested for the change was that the Rev. Thomas Atkinson, vicar of the Old Bell Chapel at Thornton and nephew of Hammond Roberson, was anxious to live near his fiancée, Miss Walker, of Lascelles Hall, which is a curious little hamlet near Huddersfield, and is well known to cricketers.

Mr. Atkinson married Miss Walker, but they did not go to the house vacated by the Brontës, preferring to rent a house known as Green House, Mirfield. It was to this house that Charlotte Brontë was invited when a pupil at Roe Head, Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson being her god-parents. When she was there during her first term at Roe Head, a visitor lifted her on her knee, thinking that Charlotte Brontë, who was very small for her age, was little more than a baby ; she at once requested to be put down, just as Polly did in *Villette*.

Elizabeth, the second daughter, was born on 8th February, 1815, at Clough Lane, Hightown, but was not baptised until the following 26th August at Thornton. The entry in the Register of Baptisms at Thornton Church is in very faint writing, which caused it to be overlooked for many years. Moreover, it was expected that the entry would be at Hartshead Church.

When Patrick Brontë left Hartshead in 1815, with his wife and two children—the younger only a few months old—he had made his reputation as a preacher, and was considered a scholar, as he had published two books.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE REV. PATRICK BRONTË AT THORNTON

1815-1820

HAPPY days at Thornton—Mrs. Gaskell's references to Thornton—Thornton parsonage—The Old Bell Chapel—St. James's Church—Birth of Charlotte, Patrick, Emily and Anne Brontë—Memorial tablet on the Thornton parsonage—Further publications by the Rev. Patrick Brontë—Nancy and Sarah Garrs.

REFERRING to his five years' residence at Thornton, Patrick Brontë wrote in 1835, "My happiest days were spent there." From an old diary, published by Prof. Moore Smith in the *Bookman*, October, 1904, and written by his grandmother, who, as Miss Firth, lived near the Brontës at Thornton in her early days, it is evident that both Mr. and Mrs. Brontë enjoyed themselves in a quiet way, visiting and receiving visits from the Firth family, who lived at Kipping, and from Mr. and Mrs. Morgan and uncle Fennell.

There were very few houses in Thornton at that time, so that Patrick Brontë would be able to get round to his parishioners fairly often ; he was always a faithful pastoral visitor. Miss Elizabeth Branwell, Mrs. Brontë's sister, spent several months at the Thornton parsonage in 1815 and 1816, and as she is constantly referred to in the diary, it is probable that she was responsible for some of the social intercourse between the Brontës and prominent families in the neighbourhood, and was able to render help to Mrs. Brontë in the management of her young family.

Thornton, as the birthplace of Patrick Brontë's famous children—Charlotte, born 21st April, 1816 ; Patrick Branwell, 26th June, 1817 ; Emily Jane, 30th July, 1818 ; and Anne, 17th January, 1820—had not received the recognition which it deserved, until Mr. William Scruton published a booklet on the birthplace of Charlotte Brontë in 1884, and fourteen years afterwards an interesting work on *Thornton and the Brontës*. The family, however, only lived in Thornton for five years, and there is little personal history to record, but

as the birthplace of the two famous sisters it deserves to rank as the first Brontë shrine. Mrs. Gaskell described the neighbourhood as "desolate and wild ; great tracts of black land enclosed by stone dykes, sweeping up Clayton heights." She and her husband drove from Bradford to Haworth by Thornton and Denholme. Except in the summer time or early autumn, the moors in this part of Yorkshire present a dreary appearance to a stranger, but to those who can see beauty in lonely grandeur the moors at all times are far from being so desolate as Mrs. Gaskell described them.

It is unfortunate that, in this matter, other writers have adopted Mrs. Gaskell's description, and the *New York Sun*, in reviewing Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, referring to this district at the time when Patrick Brontë lived there said : " It was a drear, desolate place, and that with the exception of the Fiji islanders, the Yorkshire people were, perhaps, the wildest and doggedest existing." The West Riding folk were naturally very indignant, and to this day they keenly resent Mrs. Gaskell's account of themselves and their district. They affirm that Yorkshire is much more civilised than Lancashire, and they contrast the beauties of the Yorkshire moors and dales with the slums not far from Mrs. Gaskell's home in Manchester.

It could not have been either the place or the situation that caused Patrick Brontë to speak of the happiness which he enjoyed in Thornton, for the district is much more bleak and desolate than Hartshead. Nor was the house an improvement, judging by the number of rooms and its position in Market Street. Moreover, St. James's Church—the Old Bell Chapel, as it was called—was not so pleasing an edifice as St. Peter's, Hartshead. The chief attraction which Thornton had for Patrick Brontë was of a social and family nature, and Bradford, within walking distance, had its subscription library, of which Mr. Brontë was a member. There were also in the neighbourhood of Thornton several influential families, who took an interest in the new vicar and his wife.

The district is far from prepossessing to-day. Thornton is now a busy manufacturing part of Bradford, with a population of from 6,000 to 7,000. It can be approached by train

or tram from Bradford. The huge woollen mills, which have supplanted the hand-loom—a mode of manufacture common for the previous 500 years—find work for the greater part of the people. Thornton was incorporated with the City of Bradford in 1899.

When Patrick Brontë went to live at Thornton, the people were mostly hand-loom weavers. Thornton Hall and Leventhorp Hall, both of which are still standing, though greatly altered and now turned into cottages, show that the district was not deserted by the wealthier classes. In Domesday Book Thornton is spelt Torenton—the town of thorns—and it is said to have got its name from the number of thorn bushes to be found in the neighbourhood. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane lives at Thornfield, and afterwards flees to Morton, which is Moor Town. Thornton is only six miles distant from Haworth, but it is less interesting, being more bleak and unsheltered. Charlotte Brontë, in her introduction to *Selections from the literary remains of Ellis and Acton Bell*, gives a very faithful picture of the district, which applies to Thornton as well as to Haworth: “The scenery of these hills is not grand—it is not romantic; it is scarcely striking. Long, low moors—with heath, shut in little valleys, where a stream waters, here and there, a fringe of stunted copse. Mills and scattered cottages chase romance from these valleys; it is only higher up, deep in amongst the ridges of the moors, that Imagination can find rest for the sole of her foot; and even if she finds it there, she must be a solitude-loving raven, no gentle dove.”

Though the hills are dreary and desolate, the valleys are not to be despised. Pinchbeck valley in summer time is a pleasant enough spot.

The Thornton Parsonage, to which Patrick Brontë and his family removed in 1815, was in many respects similar to the house at Hightown, near Hartshead. It was built of Yorkshire stone, quarried from the immediate neighbourhood, but it had not so many bedrooms and was only two storeys high. It is still standing in the middle of Market Street, and many Brontë pilgrims wend their way to this neighbourhood to see the house made famous as being the birthplace of their literary

heroine. The house has been altered, and in front of the room in which the four younger children were born a butcher's shop has been built. Fortunately the owner has spared the room in which Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne first saw the light. It stands on the ground floor to the right of the entrance. It was quite usual in those days to have a sort of state-room downstairs—half parlour and half spare bedroom—"where the children made their first appearance, and where the heads of the household lay down to die if the Great Conqueror gave them sufficient warning." Moreover, all the rooms in the upper part of the house were occupied, one as Mr. and Mrs. Brontë's bedroom, a small one as a dressing-room, another as Patrick Brontë's study, one small room at the back of the house as the children's bedroom, and another as the servant's bedroom. The room to the left of the entrance, on the ground floor, was the family dining-room, and behind this was the kitchen.

There is still to be seen the old fire-grate in which a fire was lit to take off the chill on that April morning in 1816 when Charlotte Brontë was born. An attempt was made to sell the house by public auction in the spring of 1911, but the owners were disappointed by the offers made, and it was withdrawn. The auctioneer remarked that he had expected a ship-load of Americans competing to purchase it. The Brontë Society was represented, but did not venture to offer such a price as would tempt the owners to part with it.

The Bell Chapel, to which Patrick Brontë was appointed in 1815, is now in ruins, and only one end of the old edifice is left standing in the midst of many blackened tombstones. It is close by the main road on which the trams from Bradford pass continually. Brontë pilgrims have worn a narrow path from the road to the ruins. Some have thought that the Bell Chapel at Thornton was the one in Emily Brontë's mind when she wrote *Wuthering Heights*. It was old and dilapidated at the time she was writing, and she and her sister, when walking over Denholme moors to Bradford, would pass the old chapel in which they were baptized. The churchyard in which Cathy, Edgar Linton, and Heathcliff were buried answers well to the description.



*Photo by*

# THORNTON VICARAGE

*Percival M. Chadwick*

Trial	Control (n = 10)	MCI (n = 10)	AD (n = 10)
1	85	75	65
2	80	70	60
3	75	65	55
4	70	60	50
5	75	65	55

When Catherine Linton was buried, Emily Brontë says of her grave: "It was dug on a green slope in a corner of the kirk-yard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat mould almost buries it."

This description fitted the Old Bell Chapel graveyard. The chapel itself was built by a freemason over 300 years ago. On the west gable were inscriptions on two stones, dated 1587 and 1612. The interior of the chapel at one time contained some ancient monumental tablets of local interest. The building itself had the appearance of a Dissenting chapel, except for the cupola and bell. When Patrick Brontë was appointed to the living at Thornton he made many alterations—re-roofing the chapel, rebuilding the south side, and adding a cupola to the tower.

Until a few years ago, a stone font might have been seen among the debris of the ruins of the chapel. A worthy devotee of the Brontës was instrumental in getting it transferred to the vestibule of the new church of St. James, which is built on the opposite side of the road. Within the church is another stone font of still earlier date. The opinion was expressed by an old inhabitant of Thornton that this font has been used for christening in the open air, but the present vicar thinks it is really an old holy-water stoup.

Until a short time ago there was to be seen at the "Black Horse," an old inn, not far from the church, a stone horse-mount, for the use of worshippers who attended church in the time of the pillion. The Old Bell Chapel was formerly the only place of worship connected with the Church of England between Haworth and Bradford. Both Haworth Church and Thornton Church were built as chapels-of-ease to the Bradford Parish Church, another chapel-of-ease being built at Low Moor, a few miles from Bradford.

The new church of St. James was built in 1870, and the present vicar, anxious for a new organ which should be worthy of the church, decided to appeal to the devotees of the Brontës. The project of a Brontë organ was taken up with great enthusiasm in Thornton, and ten working men offered to raise ten

pounds each—a promise which they were not long in fulfilling. The organ cost £1,200, and with the exception of one fifty pound note, which came from a former parishioner settled in America, the bulk of the money was raised in Thornton and the surrounding neighbourhood. It was a matter for disappointment to those who were responsible for the raising of the funds that more support was not obtained from the Brontë devotees who resided at a distance from Thornton. A small brass plate on the organ bears this inscription—

“ THE BRONTË MEMORIAL ORGAN  
1897 ”

In the vestry is an oak chest, which has been in use since 1685, and in it are the church registers, now almost undecipherable. One interesting volume contains the entry of the baptisms of the four children of Patrick Brontë, who were born at Thornton.

In 1902 the Council of the Brontë Society affixed an engraved brass memorial tablet on the old parsonage. It reads—

“ In this house were born the following members of the  
Brontë family.

CHARLOTTE 1816

BRANWELL 1817

EMILY 1818

ANNE 1820 ”

Although, according to Miss Firth's diary, Mrs. Brontë appears to have had some social enjoyment and exchanged visits with her neighbours, in company with her husband and her sister, Miss Elizabeth Branwell, she must have had a very busy life with her young family. Her second child was only a few months old when she went to Thornton, and before she left, five years afterwards, the family had increased to six. There was not a room in the house that could well be spared for a nursery. Miss Branwell, who was with Mrs. Brontë when Charlotte was born, and for some months afterwards, needed accommodation, and, with the general servant and nursemaid, there was a household of eleven in this little parsonage. Mrs. Brontë must have been a very capable manager for her husband to be able to say that his happiest



days were spent at Thornton. It was during his stay here that he published a small volume—*The Cottage in the Wood, or the Art of becoming rich and happy*—and he has also been credited with a story which formed another volume—*The Maid of Killarney, or Albion and Flora*, a tale, in which are interwoven some cursory remarks on religion and politics. No author's name is attached to the book. Altogether Patrick Brontë could now claim to be the writer of four small volumes ; they were, however, such that literature would not have been much the poorer if he had never published them, but they show evidence of a thoughtful mind, and if too didactic they are artless and sincere. In a small house filled with children, with a husband busy with writing and preparing sermons, Mrs. Brontë's task must have been by no means an easy one. It is noticeable that Mr. Brontë did not publish any poems after he lived at Thornton ; the muse from this point appears to have left him.

The old servants of the Thornton Vicarage—Nancy and Sarah Garrs—had nothing but kind remembrances of Mr. and Mrs. Brontë. Shortly after the family went to reside at Thornton, Mrs. Brontë felt it necessary to engage a second servant, and Mr. Brontë applied to the Bradford School of Industry. It was thus that Nancy Garrs became nurse in the Brontë family, and she was with Mrs. Brontë when Charlotte Emily Jane, Patrick Branwell, and Anne were born.

Nancy Garrs married a Patrick Wainwright, and the old nurse was proud in after years to tell how Patrick Brontë entered the kitchen one day at Haworth, saying : " Nancy is it true, what I have heard, that you are going to marry a Pat ? " " It is," replied Nancy, " and if he prove but a tenth part as kind a husband to me as you have been to Mrs. Brontë, I shall think myself very happy in having made a Pat my choice."

Nancy Garrs, like others who were associated with the Brontës in their early days, regretted that she had not a better memory to recall the doings and sayings of the little Brontës, but as the old servant would say pathetically : " I never thought they would have become so much thought of, or I

would have been sure to have taken more notice." Nancy's work of washing, dressing and feeding this young family left little time for observing the ways of the children, but, when they became famous as writers, her pride was very real. She continued with the family after Mrs. Brontë's death, and once when she was ill with fever in Bradford, Charlotte Brontë visited her and, regardless of infection, rushed to the bed and kissed her old nurse, bursting into tears to find her so ill.

Unfortunately, this faithful nurse died in the Bradford workhouse on 26th March, 1886, at the age of eighty-two, and she is buried in the Undercliff Cemetery.

Sarah Garrs, sister of Nancy Garrs, became second nurse at the Thornton parsonage as the family increased so rapidly. She afterwards became Mrs. Newsome, and emigrated to America, where she delighted to tell of her early days with the Brontë family. She claimed that her correct name was de Garrs.

These two servants; who accompanied the Brontë family to Haworth, considered they had been libelled by Mrs. Gaskell in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, where she wrote: "There was plenty, and even waste in the house, with young servants, and no mistress to look after them." Both sisters appealed to Mr. Brontë, when they found that they were publicly branded as wasteful, and the old vicar, in order to mollify their injured feelings, wrote out for them the following testimonial, which may be seen in the Brontë Museum.

"HAWORTH, August 17th, 1857.

"I beg leave to state to all whom it may concern, that Nancy and Sarah Garrs, during the time they were in my service, were kind to my children, and honest and not wasteful, but sufficiently careful in regard to food, and all other articles committed to their care.

"P. BRONTË, A.B.,

"Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire."

## CHAPTER V

HAWORTH

1820-1824

THE Rev. Patrick Brontë offered the incumbency of Haworth by the Vicar of Bradford—The trustees claim to share in the appointment—The Rev. Samuel Redhead—Disorderly scenes in Haworth Church—Mrs. Gaskell's account—Mr. Brontë's appointment as Vicar of Haworth—Journey from Thornton to Haworth—The Haworth parsonage—The Vicar's trials and difficulties—Haworth village—The Haworth moors—Haworth customs—The villagers and the publication of the Brontë novels—Changes at Haworth—Death of Mrs. Brontë.

AFTER five successful years as incumbent of the Old Bell Chapel at Thornton; Patrick Brontë was offered the perpetual curacy of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Haworth, which, like Thornton, was a Chapel of Ease to the Bradford Parish Church. It was distant from Thornton about six miles over the moors. This was the fourth Yorkshire church with which Patrick Brontë became associated.

The appointment as incumbent of Haworth was offered by the Vicar of Bradford, the Rev. R. H. Heap, who considered he had the right of presentation. The living was accepted by the Rev. Patrick Brontë, who was very much surprised shortly afterwards to receive a courteous letter from the trustees of the Haworth church, stating that they had no personal objection to him, but, as they had not been consulted about the matter, they must decline to accept him as their clergyman. They claimed a joint right with the Vicar of Bradford in appointing a minister, as it remained with them to provide a part of the stipend.

When this was brought to Mr. Brontë's notice, he withdrew his acceptance of the post, as he sympathised with the trustees and wrote urging them to hold out against the Vicar of

Bradford on his behalf, as otherwise they were in danger of obtaining "an inferior man." This assumption of his own superiority to other candidates was put in rather a simple way. His letters to the trustees are still in existence. This, as may be expected, smoothed his path when he subsequently became the clergyman at Haworth. Mrs. Gaskell, in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, did not get the exact facts of the case. She says: "Owing to some negligence, this right (of the trustees) has been lost to the freeholders and trustees at Haworth." The trustees, however, had not forfeited their rights, but still retained certain powers, and on the death of the Rev. James Charnock, who was the clergyman at Haworth from 1791 to 1819, they determined to enforce their rights.

After Mr. Brontë's withdrawal in June, 1819, there was a struggle between the Vicar of Bradford and the trustees of Haworth church, which lasted for nearly a year. During this interregnum, a Rev. W. Anderton officiated frequently, and in the following November the Rev. Samuel Redhead, who had often taken duty for Mr. Charnock during his illness, officiated at a funeral at Haworth church. It was this Mr. Redhead who was nominated for the living by the Vicar of Bradford after Mr. Brontë's withdrawal. He accepted the appointment, but was only allowed to attempt to officiate for three weeks, for the trustees were determined not to be coerced, and they were supported by the parishioners. Then ensued the disorderly scenes which gave Haworth an unenviable reputation for years. Some of the old inhabitants, whom the writer has questioned, were prepared to substantiate in the main Mrs. Gaskell's graphic account of the church riots, when Mr. Redhead insisted on carrying out his duties in the parish church. They take some of the sting somewhat out of the account by stating that the chimney-sweep, who clambered into the pulpit on the third Sunday, was half-witted, and not drunk, and referring to the wearing of clogs they maintain that the regular worshippers, and in fact the working people of the district, were in the habit of wearing *boots* on Sunday, and that the clogs were worn by the roughs, who had come from the neighbouring villages, and even from across

the Lancashire borders, and who were determined to make as much noise as possible when leaving the church.

Mr. Redhead became curate of Calverley, not far from Apperley Bridge, in 1823, and died in 1845. His memoir was published in 1846. Mr. Brontë was not anxious to refer to the riotous scenes of 1820, and when questioned by Mrs. Gaskell he merely said, "My predecessor took the living with the consent of the Vicar of Bradford, but in opposition to the trustees; in consequence of which he was so opposed that, after three weeks' possession, he was compelled to resign."

There is no doubt that the trustees of Haworth church were justified in their contention, as can be proved by documents in the possession of the rector of Haworth. The origin of the dispute goes much further back than the registers which are now in existence. The present rector of Haworth, the Rev. T. W. Story, M.A., wrote a series of notes on the old Haworth registers in the *Parish Magazine*; and later he published them in book form. He has searched the oldest registers, though he says in some cases they are only copies, and are in the eighteenth century characters and phraseology. From these documents he shows that Mrs. Gaskell, in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, was wrong when she said that Haworth church stands on what was most probably the site of an ancient (Saxon) field-kirk or oratory, and as she gives no evidence in support of her statement, it is most likely based on mere conjecture.

Mr. Story, to whom I am indebted for the particulars from his *Notes on the old Haworth registers*, says—

"The earliest reference to Haworth 'Chapel' in the Archbishop's Registers at York is 1317. A monition was then issued commanding the Rector and Vicar of Bradford and the freeholders of Haworth to pay to the Curate the salary due to him in the proportions to which they had been liable *from ancient times*. From this we may fairly conclude that a Chapel existed at Haworth considerably earlier than 1300. The Rector of Bradford was the owner of the 'great tithes,' the Vicar was his deputy and owner of the 'small tithes.' A

similar monition stating definitely the amounts due to the 'Curate' from the various sources was issued in 1320. The Rector of Bradford was commanded to pay twenty shillings, the Vicar of Bradford two marks and a half, and the inhabitants of Haworth one mark." *Archbishop Melton's Register*.

When chantries were confiscated in the first year of Edward VI, the whole income of the Haworth curacy appears to have been seized. How the curate was supported between that time and the second year of Queen Elizabeth does not appear, but at the latter date a public subscription was made in the parish by which a sum of £36 was raised. With this sum, several farms at Stanbury—the village adjoining Haworth—were purchased. The rents were to be paid by trustees to the curate of Haworth, but a clause was inserted in the deed, by which a condition was made that, if the trustees did not concur in the appointment, they had power to devote the income to the poor, until such time as an appointment was made in which they did concur. Therefore the appointment remained with the Vicar of Bradford, but the trustees held the purse, and could thus secure a share in the choice for themselves. Mr. Story says the document is a very long one.

It was the claim based on this ancient deed that caused the trouble when Mr. Brontë was first appointed to the "perpetual curacy of Haworth"; but this was not the only time when the trustees asserted their rights. After the death of the Rev. William Grimshaw in 1763 the then trustees, Robert Heaton and John Greenwood, warned the Archbishop of York against agreeing to an appointment apart from their concurrence, so that Mrs. Gaskell and other writers on the subject have been wrong in referring to the rights of the trustees as "a foolish claim to antiquity."

After Mr. Redhead's resignation, the Vicar of Bradford nominated other clergymen, but the trustees stood firm and refused to consider their appointment. Whilst this struggle was proceeding, Patrick Brontë wrote several ingenuous letters to the trustees, urging them to support his claim, he was evidently anxious to obtain the appointment. As he had

approved of the rights of the trustees being recognised, they concluded that the difficulty would be settled if they asked that Mr. Brontë should be appointed to the curacy. As the Vicar of Bradford had previously nominated Mr. Brontë, he agreed to their suggestion and the appointment was made. The letters which Mr. Brontë wrote to the Trustees at this time were read by the present Rector of Haworth a few years ago.

Mr. Brontë's appointment dated from 29th February, 1820, eight months after the beginning of the trouble between the trustees of Haworth church and the Vicar of Bradford.

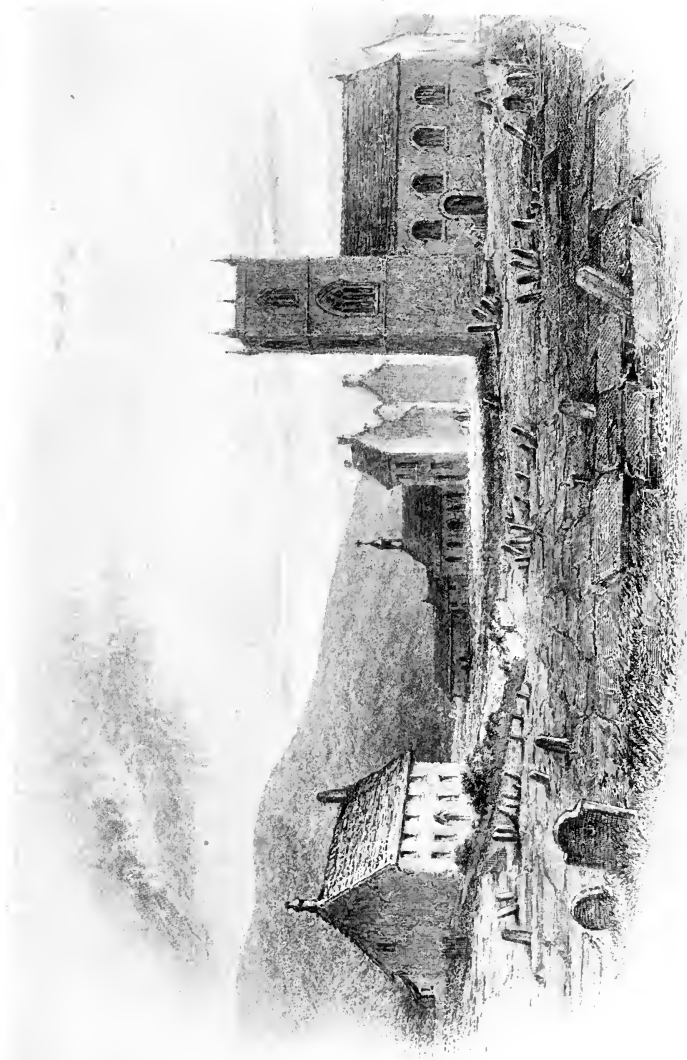
Considering the difficulties which had arisen in connection with the vacancy at Haworth church, it was necessary that the new Vicar should begin his duties as soon as possible, and no time was lost by Mr. Brontë. His wife and family, however, did not remove to Haworth until the following May or June, though more than one writer has pictured the wife and family driving in an open cart over the bleak moors between Thornton and Haworth in February or the early part of March. As a matter of fact, the journey was not in the cold weather. There is no doubt that Patrick Brontë would have some rough and cold journeys when walking from Haworth to Thornton during the first few months of his ministry at Haworth. The old inhabitants used to tell of the arrival at Haworth of the eight carts, seven containing the furniture, and a covered wagon containing Mrs. Brontë and her six little children, the eldest not seven years old and the youngest a few months old, Mr. Brontë walking by the side of the covered wagon, occasionally lifting one of the children from the conveyance in order to enjoy a little exercise, for the rate of progress along the rough moorland road would only be slow. The cavalcade toiled up Thornton Heights towards Denholme, and by way of Flappit Springs and Braemoor, reaching the steep Haworth main street late in the afternoon. The people were much interested in the procession, which wound its way round by the Black Bull, in front of the church gates, and up the narrow passage to the Haworth parsonage. Having left Thornton they entered their last home, which was

to become famous in later days because of the work done by two of the little girls in that family group.

The parsonage is still standing in the old churchyard, though it has been enlarged since the days of the Brontës, a new wing having been added, consisting of a dining-room with bedrooms above.

The house stands on high ground, and stretching behind are the moors from which most glorious sunsets may often be seen, even in November. The accommodation was scarcely sufficient for the Brontë family, though it was an improvement on the Thornton parsonage. One point in its favour was that it had a more retired position—the little garden in front was a more sheltered place for the children, and in many ways better than the street at Thornton, and it was also nearer the church. The house is not so desolate and depressing as it is usually depicted; the chief objection is the adjoining graveyard. The high stone wall with the little gate on the side of the Church Lane now screens it from the gaze of the passers-by, and, if Mrs. Brontë had not been delicate when she arrived, the family might have found great pleasure in the new home. The Haworth parsonage was a comparatively new house, having been built forty-eight years before Patrick Brontë and his family took possession. The previous vicarage had been some distance away on the moors, near what was known as Penistone quarry; it is still in existence under the name of Sowdens. There it was that the well-known William Grimshaw—the friend of Wesley—lived and died. On the left of the flagged passage of the parsonage leading from the front door was the combined dining and sitting-room, whilst on the right was Patrick Brontë's study. Over the sitting-room was the bedroom in which Charlotte Brontë died, and over the study was Mr. Brontë's bedroom. A small dressing-room without a fireplace, and measuring ten feet, including the window recess, by five feet nine inches, was used as the children's nursery or study in the early days; no wonder the six little Brontës developed consumption. Behind the two bedrooms were two other small rooms for the children and the servants. On the ground floor behind the vicar's study was the kitchen, whilst





HAWORTH CHURCH AND VICARAGE

1857

*From a drawing by Mrs. Gaskell*

**THE** **WORLD'S** **LARGEST**

**EXHIBITION**

the corresponding room behind the family sitting-room was a small lumber-room, sometimes used as a peat-house, which Charlotte Brontë tells us she afterwards cleared out and arranged as a study in 1854 for her husband, the Rev. A. B. Nicholls.

As the front door opens, it reveals the staircase, with its old oak bannisters; to the left is the corner in which Emily Brontë punished her favourite dog, Keeper. The house is full of memories, and the old-fashioned window seats remind readers of *Jane Eyre*, and of her partiality for hiding herself in the recesses of the windows.

The parsonage was built about 1774, but the old faded copy of the house-deed is extremely difficult to decipher, owing to the indistinct writing and abbreviations. This deed contains the same conditions with regard to the appointment of minister as the church-deed of 1559. Thus the parsonage does not come under the ordinary rules which are usually applied to rectories and vicarages, which have been conveyed absolutely, and it is not affected by the "Dilapidations Act" and other similar Acts. It is exceptional if not unique in this respect.

This, however, was not to the advantage of the tenant in Mr. Brontë's days, for he repeatedly drew the attention of the trustees to the insanitary condition of the house, but without any redress. There were certain rooms which then were damp and unhealthy. The old vicarage at Sowdens was much better situated, and it would have been healthier if the new vicarage had been built near the old one. There is a reference in one of the registers of the church to the old building. In 1763 is an entry made by a former minister—the Rev. Isaac Smith—the last in his beautiful writing—

"May 15th, 1739, at 6 o'clock in the Evening, the Houses in Haworth called the Parsonage were solemnly Dedicated and so Named, with Prayers, Aspersions, Acclamations, and Crossings by I.S.," etc.

The difficulties connected with his appointment to Haworth tended to make Patrick Brontë reserved and reticent in his dealings with the trustees and parishioners, and this is the true explanation of his somewhat unsociable habits at Haworth

compared with Thornton, where he was free and communicative, always feeling at one with the people, and even with the Dissenters, who were rather numerous and aggressive. An additional reason for his change of habit could be attributed to Mrs. Brontë's illness, which, shortly after leaving Thornton, was diagnosed as cancer. The result was that visitors could not be offered hospitality, and the young children had to be kept quiet for fear of disturbing the invalid mother. Had she been well and strong, the chances are that the whole family would have been more sociable, and the shyness, from which all except the son never escaped, would not have developed to such an extent that the sight of a strange face became a positive source of pain to the children, and caused them to suffer miserably from nervous self-consciousness. Whatever may have been said against Patrick Brontë in those days, his early life at Haworth was full of anxiety and trouble. The people of the district certainly deserved some of the censure which Mrs. Gaskell passed on them. In the church register is a notice concerning a meeting which Mr. Brontë called—

“Whereas a number of ill-behaved and disorderly persons have for a long period colleagued together not only to destroy the property but also to endanger the lives of the peaceful Inhabitants of the Township, in consequence of which Notice is hereby given that a Meeting will be held in the Vestry of this Church on Tuesday the 1st of January, 1822, at 2 o'clock in the Afternoon, in order to adopt such measures as may be conducive to Peace and Tranquility.”

Haworth is now a most peaceable and law-abiding place, and it is possible that the association which Patrick Brontë formed had something to do in changing the character of the district, but it is easy to see why he kept up the practice, which he had begun at Hartshead during the Luddite riots, of carrying a loaded pistol about with him. It lay on the dressing table at night, with his watch. In the morning he discharged it, and then re-loaded it, placing it in his pocket as he did his watch. He continued this custom to the end of his life, and, even on his death-bed, he sent for the local watchmaker to regulate the trigger.

Before the construction of the Worth Valley railway, the village was more or less isolated, and the villagers, especially the women, seldom travelled beyond the confines of their own borders. This isolation fostered a spirit of independence, which is still a characteristic of the people. Haworth is divided into two parts by the railway, which is almost parallel with the river Worth, thus avoiding any great engineering difficulties. The old part of Haworth consists of one long, steep street, the middle of which can be reached from the station by a rough cinder path, the incline towards the end being so great as to cause the casual visitor to pause in order to get breath for the rest of the journey. Vehicles from the station pass over the railway bridge and then begin to climb the hill to the church and West Lane on the summit. In order to assist the horses to get a footing, the stones which are used for paving the road are set edge-ways, and in descending the hill it is necessary for conveyances to use very powerful brakes. The opposite side of the valley from the station is known as The Brow; it is this part of Haworth which has developed in recent times, many substantial and well-built houses having been erected for the artisans who work at the large mills in this part of the parish.

The old houses and shops have been built close to the road, with no forecourt, and even many of the new houses, as is common in industrial districts, are only separated from the main road by a narrow footpath. Although land is cheap, little space is allowed for gardens, the somewhat bleak climate, and the long winter and comparatively short summer, not being very favourable to the cultivation of flowers or vegetables.

As the carts make their way up the hill, the driver may be seen firmly holding the bridle and exchanging greetings with the villagers at the doors of the houses. The windows of the old cottages are low and wide, since the front rooms were originally intended for a hand-loom. The ceilings are low, as is usually the case in cottages built during the early part of the nineteenth century. The West Riding of Yorkshire has long been famous for its woollen industry, and in the early days the hand-loom played a prominent part. One solitary

hand-loom remains in Haworth, and this is kept as a memento in a cottage on the moors, and was in use until last year, when "the owd weaver," Timmy Feather, died ; with him departed the hand-loom weaving of the Haworth district.

The old part of Haworth, with its houses dotted over the western slope of the hill, is connected with the moors by West Lane. The names over the shop doors are essentially Yorkshire, and are the same as many which appear in the Brontë novels.

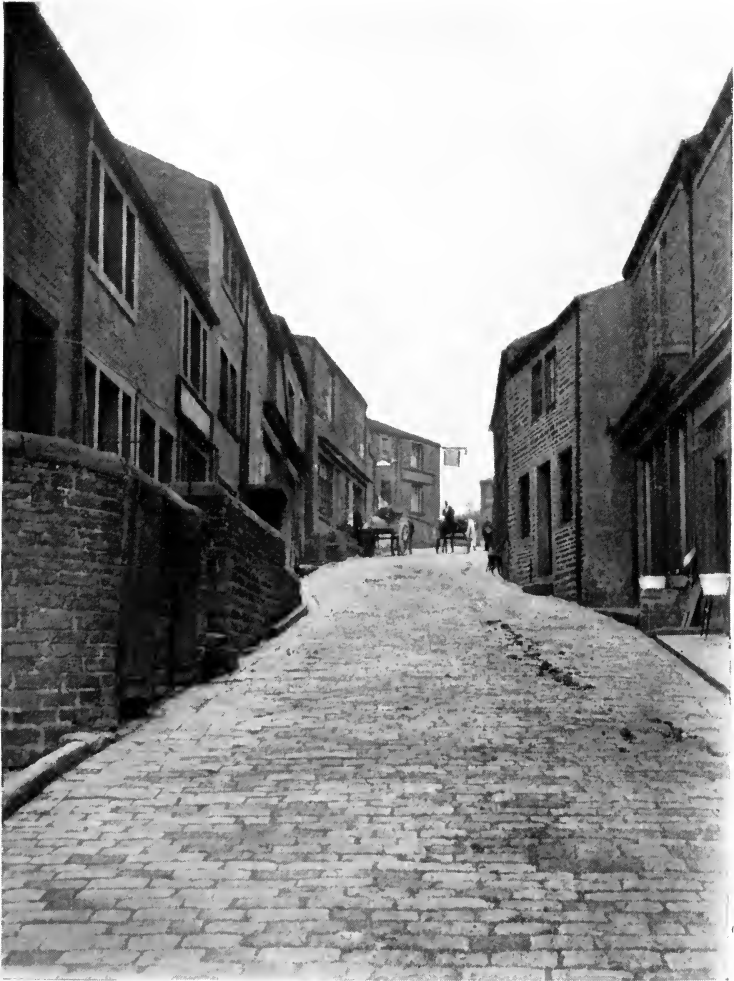
Mr. G. R. Sims having made a pilgrimage to Haworth in September, 1903, humorously described his visit in the *Referee*, much to the indignation of the villagers, for he describes Haworth as "the city of the dead." When the writer inquired about his visit a year or two afterwards, a sturdy native, adopting a menacing attitude, replied : " Yes he's been here once, and if ever he comes again he'll get mobbed ; we don't go to London and then return to Haworth and write skittish articles about Cockneys."

What struck Mr. G. R. Sims as very peculiar is not difficult for a Northerner to understand. At the top of the village street he saw a confectioner's shop with the announcement "Funeral teas." He entered, with the intention of appeasing his hunger and adding to his stock of local knowledge. Addressing the head of the establishment he remarked : " If you please, ma'am, I want a funeral tea."

" A funeral tea ! " exclaimed the astonished proprietress, curiously surveying the stranger ; " but there is no funeral to-day."

Mr. Sims, however, had set his heart on a funeral tea, and would not be denied ; he had never before heard of the expression, and was determined to find out what it meant. He insisted, therefore, upon being served with precisely the kind of tea which was supplied to a real funeral party ; and now he strongly recommends all Brontë admirers going to Haworth to have a *funeral* tea, assuring them out of the fulness of his experience that they will not forget it.

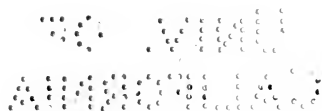
Patrick Brontë, with his knowledge of the funeral customs in Ireland, found no difficulty in complying with the wishes



*Photo by*

MAIN STREET, HAWORTH

*J. J. Stead*





of his Haworth parishioners at any funerals he conducted, for he describes very graphically an Irish wake in one of his books. Not only did he conduct the funeral service, but he frequently attended the meal which followed, departing as soon as the tea was finished.

Funerals in Haworth even in the poorest homes are conducted with the greatest reverence and decorum, though in several respects the old customs, which still survive, would possibly give a wrong impression to a stranger.

The Sunday school processions, followed by a tea, still take place at Haworth as they did in the Brontë days. In the diary of the Rev. Henry Nussey, kindly lent to me by Mr. J. J. Stead of Heckmondwike, is a description of a Yorkshire Sunday School Anniversary—

“Friday, Aug. 24th (1832). To-day the Church Sunday School Festival was celebrated. The ladies and gentlemen connected with the school, the teachers and children, met in the school at half-past one. A hymn was sung, and prayers were read by the Vicar, after which the prizes in books were distributed. All then proceeded to Church, where there was singing and an address from Mr. W. Heald, jnr., to parents, teachers, and scholars. They then walked round the village, and returned to the school, where they sung in the school-yard, and after this all the scholars were regaled, the girls with buns and tea, and the boys with buns, beer and porter. These were afterwards dismissed, and the ladies and gentlemen sat down with the female teachers, having had beer and porter, etc. At eight o'clock supper was introduced, consisting of the Old English cheer, roast beef, plum-pudding and good beer, to which from 80 to 100 sat down. The day then concluded with music and singing.”

There are even now a few inhabitants of Haworth who remember Charlotte Brontë presiding at one of the tea-tables, with her Sunday school scholars as her guests. She found the ordeal somewhat trying, and escaped as soon as possible. As the Yorkshire people say, “She took all in,” and the description of a Sunday school tea-party in *Shirley* abundantly proves how observant she was. Emily did not attend the village

tea-meetings, nor was she a teacher in the Sunday school, and yet she was a great favourite, and everybody loved her. She was the best looking of the three, and possibly her very reserve was an advantage to her, as she was brought less in touch with the inhabitants of Haworth, and consequently she had fewer opportunities of offending them, whilst Charlotte, as Sunday school teacher, day-school visitor and needle-work inspector, was considered to be very strict and particular in dealing with the children.

Good food and plenty has always been the rule in Haworth, and in this respect Haworth customs differ from those in *Cranford*, for "elegant economy" was not *de rigueur* in Haworth, though the villagers had, and still have, a real genius for saving money. Thrift is a virtue that everybody practises, and extravagance a weakness which finds no sympathy in that moorland village.

If thrift is in the blood of the natives, scrupulous cleanliness is the outside mark of virtue. Though the working people wear clogs, and shawls are used by the women as a covering for the head in no unpicturesque fashion, the homes are spotlessly clean. There is much to be said both for the clogs and the shawls in a district which gets an abundant supply of rain and wind, and where the by-roads are rough and heavy. As in *Cranford*, pattens are still worn by the women when *swilling* the flags in front of the house or the "yard" at the back, or when hanging out the clothes.

The old inhabitants of Haworth have always resented the account which Mrs. Gaskell gave of the village in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and they would like the earlier chapters in the book either entirely erased or re-written. Visitors come to Haworth to see the Brontë shrines with a firm prejudice against the place and the people, and there is no doubt that Mrs. Gaskell in some respects failed to appreciate much that was worthy both in the place and in the villagers.

The inscriptions on the graves in the old churchyard and cemetery bear evidence to the general healthiness of the locality, many octogenarians being buried there.

Mrs. Gaskell records the leaving of the doors open as a fault,

but, as the low windows in many cases were not made to open, it was to the credit of the people that they breathed the fresh air by the open door, and it certainly tended to their general good health and longevity. An open door, a good fire, winter and summer, which of itself facilitates the ventilation of the room most used, plenty of plain, wholesome food, with exercise up and down those rugged hills, and the sound sleep which followed, made the people a long-lived race. The village is built mainly on high ground, and is known for miles around as "Bonnie Haworth." Now the moors are known as a health resort, and visitors have difficulty in obtaining accommodation in August and September. As Charlotte Brontë says in *Shirley*, "Our England is a bonny land, and Yorkshire is one of her bonniest nooks."

Many who visit Haworth in the summer are charmed with the beauty of the moors, and are surprised to find the village very much better than they imagined from what has been written of it. The parsonage is far from being the miserable dreary place which it has been pictured. At the present time the graveyard is hidden by the bushy trees, and the garden and lawn are well kept. The old fruit trees and currant bushes which Emily tended so lovingly are gone. In the garden are the remains of the old stocks which used to be fixed near the church, but the "gate of the dead" through which the members of the Brontë family were carried, from the front door and along the garden, then through the gate into the churchyard, has disappeared. This gate was only used in the Brontë days for funerals from the parsonage. Mrs. Brontë was the first to be carried through, and Patrick Brontë was the last, with an interval of forty years.

There is still to be seen in the village the remnant of an old ducking-stool. It dates back to the time when women were occasionally treated with much barbarity. It is said to have been used in Haworth for brawling women and dishonest bakers. Mr. John B. Smith, the Wesleyan schoolmaster at Haworth during the Brontë period, had a picture which represented women being ducked in one of the ponds of the neighbourhood. Mr. Smith was one of those who lived in Haworth

when the identity of *Jane Eyre* was discovered, and as secretary of the Mechanics' Institute he wrote to Charlotte Brontë to tell her that, as an acknowledgment of her gift to the Institute of a copy of *Jane Eyre*, the committee had elected her a life member. Mr. Smith used to tell of Charlotte Brontë being prevailed upon "to take a tray" at the Institute soirée, and how she presided with quiet dignity—scarcely speaking to anyone but the faithful servant, Martha Brown, whom she had taken with her to assist in the serving. Mr. Smith attended Charlotte Brontë's funeral, and he was the possessor of several Brontë relics, amongst which was an old, well-thumbed Latin grammar, which had been used by Charlotte. This former Wesleyan schoolmaster was one of the first to acclaim Emily Brontë the greatest genius of this remarkable family, and his daughter was christened Emily Jane in remembrance of the author of *Wuthering Heights*.

Mrs. Gaskell mentions the musical talent of the people of the Haworth district. This is quite in keeping with the love of music so characteristic of Yorkshire people in general. The bracing air, and especially their broad, open vowel sounds, distasteful as they may be to very refined ears, offer a medium of voice-training which cannot be equalled in any part of the country, unless it be among the Welsh hills. Haworth has long been famous for its interest in music, especially among its industrial workers. Not being, as a class, specially interested in literature, they spend the long winter evenings in attaining proficiency either in singing or in the mastery of some musical instrument.

Mrs. Brontë's brief life in Haworth only extended over eighteen months, for, a few months after her arrival at the parsonage with her six little children, she was taken seriously ill, and the doctor declared her to be suffering from internal cancer. Charlotte had just one brief recollection of her, playing in the twilight with her only boy, in whom probably she took a greater pride than in her daughters.

Had the mother been well how different it might have been for those clever children, and yet their very sufferings seemed necessary to the completion of their lives; what they

learnt in suffering they gave forth in song. Had they not suffered, they might never have written anything worth adding to the world's literature. All that is known of Mrs. Brontë is that she was good, gentle and patient, and in her last trying illness her husband nursed her tenderly, and she has left on record that he never gave her an angry word.

The illness was hopeless from the first, and it is not to be wondered at that the house had to be kept very still, and the children got into the habit of moving about as quietly as possible.

Maria, the eldest, had to look after the others and help Nancy and Sarah Garrs as best she could. The old servants remembered how interested Mrs. Brontë was to the very last in her children, though she could only see them at intervals, and one at a time, as it upset her.

The younger servant taught the girls needlework, and Charlotte is credited with making a chemise at five years old, and when it was shown to the mother she was much pleased with her little daughter's neat work.

Mrs. Brontë died on 21st September, 1821, and the little gate at the end of the garden was opened to let the sad funeral through. All the Brontës except Anne are buried in Haworth.

Mrs. Brontë's illness had been sufficient excuse for lack of neighbourliness, and after her death the bereaved husband had little desire to enter into any society; his family needed all the time he could spare from his clerical duties, and the sociable Vicar of Thornton, who had enjoyed the little tea parties with his wife at Kipping, became a recluse, and his children had to find their pleasures on the moors, or in the kitchen with the servants, the father taking some of his meals in the little study, and giving lessons to his children there. It is not a matter for surprise that Mr. Brontë was sad, but in later years he became very popular in the district.

It was in these early days at Haworth that the children really began writing, for the father made a practice of telling them stories to illustrate a geography or history lesson, and they had to write it out the next morning. Consequently they thought it out in bed—a habit Charlotte continued all her life in connection with her stories.

## CHAPTER VI

### COWAN BRIDGE

JULY, 1824—JUNE, 1825

THE hamlet of Cowan Bridge—The Clergy Daughters' School—Memorial tablet—The Rev. W. Carus-Wilson—Mrs. Gaskell's account—Reasons for sending the Brontë children to the school—Miss Elizabeth Branwell—Death of Maria and Elizabeth Brontë—Schools associated with the Brontës—School life at Cowan Bridge—The school records—The Cove, Silverdale—Withdrawal of the children from the school—Tunstall Church—Correspondence in the press concerning Cowan Bridge School.

A VISIT to Cowan Bridge, where part of the Lowood School of *Jane Eyre* is still in existence, reveals a beautiful little hamlet near Kirkby Lonsdale. A drive from the hotel in Kirkby Lonsdale, where, in the old coaching days the conveyance in which the Brontë sisters travelled made its last halt, takes one over the Devil's Bridge, a narrow stone structure, which spans the river Lune, and after a quarter of an hour's drive Cowan Bridge is reached.

The descent from the bridge takes the traveller to the little hamlet of Cowan Bridge, nestling at the foot of the hill close by the river Leck, a small tributary of the Lune. The hamlet is divided by a bridge near what was once the garden of the Clergy Daughters' School.

Here was the first school to which the Brontë sisters were sent. It is a pleasant spot even to-day; the trees shelter the cottages, and the high hills protect the place from the east wind.

Through Cowan Bridge the Leeds and Kendal coach used to pass, and in the days when the Brontës were there it was busier than now, for not only did the stage coaches pass to and fro, but the pack-horses were constantly on the road, taking the wool from the outlying districts to Leeds and Bradford. The little stream, with the huge stones in its bed, flowing past the old school, Charlotte Brontë described as her favourite spot when at Cowan Bridge. Along its banks she used to

wander, frequently taking off her shoes and stockings and wading in its waters. Here she was free from intrusion, and could enjoy her broken day dreams.

In later years she told Mary Taylor how she enjoyed this beautiful spot, sitting on a stone in the middle of the stream. Mary told her she should have gone fishing, but she replied that she had no inclination.

When visiting Cowan Bridge on the anniversary of Charlotte Brontë's admission to the school it was interesting to find a commemorative medallion had been fixed on the gable-end of the cottages, which once formed the rooms for the teachers of the school. On the medallion are the names of the four Brontë sisters, with the dates of their stay at the school.

“ AT THIS SCHOOL

MARIA

ELIZABETH

CHARLOTTE

EMILY

DAUGHTERS OF THE REV. P. BRONTË  
WERE EDUCATED IN 1824-1825 ”

A large sycamore tree overhangs the end cottage, and on the opposite side of the road is a small house, now known as Lowood Cottage. It was formerly the Rev. W. Carus-Wilson's stable and coach-house; he was the founder of the Clergy Daughters' School, and known in *Jane Eyre* as the black marble clergyman—Mr. Brocklehurst. In addition to being the manager of the school, he was vicar of two parishes, Tunstall and Whittington, which were a few miles apart.

Formerly the old part of the school consisted of one house, at one time the residence of an old Yorkshire family of the name of Picard. This building was purchased in 1824 by Mr. Carus-Wilson, who adapted it as a residence for the teachers of the school. At right angles to this he added a long building for a school-room and dormitories for the pupils. Mrs. Gaskell made a mistake, which many writers on the Brontës have copied, when she said that this part of the school had once been a factory for the manufacture of bobbins from the wood of the alder trees which were abundant in the neighbourhood.

It was converted, eight years after it was built, into a bobbin factory, when the Clergy Daughters' School was removed to Casterton, some two or three miles away on the higher ground.

Charlotte Brontë gives her own graphic description of Cowan Bridge in *Jane Eyre*, as she remembered it, twenty-two years after she left.

It is a pity that Mrs. Gaskell and other writers have commented only on Charlotte Brontë's description of Lowood in winter, for during her stay from August, 1824, to June, 1825, she had the benefit both of the autumn and the spring. The garden was always a source of attraction to her—

"The garden was a wide enclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect; a covered verandah ran down one side, and a broad walk bordered a middle space divided into scores of little beds: these beds were assigned as gardens for the pupils to cultivate, and each bed had an owner."

In these days, when it is considered quite a modern movement to interest children in rural and suburban schools in gardening, it is well to remember that nearly ninety years ago the pupils at this school for clergymen's daughters were encouraged to keep a small plot of garden in good order, so that they might be interested in such work, and have their powers of observation improved.

Why and how these children of the Haworth vicar came to be pupils at the Cowan Bridge School is easily explained. Mrs. Brontë had been dead for three years. Even before her death, if a Thornton authority may be trusted, Maria, Charlotte's elder sister, when only seven years of age, had been accustomed to walk from Thornton to Bradford with her father and, perched on a high stool at the printer's office, had frequently helped to correct the proofs of his books. This wonderful child was able to converse with her father on any leading topic of the day with as much freedom and pleasure as a grown person—so Mr. Brontë informed Mrs. Gaskell. After the mother's death Maria had to act as house-mother, assisting in the education of the five younger children, and keeping the nursery in order.





COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

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But it is evident that Maria was too young to superintend the home ; the children needed some one to take their mother's place, and Mr. Brontë certainly did his best to provide a suitable stepmother. He appealed to Miss Elizabeth Branwell, his wife's elder sister. Having known Mr. Brontë through her visits to Thornton, and having a very sincere interest in her sister's children, she left her home in Penzance for ever, and came "with her best japanned dressing-box, her inlaid work-boxes, her fashionable dresses, and big fancy caps" to cold, bleak Haworth, in order to fulfil what was said to be a sacred promise to her dead sister to look after her nephew and five nieces. Although Miss Branwell had charge of the Brontë home for about twenty years, either she had no intention at first of remaining at Haworth or she found the task too great, for about this time Mr. Brontë proposed to Miss Firth, a lady of means, and a good friend of the Brontës when living at Thornton. She was also the godmother of the second and youngest daughters. But Mr. Brontë was unsuccessful, though Miss Firth always took an interest in the Brontës, even after she married the Rev. Charles Franks of Huddersfield, and in her diary, which is still in existence, she states that, when on her honeymoon, she visited Maria, Elizabeth and Charlotte Brontë at Cowan Bridge School, and gave each of them half-a-crown. Mr. Brontë then approached Mary Burder, his old sweetheart of the Wethersfield days, who was still unmarried, a pleasant, homely woman of thirty-eight.

It was in 1823 that Mr. Brontë wrote to Mary Burder and, as Mr. Birrell says, "besought her to be his wife and the mother of his six motherless children." The correspondence which passed between Mr. Brontë and Mary Burder, after the death of Mrs. Brontë has recently been published by Mr. Shorter in *The Sphere*. From these letters it is evident that Mary Burder considered that she had not been treated honourably by Patrick Brontë when a curate at Wethersfield, and she unhesitatingly refused to entertain his proposal in 1823. His first letter is dated April 23rd, 1823, and was directed to Mrs. Burder, and in it he tells the story of his life since leaving Wethersfield, entering into detail with regard to his position

at Haworth. The second letter was to Mary Burder herself, and was dated July 28th, 1823, and in it he requests permission to call upon her, after referring to the death of his wife and to his "*small but sweet* little family," and adding "I must say that my ancient love is rekindled." The reply, which was long and dated August 8th, 1823, was not only a refusal, but one couched in such terms as must have surprised Patrick Brontë. She thanks Providence which "withheld me from forming in very early life an indissoluble engagement with one whom I cannot think was altogether clear of duplicity."

After an interval of eighteen months, Mr. Brontë again requested permission to wait upon her, but in the meantime Mary Burder had married the Dissenting minister of Wethersfield, and the letter remained unanswered.

After Mr. Brontë's failure to obtain a wife, he appears to have given up all ideas of matrimony and Miss Branwell took her place as housekeeper in the home; she had an income of fifty pounds a year, and preferred to pay her own expenses, so as not to add to the burden of the household. She had the mid-Victorian woman's respect for "the cloth," and it is said she agreed better with men than with women, enjoying the visits of the neighbouring clergy.

She was never popular with the servants, and the children were not in the habit of regarding her with affection, for she was prim, severe, and "a bit of a tyke," as one of the servants told me. All her ideas were fixed when she came to Haworth, and it was difficult for her to fit in with this strange household. She thought her nieces peculiar to prefer books and animals to new dresses and gossip. These girls puzzled her, remembering her own happy days in Penzance. Her nieces were awkward and shy. Elizabeth, her namesake, was gentle like the Branwells: Maria was untidy: Charlotte was most excitable and hot-tempered: Emily had "the eyes of a half-tamed creature," and cared for nobody's opinion, only being happy with her animal pets. Miss Branwell found her greatest joy in baby Anne, and in the handsome Branwell, who was to be the pride of the family.

Those who once remembered her told the writer that she

was never to be seen without a shoulder shawl, and several of these shawls are still in existence. Shades of purple and mauve were her favourite colours. Her caps, if large, were always dainty, and her dresses good and becoming—a black silk being her favourite for afternoon wear. Fine dresses were not suitable for the stone floors and rough roads of Haworth, but in order to keep her dainty shoes dry and avoid the damp floors she was in the habit of wearing pattens, much to the annoyance of her nieces, whose sensitive nerves were irritated by the constant and peculiar click of the iron rings on the stone floors. Though the children—except, perhaps, Anne and Branwell—never came to love her, they respected her, and her word was law.

Miss Branwell deserves praise for her housekeeping and the careful training which the Brontë girls received in domestic arts especially needlework. Her bedroom became the training-ground, where they stitched and mended their clothes, and learned how to darn neatly and knit their own stockings, whilst in the kitchen they learned to cook, make bread, and manage the ironing of the household linen. Miss Branwell's bent towards the practical side of life was of great advantage in a home where the daughters possessed such highly developed imaginative powers. The careful management of the household relieved Mr. Brontë from much anxiety, and he appreciated Miss Branwell's desire "to maintain her dignity" by paying her own personal expenses. The old servants said she took most of her meals in her own bedroom, which was really a bed sitting-room, and Mr. Brontë decided to have his chief meals in his study. The six children were thus left very frequently to get their meals in the kitchen with the servants, so that the family sitting-room was left neat and clean to receive the clergymen and their wives when they called at the vicarage.

It was at this time that Patrick Brontë tried the experiment of testing his children's reasoning powers by setting them to answer questions without any previous preparation. It was with pardonable pride that he wrote to Mrs. Gaskell an account of an examination he gave them, when she was preparing the biography of Charlotte.

When Miss Branwell had been with the family about a year, all the children were very ill ; the two older girls—Maria and Elizabeth—had measles, followed by whooping-cough. The younger ones caught the infection, but in a milder form.

On the 30th of January, 1824, a school was opened at Cowan Bridge, known as *The Clergy Daughters' School*. Both Maria and Elizabeth Brontë were promised as pupils, but their illness prevented them from attending when the school was opened, and their aunt, anxious to send them with plenty of good underclothing, kept them at needlework, as the faithful servant, Nancy Garrs, declared, instead of allowing them to walk on the moors, and thus regain their health, as the four younger children did.

Mr. Brontë was much relieved by the opening of the Cowan Bridge School, for he found it difficult to supervise the education of his children, and keep pace with his church duties. Miss Branwell was also beginning to feel the strain of superintending this large household.

There is not the slightest doubt that Mr. Carus-Wilson, the founder, was anxious that the school should prove useful, and supply a long-felt need. The prospectus sent out stated the terms for education, board and lodging, and, as these were very low, several clergymen in different parts of England eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity of securing a good training for their daughters.

The Rev. Patrick Brontë seems to have been anxious to secure his elder daughter's admission to the school at the earliest possible time, and Maria and Elizabeth were sent there at the beginning of the second quarter, in July, for in those days there were four terms to the school year. The superintendent of the school hesitated to admit the two Brontës, who had not sufficiently recovered from their illness to warrant their mixing with the other scholars of the school. Instead of being sent to school they needed a long holiday, which the aunt and the father ought surely to have known. It is quite possible, however, that it was thought a change of air would be beneficial, and that they would be better in the sheltered valley of Cowan Bridge than in the bleak and breezy Haworth.

Mr. Brontë not only took his two girls himself by the coach which they joined at Keighley, but he slept and had his food at the school for the night, and no doubt left quite satisfied in his mind with the food and accommodation.

The reputation of every school associated with the Brontës has been branded as with hot irons—Cowan Bridge, perhaps, faring the worst. Charlotte Brontë spoke of Miss Wooler's school at Dewsbury as "a poisoned place for me," and Law Hill, where Emily was for two and a half years, as a place of slavery—"hard work from six in the morning to eleven at night." The *pensionnat* at Brussels suffered considerably as being a school where craft and espionage were practised by the head-mistress. Similarly the homes in which the Brontë sisters were employed as governesses were also blemished: Stonegappe, where Charlotte was engaged by Mrs. Sidgwick, was miserable: Upperwood, Rawdon, where Charlotte lived for some time, was a prison; Anne's stay at Blake Hall and the rectory of the Rev. Edmund Robinson yielded nothing but thorns. Branwell was dismissed from Thorpe Green, and in his case the fault was attributed to his employers.

Much sympathy has been expended on the Brontë children on account of the hard times which they experienced, and yet pupils who were at the same schools at the same time had a very different tale to tell. That the schools of nearly a century ago differed from those of to-day is certain, but they were not wholly bad, though the methods were frequently more mechanical, and the treatment of the children less sympathetic than is usual to-day. Almost every child in those times could remember cases of injustice, and even of ill-treatment, especially when judged by the standards of a later period. The day of the child had not arrived, nor had the country awakened to the fact that the child was the nation's greatest asset.

The Brontës were never adapted for school life; they were shy, awkward, and reserved, and unable or unwilling to join in the games. Their minds had been fed on the books in their father's library, including what Charlotte called *Mad Methodist*

*Magazines* from Penzance. In this and in other ways, they were ill-prepared to benefit by their school life at Cowan Bridge. In addition they were delicate, with more than average brain power and yet feeble bodies, which left them with unstrung nerves and a temperament such that they were seldom in a happy frame of mind. Their happiest moments were when they were rambling over the moors, away from the sound of human voices. There they could be themselves—playing in the brook, peeping into the hedge-sparrow's nest, swinging on the low branches of the trees, or lying on the grass gazing on the sky, which they were fond of doing by day, and star-gazing at night. It is necessary that the outlook of these uncommon children should be considered, before blaming their teachers or employers.

Charlotte Brontë describes the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in *Jane Eyre*, under the name of Lowood. In that description there is much that is true, and there is also much that is untrue. The two Miss Brocklehursts, who were said to be "dressed grandly," and who called at the school to see the children at Lowood, are represented as the daughters of the superintendent, Mr. Brocklehurst. These ladies could not possibly represent the daughters of the Rev. W. Carus-Wilson, whose little girls were at that time in the nursery, and yet everyone knows that "the black marble clergyman" was intended for Mr. Carus-Wilson; and they take it for granted that the grandly dressed ladies were his daughters.

The harm that Charlotte Brontë did to the school, by her version in *Jane Eyre*, was extremely small, and whatever ill-feeling may have been roused had died down by 1857, when Mrs. Gaskell published the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Her account was unjust, and it served no good purpose to revive the trouble, for, while a certain amount of licence is always allowed to a novelist, it was a different matter when the statements reflecting on the school were given in the "Life," which had to deal with facts.

Mrs. Gaskell was certainly hard on the founder of the Institution, Mr. W. Carus-Wilson, and although she knew that Charlotte Brontë regretted having written what she did,



when the place had been identified, Mrs. Gaskell made matters worse by calling attention to a worthy institution, which had been unfortunate in its management in the early months of its existence. Her statements were not always accurate, as may be seen, for instance, in the dates she gives for the arrival and departure of the Brontë girls; in fact, in checking Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, one cannot help feeling that in some respects she failed to exercise ordinary care in her research work. Had she asked to see the admission register of the school, she would have saved Mr. Brontë from some abuse and seeming want of consideration for his children. Though the school was transferred to Casterton, in 1832, owing to the inadequacy of the Cowan Bridge premises, the old register is still in existence, and it is there stated that Maria Brontë, aged ten years, and Elizabeth, aged nine years, were admitted to the school on 21st July, 1824. Maria left in ill-health on 14th February, 1825, gradually wasting away until she died on 6th May, 1825. Elizabeth left on 31st May, 1825, and died, owing to the same cause, on 15th June, 1825.

Mrs. Gaskell conveys the impression that both died of typhoid fever as the result of the unhealthiness of the school. From the dates previously mentioned, it is seen that Maria was at home for three months before her death. As a matter of fact, neither of the Brontë children had fever. Strange to say, Mrs. Gaskell mentions that Maria died a few days after Mr. Brontë brought her home by the Leeds coach. Elizabeth died nearly six weeks after her sister, though she did not arrive at home until nearly a month after Maria's death. It is plain to see that Mrs. Gaskell fixed some of her dates by *Jane Eyre*, taking it for granted that the treatment of Helen Burns was literally true.

Referring to the harsh treatment which Maria—the Helen Burns of *Jane Eyre*—received whilst at school at the hands of Miss Scatcherd, who was early identified as a Miss Andrews—one of the teachers of the school—Mrs. Gaskell says—

“I only wonder that she (Charlotte) did not remonstrate against her father's decision to send her and Emily back to Cowan Bridge, after Maria's and Elizabeth's deaths.”

This not only reflects on the school, but also would indicate, if accurate, most callous conduct on the part of Mr. Brontë and the aunt, Miss Branwell. It was a fact that a low fever had broken out at the school in the Spring, when Maria and Elizabeth were first taken seriously ill, and though they did not take the fever, they were so ill that they had to return home; but to the honour of Mr. Brontë, not only did he not send Charlotte and Emily back to Cowan Bridge School, but such was his anxiety at losing one daughter, and receiving another almost in a dying state, that he sent, or probably went himself, for Charlotte and Emily and brought them home the very next day after Elizabeth's return, keeping all his children at home for the following six years, teaching them scripture and secular subjects generally, whilst Miss Branwell was responsible for their progress in needlework and housewifery. It may be suggested that Mr. Brontë should have protested against Mrs. Gaskell's reflection on his conduct in connection with this Cowan Bridge incident, but it must be remembered that, when *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* was written, he was an old man of over eighty years of age, and not likely to be much concerned to defend his character. It is a pity that in subsequent editions the error has been repeated, for many writers on the Brontës have continued to make this charge against Mr. Brontë until it has become to be considered the absolute truth. The old register shows that Charlotte, aged eight, entered the school on 10th August, 1824, and left on 1st June, 1825, and Emily, aged six and a quarter, became a pupil on 25th November, 1824, and was withdrawn on 1st June, 1825, with her sister—neither of them returning again to Cowan Bridge.

There is a report in the admission register for each of the Brontë children, opposite to their names. This can still be seen by the courtesy of the Governor of The Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton—

"Maria Brontë, aged 10½ (daughter of Patrick Brontë, Haworth, near Keighley, Yorks), July 21st, 1824: Reads tolerably. Writes pretty well. Ciphers a little. Works very badly. Knows a little grammar, geography and history. Has

made some progress in reading French, but knows nothing of the language grammatically. Left February 14, 1825, in ill-health, and died May 6, 1825."

It is no wonder that the child worked badly, by which is probably meant that her needlework was inferior. As her mother died in 1821, she had been a little drudge to her younger sisters. She was the only child of the family that could remember much of Mrs. Brontë; it had fallen to her lot to keep the younger children quiet in the little fireless box-room next to the mother's sick room. "Those who knew her then described her as grave, thoughtful, and quiet, to a degree far beyond her years. Her childhood was no childhood."

The school record of Elizabeth Brontë, of whom we know the least, reads—

"Elizabeth Brontë, age 9. (Vaccinated. Scarlet fever. Whooping cough.) Reads little. Writes pretty well. Ciphers none. Works very badly. Knows nothing else. Left in ill-health, May 31, 1825. Died June 15, 1825, in decline."

There is little to tell of Elizabeth, but the teacher, Miss Evans—the Miss Temple of *Jane Eyre*—wrote to Mrs. Gaskell saying—

"The second, Elizabeth, is the only one of the family of whom I have a vivid recollection, from her meeting with a somewhat alarming accident, in consequence of which I had her for some days and nights in my bedroom, not only for the sake of greater quiet, but that I might watch over her myself. Her head was severely cut, but she bore all the consequent suffering with exemplary patience, and by it won much upon my esteem. Of the two younger ones (if two there were) I have very slight recollections, save that one, a darling child, under five years of age, was quite the pet nursling of the school."

This last would be Emily; Charlotte was considered the most talkative of the sisters—a "bright, clever little child."

Charlotte Brontë's report is interesting—

"Entered school August 10, 1824. Writes indifferently. Ciphers a little, and works neatly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Altogether clever of her age, but knows nothing systematically. Left school June 1, 1825. Governess."

Emily Brontë's report reads as follows—

"Entered Nov. 25, 1824, age 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ . Reads very prettily, and works a little. Left June 1, 1825. Subsequent career, governess." The age should have been 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ .

She appears to have received good reports in every case from her schools.

For each of the four children Mr. Brontë paid on entrance £7, and £4 for books and clothing, and in 1825, £7 for three of the girls, £3 for French and Drawing for Maria, and £1 14s. 8d. for extra clothing, besides 18s. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for "clothes for Miss Charlotte," and 13s. for Emily.

When Maria was sent home ill she travelled under the care of Mrs. Hardacre, and in the school account book appear these items—

Elizabeth's fare home, guard and coachman .	13	0
Mrs. Hardacre's fare . . . . .	18	0
Horse, gig, pikes and men . . . . .	2	6
Mrs. Hardacre's bed at Keighley . . . . .	1	0
2 letters . . . . .	1	4 $\frac{1}{2}$

It was the custom at the Clergy Daughters' School to ask for the prospective career of each girl when she entered the school. Much has been said of the touching, but harrowing description of the death of Helen Burns (Maria Brontë). Mrs. Gaskell says—

"I need hardly say that Helen Burns is as exact a transcript of Maria Brontë as Charlotte's wonderful power of reproducing character could give."

That could hardly be true, as Charlotte did not leave school until three weeks after Maria's death, but it is very probable that the description of the death of Helen Burns is really founded on that of Elizabeth, as Charlotte was at home during the last fortnight of Elizabeth's illness. Only Anne and Branwell were at home when Maria died, and Anne was too young to remember it, but Branwell never forgot it; he mentions his sister's death years afterwards, and he wrote a poem to her memory, entitled *Caroline*.

The letter from Miss Evans to Mrs. Gaskell, just quoted, tells of Elizabeth on one occasion being cared for in her bedroom,

and in *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë relates a similar incident concerning Helen Burns, who is supposed to have died at school in the arms of Jane Eyre. In later years, Charlotte Brontë told her fellow-pupils at Roe Head of the effect which the death of her sister Elizabeth had on her.

Mrs. Gaskell made too much of the Cowan Bridge School, and the first part of the biography of Charlotte Brontë goes far too much into detail, as if the writer was afraid that she would not have sufficient material for the work. It is clear that Mr. Brontë intended that Charlotte and Emily would return to school, for his account was not closed till Sept. 23, when he was allowed an abatement of nearly £7 on Maria's and Elizabeth's account, and £5 2s. 4d. for clothing.

It is only fair to the memory of Charlotte Brontë to quote what she said to Mrs. Gaskell—

“Miss Brontë more than once said to me, that she should not have written what she did of Lowood in *Jane Eyre*, if she had thought the place would have been so immediately identified with Cowan Bridge, although there was not a word in her account of the institution but what was true at the time when she knew it; she also said that she had not considered it necessary, in works of fiction, to state every particular with the impartiality that might be required in a court of justice, nor to seek out motives, and make allowances for human feelings, as she might have done, if dispassionately analysing the conduct of those who had the superintendence of the institution. I believe she herself would have been glad of an opportunity to correct the over-strong impression which was made upon the public mind by her vivid picture, though even she, suffering her whole life long, both in heart and body, from the consequences of what happened there, might have been apt, to the last, to take her deep belief in facts for the facts themselves—her conception of truth for the absolute truth.”

If it be granted that Charlotte Brontë considered her own case as bad as it was represented in *Jane Eyre*, it must be remembered that the hardship from the cold weather could only refer to the winter months. She went to the school

on 10th August, and generally the autumn in that part of Yorkshire is the best time of the year.

The founder of the school—the Rev. W. Carus-Wilson—had charge of two churches, with two residences, one at Casterton Hall, near Tunstall, and one at Silverdale, a few miles away. Though not really a wealthy man, he had ample means, and was generous to the school, which only started with sixteen pupils, though Mrs. Gaskell gives nearly a hundred as the number. As a fact, until the time when Charlotte Brontë left in June, 1825, only fifty-three girls had been admitted, and the fees would, consequently, not by any means cover the expenses, so that it was necessary to ask for subscriptions towards the cost of maintaining the school.

At "The Cove"—Mr. W. Carus-Wilson's sea-side home at Silverdale—the children from the Clergy Daughters' School sometimes passed their holidays, and whilst pupils at Cowan Bridge, Charlotte and Emily Brontë were sent to this beautiful old house on the shores of Morecambe Bay. In the house is a room, known as "The Brontë room," which is kept just as it was when Charlotte Brontë occupied it as a bedroom. One of the two windows overlooks a fine lawn. A relative of Mr. W. Carus-Wilson informed the writer that Charlotte and Emily Brontë were sent there on 31st May, 1825, the day when their sister, Elizabeth Brontë, left Cowan Bridge School, owing to her serious illness. It was said that the Rev. Patrick Brontë was so alarmed when his daughter arrived at the Haworth Vicarage, that he set off post haste and brought the other two daughters from "The Cove" to Haworth. This would account for the statement that Charlotte never saw the sea until years later, although the waves, at high tide, washed against the walls of the garden at "The Cove," but the windows in the Brontë bedroom look in an opposite direction. Charlotte saw the sea for the first time at Bridlington, when she visited that sea-side resort in company with Ellen Nussey.

Not more than ten minutes walk from this house is the Lindeth Tower—now known as the Gibraltar Tower—where, thirty-one years later, Mrs. Gaskell wrote the "Life" of this quiet little girl, who spent just one night in Silverdale.

Charlotte Brontë retained for nearly twenty years a lively recollection of her first journey from Haworth, when she was but eight years old. It would be necessary to rise early to catch the Leeds and Kendal coach as it passed through Keighley. It is very probable that her father accompanied her as far as Keighley, and her two sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, would be ready to receive her at the Cowan Bridge School.

From Keighley the coach would go by Skipton and Eshton Hall where Miss Currer lived. She was noted for her great collection of books, probably the envy of Charlotte Brontë who, when anxious to find a *nom de guerre* to hide her identity, chose Currer as her first name. From Eshton Hall, the coach would proceed through Giggleswick to Ingleton, at the foot of Ingleborough. To the little traveller, having seen little beyond Haworth, some of these places through which the coach passed would appear almost like important towns.

In 1857, when the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was issued, there were many letters in the press concerning the treatment of the little Brontës whilst staying at the Cowan Bridge School. That Mr. Carus-Wilson made several mistakes in the early days is not to be wondered at, and that he was very strict and narrow concerning religious matters was only in keeping with the times. Some of those subjects, such as "hell fire," "sin" and "future punishments," were the common theological questions of the day, and the Brontës only fared as many children did in the majority of the Sunday Schools of the land.

The school still keeps the founder's day on the anniversary of the birthday of Mr. Carus-Wilson, 7th July. A white marble tablet is placed in the church to his memory, and his grave in the churchyard is seldom without flowers. Admirers of the Brontës often visit Casterton, expecting to find it the original of Lowood, which is four miles away. Charlotte Brontë knew that Casterton succeeded Cowan Bridge, and she speaks highly of it in *Jane Eyre*.

Had the Brontës been strong and well when they went to Cowan Bridge they would not have fared so badly. Many of the old pupils, even some who were at the school with the Brontës, showed their appreciation by becoming

subscribers to the school. More than once Charlotte Brontë accused herself of exaggeration and of scorning those who were better than herself.

Of Tunstall church, which is described in *Jane Eyre* as Brocklebridge, Charlotte Brontë says—

“Sundays were dreary days in that wintry season. We had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where our patron officiated. We set out cold, we arrived at church colder : during the morning service we became almost paralysed. It was too far to return to dinner, and an allowance of cold meat and bread, in the same penurious proportion observed in our ordinary meals, was served round between the services. At the close of the afternoon service we returned by an exposed and hilly road, where the bitter winter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from our faces.”

This church at Tunstall was only used by the pupils of Cowan Bridge School for the first year of the school's existence. A few months after the opening of the school a meeting of the trustees of the Leck chapel, a chapel of ease, was held, and it was decided to enlarge it to accommodate the pupils. This place of worship was within half a mile of the school, and when the alterations were completed the pupils were taken there on Sundays. It was unfortunate that the Brontë children were at Cowan Bridge during the only winter when it was necessary for the pupils to attend the Sunday services at the Tunstall church.

The walk to this church was through a beautiful country district, and, in fine weather, the journey must have been very pleasant. Other pupils who were at school with the Brontës said that they do not remember a single case of scholars having their feet wet through the walk, as the pupils wore clogs, which kept their feet much drier than boots or shoes would have done.

It is difficult to understand how the pupils could be cold when they started and colder still when they arrived at church. This could hardly be literally true, as the very exercise of walking would tend to raise the temperature of the body,



especially as Miss Temple, the teacher in charge, is represented as walking lightly and rapidly, as Charlotte Brontë says, "encouraging us, by precept and example, to keep up our spirits, and march forward, as she said, 'like stalwart soldiers.'" Charlotte Brontë was a novelist, and had to make her heroine suffer, but she also made the greatly respected family of Mr. Carus-Wilson suffer, and his descendants resent it to-day.

According to the old registers, the girls in winter wore thick purple dresses and short capes, whilst on cold or wet days they had green plaid cloaks and pattens. The hair was cropped, and night caps were worn, but pocket handkerchiefs do not appear in the list of clothing. On week days brown holland pinafores were worn and white ones on Sundays. In summer, the girls had green and white straw bonnets trimmed with green calico, buff dresses of nankeen, with short sleeves and high necks, white cotton stockings and strong shoes.

White bonnets were worn on Sundays, trimmed with purple, and white dresses with low necks and short sleeves, and for church white cotton gloves were supplied.<sup>1</sup>

Many pilgrims visit Tunstall church because of its association with the Brontës and the Brontë literature. The little chamber over the porch, where the scholars ate their lunch between morning and afternoon service, is usually pointed out. As the galleries have been demolished, it is not possible for visitors to enter the room.

The letter from one of the teachers at Cowan Bridge School probably sums up the question fairly—

"I have not the least hesitation in saying that, upon the whole, the comforts were as many, and the privations as few at Cowan Bridge as can well be found in so large an establishment. How far young, or delicate children are able to contend with the necessary evils of a public school is, in my opinion, a very grave question, and does not enter into the present discussion."

Some bitter correspondence passed in the Halifax papers after the publication of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, in which the Rev. A. B. Nicholls defended his late wife, Charlotte Brontë.

<sup>1</sup> Notes on the Clergy Daughters' School by M. Williams.

## CHAPTER VII

HAWORTH

1825-1831

THE Brontë children return to Haworth—Their home life and education—Tabitha Aykroyd—Early compositions by the Brontës—Sale of autograph manuscripts—Dramatisation of stories.

THE middle of June found the family at the parsonage reunited, though two, Maria and Elizabeth, had passed through "the little gate of death" at the end of the garden, and found an early grave by the side of their mother in the vault in the old church.

Charlotte was now called upon to take the rôle of her elder sister, and though only nine years of age, some responsibility in the home rested upon her little shoulders. Another servant had to be engaged, and Mr. Brontë and Miss Branwell determined to undertake the education of the children. Anne was now five years old, Emily seven, and Branwell eight. The four children went each morning to their father's little study on the ground floor, where they received lessons in scripture, the three R's, a little history, and, strange to say, politics—the vicar using his old school books. In some of the exercise books, remembering his schoolmaster days, Mr. Brontë wrote: "Everything that is written in this book must be clear and legible."

Of these six years there is little that is recorded, but it was the period when the children formed their ideas, which bore fruit in later times. Even at this early stage, they were accustomed to keep household records, stating where each member of the family was, and what each was doing. In the summer months they wandered over the moors—their one place of recreation.

Charlotte had not forgotten these uneventful days when she wrote *Jane Eyre*, for in Chapter X she says—

"Hitherto I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence: to the first ten years of my life, I have

given almost as many chapters. But this is not to be a regular autobiography : I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest ; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence : a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection."

The last paragraph points to the fact that Miss Branwell, and not Mrs. Sidgwick, was the original of Mrs. Reed, for Charlotte Brontë did not meet Mrs. Sidgwick until 1839; and the reference to "responses that possess some degree of interest" is most probably the result of Mr. Williams' letter sent when *The Professor* was refused because it was not sufficiently interesting. The great event of this year of 1825 in the Brontë household, after the sad death of the older girls, was the installation of Tabitha Aykroyd as the chief servant. She was a native of Haworth—a woman of fifty-three—and five years older than Mr. Brontë. Miss Branwell, who was far from strong, and had to keep to her room upstairs, needed a good housekeeper. Thus it became necessary to have a capable woman in the kitchen, and "Old Tabby," as she came to be called, ruled not only the kitchen but the whole household. She had a will of her own, and she afforded the girls a new field of observation. She was, undoubtedly, the original of "Hannah," the old servant in *Jane Eyre*, and she also appears in *Wuthering Heights*. The children became greatly attached to her.

Tabitha Aykroyd was a characteristic Yorkshire woman, faithful and true, but brusque to a fault, she ruled the household well. She had many tales to tell of the bairns, who sometimes nearly frightened her out of her wits with their outlandish games and strange little plays. She stayed with the Brontë family for over thirty years, with one short break, dying only a few weeks before Charlotte Brontë at the age of eighty-four, though Mrs. Gaskell in one of her unpublished letters gives her age as ninety-four. Much to the regret of the family, she did not end her days at the old parsonage, but, on account of the anxiety caused by Charlotte Brontë's illness, both Mr. Brontë and Mr. Nicholls thought it best to remove her to her friend's house in Sun Street, Haworth, at the lower end of the

village, where she died. She is buried in the churchyard, just beyond the wall of the parsonage garden ; the housemaid, Martha Brown, succeeded her, and lived at the vicarage until the vicar's death. Tabby was the confidante of the girls, who were often to be found in her kitchen, helping with the baking and ironing, or inducing her to tell them the fairy tales of the glens, and the ghost stories connected with the desolate houses on the moors between Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Tabby seemed to have read Richardson's *Pamela*, which foreshadowed *Jane Eyre*, though Jane depended on her intellect more than her beauty in attracting her master.

Emily Brontë did well to make Nelly Dean the narrator of *Wuthering Heights*. She had often sat listening to Tabby in the parsonage kitchen, for the old servant was a good tale-teller, speaking always in the broad Yorkshire dialect, which both Charlotte and Emily have used when writing of her in their novels.

It was well that Cowan Bridge did not prove congenial, for their education at home was much more suited to their delicate constitutions. The regular daily routine was family prayers, breakfast, lessons in the father's study, early dinner, walk on the moors, Tabby going with them, and often carrying little Anne over the rough places ; then back to tea in the spotless kitchen, followed by sewing for the older girls in the aunt's room—the father or aunt often reading the newspaper to them or discussing books or politics. It is not surprising that in later days they could write books which startled the reading world. Charlotte, the chronicler of the household, says—

“ We take two, and see three newspapers a week. We take the *Leeds Intelligencer*, Tory, and the *Leeds Mercury*, Whig, edited by Mr. Baines, and his brother, son-in-law, and his two sons, Edward and Talbot. We see the *John Bull* ; it is a high Tory, very violent. Mr. Driver lends us it, as likewise *Blackwood's Magazine*, the most able periodical there is. The Editor is Mr. Christopher North, an old man seventy-four years of age ; the 1st of April is his birthday ; his company are Timothy Tickler, Morgan O'Doherty, Macrabin Mordecai,



*Photo by*

MOORLAND ROAD, HAWORTH

*Fred Shuttleworth*



Mullion, Warnell, and James Hogg, a man of most extraordinary genius, a Scottish shepherd."

It was at this time that the children began to commit their ideas to writing, and many of their little manuscripts, written at this time, are extant. Charlotte wrote the most, and Branwell came next, so far as can be judged. Either the younger sisters wrote much less than Charlotte, or they destroyed their early manuscripts, for there is nothing written by Emily or Anne at this time that has been brought to light.

On 31st May, 1912, in London, six autograph fragments of these children's early work were sold in separate lots. The bidding was remarkably keen for each item, and the sale realised £76. One was a small page of Emily's poetry, beginning, "May flowers are opening," and consisting of eight four-lined verses, written on a slip of thin paper, in her sloping, printed characters, and measuring  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches. It was signed E. J. Brontë, and was dated 25th Jan., 1839. This manuscript was sold for £14 5s. Another was a short, unpublished poem by Charlotte Brontë, signed and dated 11th Dec., 1831, and beginning, "The trumpet has sounded, its voice is gone forth." It covered two and a half small pages of thin paper,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches by  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches, in writing which was quite microscopic in size. This poem is not included in any list of Charlotte Brontë's works, and it realised £24 10s. There was also an undated autograph manuscript of two pages,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, consisting of about seventy lines, evidently being a fragment of a story by Charlotte Brontë. It told of a traveller going to an inn and staying for the night, much in the style of Lockwood going to stay at The Grange in *Wuthering Heights*. This was sold for £6 15s.

A further autograph manuscript by Charlotte Brontë, signed and dated 11th Feb., 1830, though the printed catalogue referred to the date as 1820, the figure three not being very distinct, realised £5 5s.

A curious feature of the sale was the high price obtained for the two manuscripts written by Branwell Brontë, who has been discarded, and considered unfit to be associated with his sisters, either as an author or a brother. There was,

however, quite as keen competition for his manuscripts as for the others. The first offered for sale was *The Rising of the Angrians*, covering twenty pages,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches, with about twenty lines to the page, and signed and dated 7th Jan., 1836. It was written in printed characters, which very much resembled Emily's hand-printing, and was sold for £13.

The second manuscript by Branwell was entitled *The Liar Detected*. The word "unmasked" had been altered to "detected" in the manuscript. It consisted of twelve pages, in the form of a very little book— $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches by 2 inches, with about twenty-eight lines to a page. It was signed at the end "Captain J. Bud," and, with Branwell's love of conceit, two other books by Captain Bud were mentioned—one, a work in three volumes, priced at £3 3s., and the other in ten volumes at £10 10s. One was referred to as *A History on Political Economy*.

This hand-made book was most interesting, as it showed that Branwell was one of the little band of authors in the remote parsonage in the early days. The tiny pages were stitched together—probably by Charlotte—and a cover was made from the back of an old copy book. On the cover was a pencil drawing of an old man, most likely the work of Branwell. Some coarse, purple sugar paper, used in those days, was pasted to the cover to make it firmer, and the leaves and cover were stitched together with grey worsted, commonly used at that time for knitting stockings. This small book realised at the sale £12 15s. That these two small efforts from Branwell's pen should be worth £25 15s., considering that he never succeeded in getting anything published during his lifetime, is no doubt due to the fame of his sisters, and yet, as these two stories show, he had ability which would have been recognised earlier, if he had persevered, and refrained from strong drink.

When it is remembered that the book of poems by Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, published in 1846 at their own expense (nearly £50) was a complete failure, only two copies being sold, it is remarkable that such high prices should be given for these small items. The fame of the three sisters has increased, step by step, since the publication of *Jane Eyre*.



Emily has waited long for her due recognition, but now her manuscripts have a greater marketable value than those of Charlotte; Branwell is more appreciated than formerly, and possibly in the future Anne will gain in public recognition, though her work is of an entirely different style, and lacks the fire of her famous sisters.

It was in 1826 that Charlotte got possession of her mother's copy of *The Imitation of Christ*, and this she read regularly, trying to frame her conduct upon its teaching. The children learned to read and write almost as easily as they learned to talk, and their books took the place very largely of young friends.

It was related in Haworth that one of the trustees of the church invited the whole group from the parsonage to a birthday party, in the days following the school life at Cowan Bridge. Much to the surprise of their little friends, the Brontë children had no idea of the ordinary games that any village child could play, such as "hunt the slipper" and "here we go round the gooseberry bush." Their shyness was painful to behold; they were awkward and silent the whole evening, and evidently greatly relieved when it was time to return home. If they had been more accustomed to associating with other children, they could have surprised their friends by acting one of their own original plays, requiring much more brain power than the repetition of the usual children's games. In their own home this was quite a common mode of enjoyment, in which the servants sometimes joined. On one occasion, on the 29th May, they determined to act Prince Charles and his escape into the oak tree. As there was no oak tree in the garden, they decided that Emily, dressed up to represent the prince, should get through the bedroom window, and hide in the cherry tree. This she did not accomplish without breaking off one of the branches, which caused them much distress, as the tree was highly prized by their father. To prevent the discovery of the damage to the tree, one of the servants blacked the broken end with soot, but Mr. Brontë found this out, though he was unable to discover the real culprit.

Much is published nowadays about dramatisation as a

means of education in schools, but the Brontë children must have been pioneers of this method nearly a century ago. From early childhood Charlotte Brontë showed a gift for acting, and she could write plays with much vigour. In *Villette* she says—

“A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature ; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life : the strength and longing must be put by ; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked.”

How these children found time to get all the writing done is marvellous. One of the old servants said that they always had a pencil in their pocket, and were accustomed to go into corners of the room to put down their thoughts, sometimes on odd pieces of cardboard, or on any stray bit of paper. To read their little stories almost leads one to conclude that they were written as composition exercises for their father, who, himself, had always striven to be known as an author, and he, doubtless, encouraged them in their literary efforts.

The amount of writing accomplished by Charlotte between 1825 and 1830 is amazing ; Mrs. Gaskell estimates it as twenty-two volumes, quoting Charlotte, who was only fourteen years old at the time, as her authority. This catalogue of books completed 3rd August, 1830, includes : *Two Romantic Tales* in one volume : *Leisure Hours : The Adventures of Ernest Alembert : An interesting Incident in the Lives of some of the most Eminent Persons of the Age : Tales of the Islanders*, in four volumes : *Characters of Great Men of the Present Age : The Young Men's Magazine*, in six numbers : *The Poetaster*, a drama in two volumes : *A Book of Rhymes : and Miscellaneous Poems*.

The Rev. A. B. Nicholls has proved that Mrs. Gaskell greatly underestimated the amount. Altogether about 100 small manuscripts were written by these children at this time, and at intervals they find their way to the London auction rooms, and are eagerly bought up by well-known autograph

dealers. During the month of June, 1913, three tiny manuscripts were sold.

In addition to writing, the Brontë children practised drawing, Charlotte and Branwell hoping to become artists. With writing, drawing and the acting of their little plays, these children were far from unhappy. Mrs. Gaskell, quoting from a letter by Miss Evans, which referred to Charlotte as "a bright, clever little girl," said that this was the last time she could use the word *bright* with regard to Charlotte, but in this she was quite mistaken. The children of the parsonage did not pursue the common path in their search for happiness, but this does not prove that their young lives were devoid of pleasure. Charlotte gives us an account of one play, *The Islanders*.

" June the 31st, 1829.

" The play of the *Islanders* was formed in December, 1827, in the following manner. One night, about the time when the cold sleet and stormy fogs of November are succeeded by snow-storms, and high piercing night-winds of confirmed winter, we were all sitting round the warm blazing kitchen fire, having just concluded a quarrel with Tabby concerning the propriety of lighting a candle, from which she came off victorious, no candle having been produced. A long pause succeeded, which was at last broken by Branwell saying, in a lazy manner, 'I don't know what to do.' This was echoed by Emily and Anne.

" *Tabby*. 'Wha ya may go t'bed.'

" *Branwell*. 'I'd rather do anything than that.'

" *Charlotte*. 'Why are you so glum to-night, Tabby? Oh! suppose we had each an island of our own.'

" *Branwell*. 'If we had I would choose the Island of Man.'

" *Charlotte*. 'And I would choose the Isle of Wight.'

" *Emily*. 'The Isle of Arran for me.'

" *Anne*. 'And mine should be Guernsey.'

" We then chose who should be chief men in our islands. Branwell chose John Bull, Astley Cooper, and Leigh Hunt; Emily, Walter Scott, Mr. Lockhart, Johnny Lockhart; Anne, Michael Sadler, Lord Bentinck, Sir Henry Halford. I chose the

Duke of Wellington and two sons, Christopher North and Co., and Mr. Abernethy. Here our conversation was interrupted by the, to us, dismal sound of the clock striking seven, and we were summoned off to bed. The next day we added many others to our list of men, till we got almost all the chief men of the kingdom. After this, for a long time, nothing worth noticing occurred. In June, 1828, we erected a school on a fictitious island, which was to contain 1,000 children. The manner of the building was as follows. The Island was fifty miles in circumference, and certainly appeared more like the work of enchantment than anything real," etc.

Charlotte was twelve and Anne eight, yet they all had to go to bed at seven o'clock, not to sleep is fairly certain; they would use their imaginative powers to people their island.

Shortly after this, Charlotte Brontë gives an account of the year 1829, including in her statement the newspapers and magazines either purchased or lent to Mr. Brontë, and the plays written by his children.

Patrick Brontë had small opportunity of being an indulgent parent; he had little money to spare for toys, but the old interest in warfare and his love for his children prompted him to buy a box of soldiers from Leeds, which in those days were more costly than to-day. To ordinary children, these would have stood for soldiers and nothing more, but to the imaginative Brontës they represented a world of history, and provided thought and employment for months. Charlotte and Branwell often took opposite views of history, and it is not surprising that one should take Wellington and the other Buonaparte as his or her favourite soldier. In those early days Charlotte and Branwell were the leaders, whilst Emily and Anne appear to have been more childish, as was natural, being the younger members of the family. Wellington became Charlotte's great hero, and his son's name became her *nom de guerre*; many of her earlier manuscripts are signed "Lord C. Wellesley," and "The Marquis of Douro."

This make-believe life lasted for six years, and imagination contributed much to the joy of their uneventful days. Mrs.

Atkinson, wife of the Rev. Thomas Atkinson, of Hartshead—Charlotte's godmother—suggested that, as Charlotte was now nearly fifteen years of age, she ought to go to school, and she offered to pay the fees to Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Dewsbury, not far from Hartshead.

## CHAPTER VIII

DEWSBURY

1831-1832

CHARLOTTE BRONTË's journey from Haworth—Roe Head School—Kirklees Hall—Ellen Nussey and Caroline Helstone—Mary Taylor and Rose Yorke—Martha Taylor and Jessy Yorke—Miss Wooler and Mrs. Pryor—Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey.

COWAN BRIDGE had been an unfortunate experiment, but now that Charlotte was nearly fifteen years of age, and her godparents had offered to pay for her education, it was decided that she should again go to school.

The little author of so many small manuscripts was to submit to "a new servitude," but as duty was always Charlotte Brontë's watchword she went bravely on a cold day in January, by a covered cart, from Haworth to Mirfield Moor, a distance of about twenty miles.

Mr. Brontë knew the district well, and it is very probable that he knew Miss Wooler, for her school was not far from his former home at Hartshead. But if he did not know the "good, kind schoolmistress," she was known to the Rev. Thomas Atkinson, who was then Vicar of Hartshead.

Roe Head is still standing—a large, commodious house, on the Leeds and Huddersfield Road, about five miles from Huddersfield. The building is of Georgian date, and has the old-fashioned half-circular bow windows, with the comfortable window seats. It had the reputation of being haunted in Charlotte Brontë's days, but Miss Wooler very soon dispelled that idea. The present owners say no ghost ever haunts it now, unless it be the spirit of Charlotte Brontë, which Brontë lovers, especially Americans, come to hunt. It was offered for sale in 1911, but no reasonable bid was made, and it was withdrawn. When visiting it some years ago, the writer was asked by the owner why one of the Brontë worshippers did not purchase it, seeing that they were so fond of visiting the former homes of Charlotte Brontë, and enjoyed exploring the district,



*Photo by*

ROE HEAD SCHOOL

*J. J. Stead*

The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagon with its six nearest neighbors. The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with various sites highlighted by different symbols: open circles, filled circles, and circles with a cross. Some sites are labeled with letters like 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z'.



which has become to be known as *The Shirley Country*, because of its association with the novel. To visit a literary shrine and to live in it are very different. Were it not for the smoky surroundings, caused by the neighbouring woollen mills, Roe Head would be a pleasant residence still. The house is large and roomy, and stands on the slope of Mirfield Moor, commanding a view of the Calder Valley. Near the front entrance is the old tree, under which Charlotte Brontë used to stand or sit, whilst her schoolmates were at play ; she considered this a much pleasanter way of spending the time appointed for recreation, interested in the shadows, and the bits of sky seen through the branches. There is a carriage drive to the house, which is surrounded by extensive grounds. The former schoolroom in which Ellen Nussey found Charlotte Brontë crying on her first arrival at the school is pointed out to visitors who are fortunate in gaining admission, and her favourite window seat is to be seen.

There is ample bedroom accommodation, and when Charlotte Brontë entered the school there were but seven to ten pupils, so that Miss Wooler and her sister were able to give much individual attention to the girls.

Although not more than twenty miles from the moorland village of Haworth, it was much less solitary, and a far more picturesque neighbourhood, and the change was a great benefit to the future novelist.

Near to the school is the beautiful park of Kirklees—the Nunnwood of *Shirley*—and Sir George Armytage's Jacobean hall ; in the grounds is the reputed tomb of Robin Hood, surrounded by a high iron fence. In another part of the park is the grave of the man who is supposed to have caused Robin Hood's death. In a hollow, on the borders of the park, are the remains of the nunnery, and there is still the old gate-house containing some reputed relics of Robin Hood.

It was formerly supposed, on the suggestion of Ellen Nussey, that Kirklees was the original of Ferndean Manor in *Jane Eyre*, but recent research has proved that Wycoller Dean, near Haworth, is the spot where Jane Eyre found Rochester, and where she was married to her blind master. It is interesting

to remember that it was Charlotte Brontë herself who was afraid she was going blind about the time she wrote *Jane Eyre*, according to a letter which she wrote to M. Heger.

The time spent at Roe Head proved very helpful to Charlotte Brontë in many ways, for she was always alert, and, in addition to the improvement in her general education, the place and people served her well when she wrote *Shirley*.

Describing Kirklees Park, Charlotte Brontë says: "It is like an encampment of forest sons of Anak. The trees are huge and old. When you stand at their roots, the summits seem in another region; the trunks remain still and firm as pillars, while the boughs sway to every breeze. In the deepest calm their leaves are never quite hushed, and in high wind a flood rushes—a sea thunders above you."

This beautiful country was as welcome to the future author of *Shirley*, as was her friendship with what proved to be her two dearest friends from this neighbourhood—Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. The place was also dear to her from the associations with her good and kind schoolmistress, Miss Wooler.

Both Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor have left a faithful record of Charlotte Brontë's school days at Roe Head. Ellen Nussey always affirmed that she was the original of Caroline Helstone in *Shirley*, but by comparing that character with what is known of Charlotte Brontë's life there is much more of Charlotte Brontë than of Ellen Nussey in the character. Mary Taylor was the Rose Yorke of the novel, and the portraiture is very correct. "What a lump of perfection you have made me," wrote Mary Taylor to the author of *Shirley*. The merry, laughing Martha Taylor became the Jessy Yorke of the story, and Mrs. Pryor was drawn from the character of Miss Wooler.

"Mrs. Pryor, you know, was my governess, and is still my friend; and of all the high and rigid Tories, she is queen; of all the staunch Churchwomen, she is chief."

Charlotte found a good friend, whilst at Roe Head, in her godmother, Mrs. Atkinson, who sometimes took her little

godchild to her home for week-ends. In after years, Mrs. Atkinson, who had supplied her with clothes, as well as paid her school fees and given a kindly oversight to her whilst at Roe Head, ceased to correspond or have anything to do with her, because she did not approve of a clergyman's daughter writing novels, especially novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, where the clergy of the district were so freely criticised.

Mrs. Gaskell's description of Charlotte is interesting—

“ In 1831, she was a quiet, thoughtful girl, of nearly fifteen years of age, very small in figure—‘stunted’ was the word she applied to herself—but, as her limbs and head were in just proportion to the slight, fragile body, no word in ever so slight a degree suggestive of deformity could properly be applied to her ; with soft, thick, brown hair, and peculiar eyes, of which I find it difficult to give a description, as they appeared to me in her later life. They were large, and well shaped ; their colour a reddish brown ; but if the iris was closely examined, it appeared to be composed of a great variety of tints. The usual expression was of quiet, listening intelligence ; but now and then, on some just occasion for vivid interest or wholesome indignation, a light would shine out, as if some spiritual lamp had been kindled, which glowed behind those expressive orbs. I never saw the like in any other human creature. As for the rest of her features, they were plain, large, and ill set ; but, unless you began to catalogue them, you were hardly aware of the fact, for the eyes and power of the countenance overbalanced every physical defect ; the crooked mouth and the large nose were forgotten, and the whole face arrested the attention, and presently attracted all those whom she herself would have cared to attract. Her hands and feet were the smallest I ever saw ; when one of the former was placed in mine, it was like the soft touch of a bird in the middle of my palm. The delicate long fingers had a peculiar fineness of sensation, which was one reason why all her handiwork, of whatever kind—writing, sewing, knitting—was so clear in its minuteness. She was remarkably neat in her whole personal attire ; but she was dainty as to the fit of her shoes and gloves.”

The three people who supplied Mrs. Gaskell with particulars

of Charlotte Brontë's life at this time were her schoolmistress, Ellen Nussey, and Mary Taylor. The latter wrote from New Zealand, nearly twenty-five years after she was at school at Roe Head, and her account throws much light on this period of Charlotte Brontë's life.

"I first saw her coming out of a covered cart, in very old-fashioned clothes, and looking very cold and miserable. She was coming to school at Miss Wooler's. When she appeared in the schoolroom, her dress was changed, but just as old. She looked a little old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her, she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it, and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing. . . . We thought her very ignorant, for she had never learnt grammar at all, and very little geography.

"She used to draw much better, and more quickly, than anything we had seen before, and knew much about celebrated pictures and painters. Whenever an opportunity offered of examining a picture or cut of any kind, she went over it piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her 'what she saw in it.' She could always see plenty, and explained it very well. She made poetry and drawing, at least, exceedingly interesting to me; and then I got the habit, which I have yet, of referring mentally to her opinion on all matters of that kind, along with many more, resolving to describe such and such things to her, until I start at the recollection that I never shall." . .

"The whole family used to 'make out' histories, and invent characters and events. I told her sometimes they were like growing potatoes in a cellar. She said, sadly, 'Yes! I know we are!'"

It is interesting to read Charlotte Brontë's description of Mary Taylor in *Shirley*.

Miss Wooller once said to Mary Taylor that when she first saw her, she thought her too pretty to live ; but her portrait in later years did not support this. A greater friend than Mary Taylor was Ellen Nussey, who gave Mrs. Gaskell all the information she could. She, herself, did not publish a description of Charlotte Brontë until 1871, when in *Scribner's Magazine* she wrote—

“ Miss Wooller's system of education required that a good deal of her pupils' work should be done in classes, and to effect this, new pupils had generally a season of solitary study ; but Charlotte's fervent application made this period a very short one for her—she was quickly up to the needful standard, and ready for the daily routine and arrangement of studies, and as quickly did she outstrip her companions, rising from the bottom of the classes to the top, a position which, when she had once gained, she never had to regain. She was first in everything but play, yet never was a word heard of envy or jealousy from her companions ; everyone felt she had won her laurels by an amount of diligence and hard labour of which they were incapable. She never exulted in her successes or seemed conscious of them ; her mind was so wholly set on attaining knowledge that she apparently forgot all else.

“ Charlotte's appearance did not strike me at first as it did others. I saw her grief, not herself particularly, till afterwards. She never seemed to me the unattractive little person others designated her, but certainly she was at this time anything but *pretty* ; even her good points were lost. Her naturally beautiful hair of soft silky brown being then dry and frizzy-looking, screwed up in tight little curls, showing features that were all the plainer from her exceeding thinness and want of complexion, she looked ‘dried in.’ A dark, rusty green stuff dress of old-fashioned make detracted still more from her appearance ; but let her wear what she might or do what she would, she had ever the demeanour of a born gentlewoman ; vulgarity was an element that never won the slightest affinity with her nature. Some of the elder girls who had been years at school, thought her ignorant. This was true in one sense ; ignorant she was indeed in the elementary

education which was given in schools, but she far surpassed her most advanced school-fellows in knowledge of what was passing in the world at large, and in the literature of her country. She knew thousands of things unknown to them.

"About a month after the assembling of the school, one of the pupils had an illness. There was great competition among the girls for permission to sit with the invalid. Charlotte was never of the number, though she was as assiduous in kindness and attention as the rest in spare moments : but to sit with the patient was indulgence and leisure, and these she would not permit herself.

"It was shortly after this illness that Charlotte caused such a panic of terror by her thrilling relations of the wanderings of a somnambulist. She brought together all the horrors her imagination could create, from surging seas, raging breakers, towering castle walls, high precipices, invisible chasms and dangers.

"Having wrought these materials to the highest pitch of effect, she brought out, in almost cloud-height, her somnambulist, walking on shaking turrets—all told in a voice that conveyed more than words alone can express. A shivering terror seized the recovered invalid ; a pause ensued ; then a subdued cry of pain came from Charlotte herself, with a terrified command to others to call for help. She was in bitter distress. Something like remorse seemed to linger in her mind after this incident ; for weeks there was no prevailing on her to resume her tales, and she never again created terrors for her listeners. Tales, however, were made again in time, till Miss W. discovered there was 'late talking.' That was forbidden ; but understanding it was 'late talk' only which was prohibited, we talked and listened to tales again, not expecting to hear Miss Wooler say one morning, 'All the ladies who talked last night must pay fines. I am sure Miss Brontë and Miss Nussey were not of the number.' Miss Brontë and Miss Nussey were, however, transgressors like the rest, and rather enjoyed the fact of having to pay like them, till they saw Miss Wooler's grieved and disappointed look. It was then a distress that they had failed where they were

reckoned upon, though unintentionally. This was the only school-fine that Charlotte ever incurred. At the close of the first half-year, Charlotte bore off three prizes. . . .

"During one of our brief holidays Charlotte was guest in a family who had known her father when he was a curate in their parish. They were naturally inclined to show kindness to his daughter, but the kindness here took a form which was little agreeable. They had had no opportunity of knowing her abilities or disposition, and they took her shyness and smallness as indications of extreme youth. She was slow, very slow to express anything that bordered on ingratitude, but here she was mortified and hurt. 'They took me for a child, and treated me just like one,' she said. I can now recall the expression of that honest face as she added, 'one tall lady *would* nurse me.'

"The tradition of a lady ghost who moved about in rustling silk in the upper stories of Roe Head had a great charm for Charlotte. . . .

"I must not forget to state that no girl in the school was equal to Charlotte in Sunday lessons. Her acquaintance with Holy Writ surpassed others in this as in everything else. She was very familiar with all the sublimest passages, especially those in Isaiah, in which she took great delight. Her confirmation took place while she was at school, and in her preparation for that, as in all other studies, she distinguished herself by application and proficiency.

"At school she acquired that habit which she and her sisters kept up to the very last, that of pacing to and fro in the room. In days when out-of-door exercise was impracticable, Miss Wooler would join us in our hour of relaxation and converse (for which she had rare talent); her pupils used to hang about her as she walked up and down the room, delighted to listen to her, or have a chance of being nearest in the walk. The last day Charlotte was at school she seemed to realise what a sedate, hard-working season it had been to her. She said, 'I should for once like to feel *out and out* a schoolgirl; let us run round the fruit garden (running was what she never did); perhaps we shall meet some one, or we may have a fine for trespass.'

She evidently was longing for some never-to-be-forgotten incident. Nothing, however, arose from her little enterprise. She had to leave school as calmly and quietly as she had lived there."

Although Caroline Helstone, as a character, owes more to Charlotte Brontë than to Ellen Nussey, yet the novelist has drawn a beautiful portrait of Ellen Nussey in *Shirley*, which those who knew her when young said was true to the life.

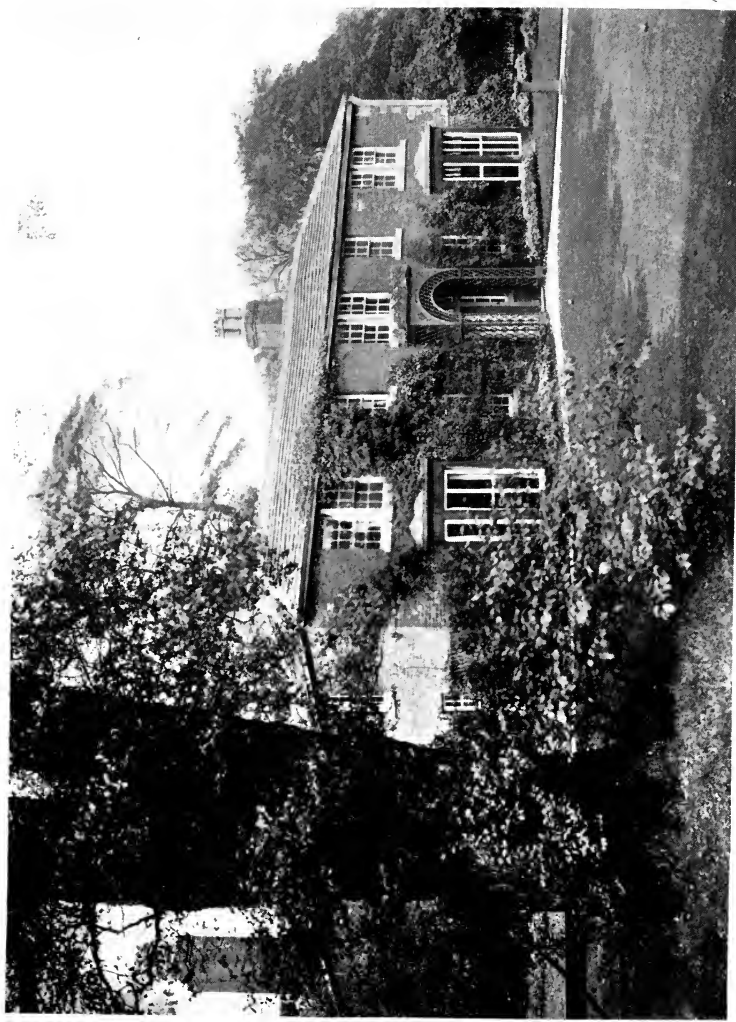
The silver medal for good conduct, won by Charlotte Brontë, may now be seen in the Brontë Museum, stamped with the word "reward." She also took home three prizes at the end of her first year, and judging by a letter written in French, soon after she went home in the following year, she had acquired a fair knowledge of that language.

Evidently her father thought she might be useful in teaching the younger members of the family, and when she was about seventeen she returned once more to Haworth, in order to teach a class of three pupils—her two sisters and her brother.

The first sojourn at Roe Head was a very happy time, for if she had to work very hard—harder than her teacher wished—she had many little pleasures, not the least being her visits to her godmother, and better still, to the homes of Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey.

A youth, who used to have the honour of driving Charlotte Brontë to and from these homes, was asked which home he thought she preferred; he mentioned Ellen Nussey's, at The Rydings, Birstall, where he noticed the evidences of much regret when taking leave, though she always seemed sorry to leave the Red House at Gomersal, which is pictured in *Shirley* as "Briarmains," whilst The Rydings figures as "Thornfield."





*Photo by*

THE RED HOUSE, GOMERSAL

*J. J. Stead*

The figure shows a 10x10 grid of cells. The top half (rows 1-5) is mostly empty, with a few scattered black dots. The bottom half (rows 6-10) is densely populated with black dots, representing obstacles. The dots are arranged in a way that creates a complex, maze-like path through the environment.

## CHAPTER IX

HAWORTH, ROE HEAD AND DEWSBURY MOOR

1832-1838

CHARLOTTE BRONTË returns to Haworth—Her anxiety for the future—She continues her studies—Tuition in painting—Lines to Bewick—Charlotte Brontë and Wordsworth—Her correspondence with Ellen Nussey—The Rydings, Birstall—Ellen Nussey's visit to Haworth—Branwell Brontë's visit to London—His life at Haworth—Charlotte Brontë's return to Roe Head accompanied by Emily Brontë—Uncongenial tasks—Emily Brontë returns to Haworth—Anne Brontë takes Emily's place as a pupil at Roe Head—Anne's illness—Transfer of Miss Wooler's school from Roe Head to Heald House, Dewsbury Moor—Charlotte and Anne Brontë's return to Haworth—Charlotte Brontë's correspondence with Southey.

AFTER a year and a half at Roe Head, Charlotte Brontë left the school at the close of the Midsummer term. She returned to Haworth quite happily, for to be with her sisters always afforded her great pleasure. Mrs. Gaskell seems to have been struck by her lack of hopefulness, and she judged her by her letters at this time. Charlotte was the eldest, and, knowing that her father was often in ill-health, she dreaded the family being left to struggle with poverty. The income of the aunt was not large, and there were no relatives who could help them in any way. This seems to have made Charlotte over-anxious about the future, and to this fear must be attributed her determination to qualify herself to earn her own living. She worked very hard at her studies, and was never happy except when improving her qualifications. In connection with this period she writes—

“An account of one day is an account of all. In the morning, from nine o'clock till half-past twelve, I instruct my sisters, and draw; then we walk till dinner-time. After dinner I sew till tea-time, and after tea I either write, read, or do a little fancy work, or draw, as I please. Thus, in one delightful though somewhat monotonous course, my life is passed. I have been only out twice to tea since I came home.

We are expecting company this afternoon, and on Tuesday next we shall have all the female teachers of the Sunday School to tea."

This letter shows that Charlotte was busy and happy, and, to add to her pleasure, her father paid a drawing-master to come to the parsonage and give her and Branwell lessons in drawing and painting. Branwell was to be a great artist some day, and his father intended that he should finish his studies by attending at the Royal Academy. Both Charlotte and Branwell completed a large number of little drawings, mostly copies; some, however, like their stories, were purely imaginative. Both the father and aunt thought that these sketches were wonderful, and so did Mr. Wood, the village carpenter, who lived a little distance down the steep Main street of Haworth. In later years, he never tired of telling how the Vicar's children were in the habit of coming to his workshop to obtain frames for their drawings; they were too proud to accept them as presents, and they were accustomed to give him a drawing in exchange for a frame, which he usually made from the odds and ends of his larger picture frames. He regarded their work as of little value, but afterwards, when the Brontë girls became famous, he regretted that he had not kept all these little sketches, some of which were in colour. His sons remember seeing quite a large collection of these drawings in one of the drawers, but they have all been destroyed or scattered. Mr. Brontë thought so highly of his children's ability in art, that he determined to provide for them more efficient training, and a Mr. W. Robinson of Leeds, was engaged to visit the vicarage for the purpose of giving lessons to Charlotte and Branwell at two guineas for each visit.

It can never be said that Patrick Brontë was niggardly in providing for the education of his children, although he had little to spare out of his small salary.

Charlotte Brontë's weak eyesight prevented her becoming a successful artist, and Branwell's conceit always stood in the way of his doing great things. There are several large canvases to be seen in and around Haworth that were

executed by Branwell : two are in the possession of the village carpenter's family. Martha Brown's niece also has an oil painting of John Brown, the sexton, and in Dewsbury there are several oil-paintings—the work of Branwell when he lodged in Fountain Street, Bradford. Mrs. Ingram and Mr. Wood, the owners of these paintings, spoke most highly of Branwell Brontë, and were indignant to find him described as a brainless sot, which is absolutely untrue.

The colour of these family portraits is still good, but they reveal little more than aptitude for painting, and some small evidence of talent. Branwell, unlike his sisters, disliked plodding ; he had not much patience, and, though clever in many ways, he considered that he could succeed without effort or diligent application.

Charlotte says that at this time her greatest enjoyments were drawing and walking on the moors with her sisters. That she did not neglect her writing is proved by her *Lines on the Celebrated Bewick*, dated 27th November, 1832, which have never been published in Charlotte Brontë's collection of poems. This poem of twenty verses was first published in Mr. Hall's little *Guide to Haworth*. He has kindly allowed it to be copied—

“ LINES ON THE CELEBRATED BEWICK.

The cloud of recent death is past away,  
But yet a shadow lingers o'er his tomb  
To tell that the pale standard of decay  
Is reared triumphant o'er life's sullied bloom.

But now the eye undimmed by tears may gaze  
On the fair lines his gifted pencil drew,  
The tongue unfalt'ring speaks its meed of praise  
When we behold those scenes to nature true—

True to the common Nature that we see  
In England's sunny fields, her hills, and vales,  
On the wild bosom of her storm-dark sea  
Still heaving to the wind that o'er it wails.

How many winged inhabitants of air,  
How many plume-clad floaters of the deep,  
The mighty artist drew in forms as fair  
As those that now the skies and waters sweep !

From the great eagle with his lightning eye,  
 His tyrant glance, his talons dyed in blood,  
 To the sweet breather-forth of melody,  
 The gentle merry minstrel of the wood.

Each in his attitude of Native grace  
 Looks on the gazer life-like, free and bold,  
 And if the rocks be his abiding place  
 Far off appears the winged marauder's hold.

But if the little builder rears his nest  
 In the still shadow of green tranquil trees,  
 And singing sweetly mid the silence blest  
 Sits a meet emblem of untroubled peace,

'A change comes o'er the spirit of our dream,'—  
 Woods wave around in crested majesty,  
 We almost feel the joyous sunshine's beam  
 And hear the breath of the sweet south go by.

Our childhood's days return again in thought,  
 We wander in a land of love and light,  
 And mingled memories joy—and sorrow—fraught  
 Gush on our hearts with overwhelming might.

Sweet flowers seem gleaming mid the tangled grass,  
 Sparkling with spray-drops from the rushing rill,  
 And as these fleeting visions fade and pass  
 Perchance some pensive tears our eyes may fill.

These soon are wiped away; again we turn  
 With fresh delight to the enchanted page,  
 Where pictured thoughts that breathe and speak and burn  
 Still please alike our youth and riper age.

There rises some lone rock, all wet with surge  
 And dashing billows glimmering in the light  
 Of a wan moon, whose silent rays emerge  
 From clouds that veil their lustre cold and bright.

And there 'mongst reeds upon a river's side  
 A wild-bird sits, and brooding o'er her nest  
 Still guards the priceless gems, her joy and pride.  
 Now ripening 'neath her hope-enlivened breast.

We turn the page ; before the expectant eye  
 A Traveller stands lone on some desert heath,  
 The glorious sun is passing from the sky  
 While fall his farewell rays on all beneath.

O'er the far hills a purple veil seems flung,  
 Dim herald of the coming shades of night ;  
 E'en now Diana's lamp aloft is hung  
 Drinking full radiance from the fount of light.

O, when the solemn wind of midnight sighs,  
 Where will the lonely traveller lay his head ?  
 Beneath the tester of the star-bright skies  
 On the wild moor he'll find a dreary bed.

Now we behold a marble Naiad placed  
 Beside a fountain on her sculptured throne,  
 Her bending form with simplest beauty graced,  
 Her white robes gathered in a snowy zone.

She from a polished vase pours forth a stream  
 Of sparkling water to the waves below,  
 Which roll in light and music, while the gleam  
 Of sunshine flings through shade a golden glow.

A hundred fairer scenes these leaves reveal,—  
 But there are tongues that injure while they praise ;  
 I cannot speak the rapture that I feel  
 When on the work of such a mind I gaze.

Then farewell, Bewick, genius' favoured son,  
 Death's sleep is on thee, all thy woes are past,  
 From earth departed, life and labour done,  
 Eternal peace and rest are thine at last.

(Signed) C. BRONTË."

November 27th, 1832.

This poem was written in the November of the year in which Charlotte Brontë returned home from Roe Head, when sixteen and a half years of age, and it is significant that in the beginning of the first chapter of *Jane Eyre* she speaks of "A drear

November afternoon, when she was carefully studying the beautiful engravings in Bewick's *History of British Birds*."

Of Bewick's two books, Volume I, dealing with the history of quadrupeds, was published in 1790, and Volume II, which dealt with the history of British birds, was issued in 1797. Bewick died in 1828, four years before Charlotte Brontë wrote her poem.

Bewick's *British Birds* was included in Patrick Brontë's collection of books, for the late Mr. Law, of Littleboro, purchased a copy of Bewick's *Birds* at the Brontë sale in 1886. The minute engravings must have attracted Charlotte Brontë especially, for she was very fond of copying pictures.

Bewick was the first engraver on wood in England and, like the Brontës, he was passionately fond of wild birds and animals. With his great love of nature and his power to depict it, he fostered the similar taste in Charlotte Brontë and her sisters, who revelled in the moors, the changing skies, and the wild birds on the moor.

In *Wuthering Heights* Emily tells of Cathy, in her delirium, picking out the feathers from the pillow and naming them one by one.

In his *History of British Birds*, Bewick has drawn some exquisite little vignettes of the feathers of different birds, with clear, delicate lines as fine as a hair, and the Brontës not only knew the name of each bird on the Haworth moors, but they could tell the bird from seeing a single feather. Just as there is a Brontë Museum at Haworth, with specimens of the drawings and writings of the Brontës, so at Newcastle-on-Tyne there is a Bewick Museum, containing some original drawings and paintings by Bewick. Here are to be seen his early studies and suggestions; nothing was too insignificant for his pencil. In the Bewick Museum may be seen the little picture, with its suggestive moral, of a traveller trying to hoist his heavy sack upon his back before starting once more upon his tramp, whilst a little demon, with horns and tail—the usual method in those days of depicting the devil for children—is mischievously pinning the load securely down. Charlotte Brontë refers to this picture in *Jane Eyre*.



When Ellen Nussey asked Charlotte Brontë, at the age of eighteen, what she should read, she suggested for natural history Bewick and Audubon.

Charlotte Brontë was at this time a great admirer of Wordsworth, and she may have been prompted to write a eulogy on the great engraver by Wordsworth's lines in his *Lyrical Ballads*—

“O now that the genius of Bewick were mine,

And the skill which he learned on the banks of the Tyne.”

There is one little vignette on page 256 of Bewick's *History of Birds* that Charlotte Brontë refers to in *Jane Eyre*. “I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quiet churchyard, with its inscribed headstone, its gate, its two trees, its low horizon, girdled by a broken wall, and its newly-risen crescent, attesting the hour of evening.” Though she goes into all these minute details, she does not mention the peculiar inscription on the tombstone, which reads—

“GOOD TIMES  
AND BAD TIMES  
AND ALL TIMES  
GET OVER.”

This may have comforted Charlotte Brontë as it did *Jane Eyre*, as she sat hiding in the window-seat, reading and analysing Bewick.

Her poem on Bewick, written in 1832, helps to prove that the early part of *Jane Eyre* was autobiographical, and that aunt Branwell was the original of “Mrs. Reed,” though it is not all true to fact. Charlotte Brontë paraphrased as well as quoted some of Bewick's writing in her opening chapter of *Jane Eyre*, and her quotation from the poet Thomson is also from a page of Bewick.

It was in those years, after Charlotte Brontë's visit to Roe Head, that her voluminous correspondence with Ellen Nussey began. The girls had vowed eternal friendship in school girl fashion, and had promised to write to each other once a month. Charlotte, with the idea of improving herself, suggested that they should correspond in French.

After leaving Roe Head, Charlotte was frequently invited to Ellen Nussey's home at the Rydings, Birstall. The building is still there, but it has been divided into two houses. When I was privileged to go through the building, Charlotte's bedroom was pointed out, and in the grounds is the sunk fence in which the lightning-struck tree mentioned in *Jane Eyre* was to be seen some few years ago, held together by iron hoops. The house originally belonged to Mr. John Green, a wealthy Yorkshireman, who owned several ancient halls in Yorkshire.

A descendant of this Mr. John Green, Mr. J. J. Green of Hastings, married a daughter of Emily Wheelwright, who was at school with Charlotte and Emily Brontë in Brussels, and received music lessons from Emily Brontë. The Rydings figures in *Jane Eyre* as "Thornfield," though the interior of Norton Conyers, near Harrogate, contributes something to it.

Ellen Nussey was one of a family of eleven, who were all present at her twenty-first birthday party on 22nd April, 1837. She outlived them all and died on 26th November, 1897, aged eighty. The day of her funeral was very wet and wild, but the Birstall churchyard was crowded, people coming from long distances, not only out of respect for Miss Nussey, but because she had been the faithful friend of Charlotte Brontë. The grave-stone was so crowded that Ellen's name has had to be engraved on the side of the stone.

In 1871 she wrote for *Scribner's Magazine* an account of her first visit to Haworth—

"My first visit to Haworth was full of novelty and freshness. The scenery for some miles before we reached Haworth was wild and uncultivated, with hardly any population; at last we came to what seemed a terrific hill, such a deep declivity no one thought of riding down it; the horse had to be carefully led. We no sooner reached the foot of this hill than we had to begin to mount again, over a narrow, rough, stone-paved road; the horse's feet seemed to catch at the boulders as if climbing. When we reached the top of the village there was apparently no outlet, but we were directed to drive into an entry which just admitted the gig; we wound round in this



*Photo by*

THE RYDINGS, BIRSTALL

*J. J. Stead*



entry and then saw the church close at hand, and we entered on the short lane which led to the parsonage gateway. Here Charlotte was waiting, having caught the sound of the approaching gig. When greetings and introductions were over, Miss Branwell (the aunt of the Brontës) took possession of their guest and treated her with the care and solicitude due to a weary traveller. Mr. Brontë, also, was stirred out of his usual retirement by his own kind consideration, for not only the guest but the man-servant and the horse were to be made comfortable. He made inquiries about the man, of his length of service, etc., with the kind purpose of making a few moments of conversation agreeable to him.

"Even at this time, Mr. Brontë struck me as looking very venerable, with his snow-white hair and powdered coat-collar. His manner and mode of speech always had the tone of high-bred courtesy. He was considered somewhat of an invalid, and always lived in the most abstemious and simple manner. His white cravat was not then so remarkable as it grew to be afterwards. He was in the habit of covering this cravat himself. We never saw the operation, but we always had to wind for him the white sewing-silk which he used. Charlotte said it was her father's one extravagance—he cut up yards and yards of white lute-string (silk) in covering his cravat; and, like Dr. Joseph Woolffe (the renowned and learned traveller), who, when on a visit and in a long fit of absence, 'went into a clean shirt every day for a week, without taking one off,' till at length nearly half his head was enveloped in cravat. His liability to bronchial attacks, no doubt, attached him to this increasing growth of cravat.

"Miss Branwell, their aunt, was a small, antiquated little lady. She wore caps large enough for half a dozen of the present fashion, and a front of light auburn curls over her forehead. She always dressed in silk. She had a horror of the climate so far north, and of the stone floors of the parsonage. She amused us by clicking about in pattens whenever she had to go into the kitchen or look after household operations.

"She talked a great deal of her younger days; the gaities of her native town, Penzance, in Cornwall; the soft warm

climate, etc. The social life of her younger days she used to recall with regret ; she gave one the idea that she had been a belle among her own home acquaintances. She took snuff out of a very pretty gold snuff-box, which she sometimes presented to you with a little laugh, as if she enjoyed the slight shock and astonishment visible in your countenance. In summer she spent part of the afternoon in reading aloud to Mr. Brontë. In the winter evenings she must have enjoyed this ; for she and Mr. Brontë had often to finish their discussions on what she had read when we all met for tea. She would be very lively and intelligent, and tilt arguments against Mr. Brontë without fear.

“ ‘Tabby,’ the faithful, trustworthy old servant, was very quaint in appearance—very active, and, in these days, the general servant and factotum. We were all ‘childer’ and ‘bairns,’ in her estimation. She still kept to her duty of walking out with the ‘childer’ if they went any distance from home, unless Branwell were sent by his father as a protector. Poor ‘Tabby’ in later days, after she had been attacked with paralysis, would most anxiously look out for such duties as she was still capable of. The postman was her special point of attention. She did not approve of the inspection which the younger eyes of her fellow-servant bestowed on his deliveries. She jealously seized them when she could, and carried them off with hobbling step and shaking head and hand to the safe custody of Charlotte.

“ Emily Brontë had by this time acquired a lithesome, graceful figure. She was the tallest person in the house, except her father. Her hair, which was naturally as beautiful as Charlotte’s, was in the same unbecoming tight curl and frizz, and there was the same want of complexion. She had very beautiful eyes—kind, kindling, liquid eyes ; but she did not often look at you ; she was too reserved. Their colour might be said to be dark grey, at other times dark blue, they varied so. She talked very little. She and Anne were like twins—inseparable companions, and in the very closest sympathy, which never had any interruption.

“ Anne—dear, gentle Anne—was quite different in appearance

from the others. She was her aunt's favourite. Her hair was a very pretty light brown, and fell on her neck in graceful curls. She had lovely violet-blue eyes, fine pencilled eyebrows, and clear, almost transparent complexion. She still pursued her studies, and especially her sewing, under the surveillance of her aunt. Emily had now begun to have the disposal of her own time.

"In fine and suitable weather delightful rambles were made over the moors and down into glens and ravines that here and there broke the monotony of the moorland. The rugged bank and rippling brook were treasures of delight. Emily, Anne, and Branwell used to ford the streams, and sometimes placed stepping-stones for the other two; there was always a lingering delight in these sports—every moss, every flower, every tint and form, were noted and enjoyed. Emily especially had gleesome delight in these nooks of beauty—her reserve for the time vanished. One long ramble made in these early days was far away over the moors, to a spot familiar to Emily and Anne, which they called 'The Meeting of the Waters.' It was a small oasis of emerald green turf, broken here and there by small clear springs; a few large stones served as resting-places; seated here, we were hidden from all the world, nothing appearing in view but miles and miles of heather, a glorious blue sky, and brightening sun. A fresh breeze wafted on us its exhilarating influence; we laughed and made mirth of each other, and settled we would call ourselves the quartette. Emily, half reclining on a slab of stone, played like a young child with the tadpoles in the water, making them swim about, and then fell to moralising on the strong and the weak, the brave and the cowardly, as she chased them with her hand. No serious care or sorrow had so far cast its gloom on nature's youth and buoyancy, and nature's simplest offerings were fountains of pleasure and enjoyment.

"The interior of the now far-famed parsonage lacked drapery of all kinds. Mr. Brontë's horror of fire forbade curtains to the windows; they never had these accessories to comfort and appearance till long after Charlotte was the only inmate of the family sitting-room—she then ventured on the

innovation when her friend was with her ; it did not please her father, but it was not forbidden. There was not much carpet anywhere except in the sitting-room, and on the study floor. The hall floor and stairs were done with sand-stone, always beautifully clean, as everything was about the house ; the walls were not papered, but stained in a pretty dove-coloured tint ; hair-seated chairs and mahogany tables, bookshelves in the study, but not many of these elsewhere. Scant and bare indeed, many will say, yet it was not a scantness that made itself felt. Mind and thought, I had almost said elegance, but certainly refinement, diffused themselves over all, and made nothing really wanting.

“ A little later on there was the addition of a piano. Emily, after some application, played with precision and brilliancy. Anne played also, but she preferred soft harmonies and vocal music. She sang a little ; her voice was weak, but very sweet in tone.

“ Mr. Brontë's health caused him to retire early. He assembled his household for family worship at eight o'clock ; at nine he locked and barred the front door, always giving, as he passed the sitting-room door, a kindly admonition to the ‘ children ’ not to be late ; half-way up the stairs he stayed his steps to wind up the clock.

“ Every morning was heard the firing of a pistol from Mr. Brontë's room window ; it was the discharging of the loading which was made every night. Mr. Brontë's tastes led him to delight in the perusal of battle-scenes, and in following the artifice of war ; had he entered on military service instead of ecclesiastical, he would probably have had a very distinguished career. The self-denials and privations of camp-life would have agreed entirely with his nature, for he was remarkably independent of the luxuries and comforts of life. The only dread he had was of fire, and this dread was so intense it caused him to prohibit all but silk or woollen dresses for his daughters ; indeed, for anyone to wear any other kind of fabric was almost to forfeit his respect.

“ During Miss Branwell's reign at the parsonage, the love of animals had to be kept in due subjection. There was then



but one dog, which was admitted to the parlour at stated times. Emily and Anne always gave him a portion of their breakfast, which was, by their own choice, the old north country diet of oatmeal porridge. Later on, there were three household pets—the tawny, strong-limbed ‘Keeper,’ Emily’s favourite: he was so completely under her control, she could quite easily make him spring and roar like a lion. She taught him this kind of occasional play without any coercion. ‘Flossy’—long, silky-haired, black and white ‘Flossy’—was Anne’s favourite; and black ‘Tom,’ the tabby, was everybody’s favourite. It received such gentle treatment it seemed to have lost cat’s nature, and subsided into luxurious amiability and contentment. The Brontës’ love of dumb creatures made them very sensitive of the treatment bestowed upon them. For anyone to offend in this respect was with them an infallible bad sign, and a blot on the disposition.”

A visitor does not always see the true family picture. Whilst Ellen Nussey was staying at the parsonage, there were no doubt many signs of what may be regarded as a happy home. As it was summer time, Miss Branwell came downstairs to her meals, and the father left his study to dine with his children and tell tales of his younger days, of Haworth, and of the surrounding neighbourhood. But this was not the usual routine, and it was calculated to create a more favourable impression than the family life warranted. Branwell was beginning to be more troublesome; the vanity, which was a prominent feature in his character, was really his besetting sin. His letters to Coleridge, Wordsworth and the editor of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, showed an excited brain, and there is no doubt that at times his mind was unbalanced, as his letters and some of his poems indicate.

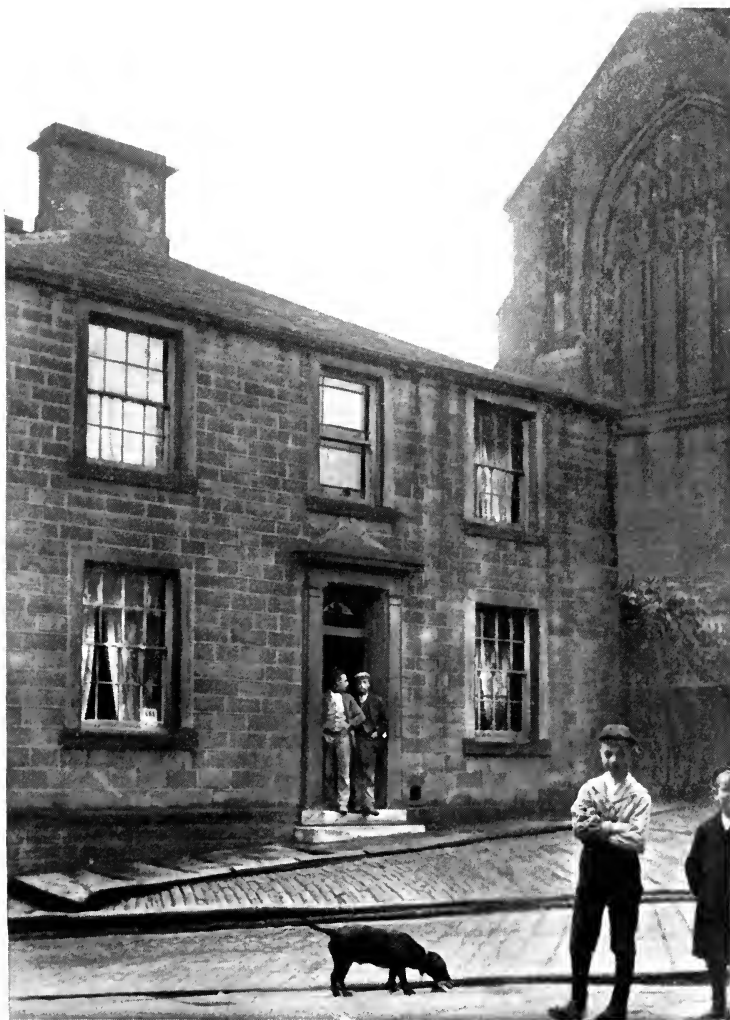
Charlotte Brontë tells of Emily being bitten by a mad dog, and how her sister cauterised the wound with a red-hot iron. She does not refer to the fact that Branwell, when a boy, was bitten by a dog, and in his case the wound was not cauterised. It was only years afterwards, when he became so difficult to manage, that the bite by the dog was referred to. Whether it had anything to do with his lack of control is doubtful;

all the members of the home combined to spoil him, and in cases where the sisters would have been corrected, he was allowed to pass unpunished, and his faults were even attributed to manliness as opposed to being effeminate. Charlotte speaks of his handsome face, and says that nature had been kinder to him than to his sisters. That he went to London is certain, though Mrs. Gaskell did not get to know this; but he soon got through all the money his father had allowed him, giving useless excuses, such as that he had been robbed by a fellow-traveller. The old Vicar saw that Branwell was not to be trusted in London, and he was brought back; he had none of his sisters' stern application to duty. The people of Haworth laughed at him, and treated him as one quite lacking in ordinary common sense, though sociable to a fault.

The Black Bull at Haworth, which has been considered by some people to some extent responsible for Branwell's downfall, was a very respectable village inn, kept by a succession of members of the Sugden family, who would not tolerate conduct likely to jeopardise their good name. When the landlord was taxed with having sent for Branwell, in order to entertain the guests, he replied: "I never sent for him at all; he came himself, hard enough." He admitted, however, that sometimes the Vicar or his daughters would call at the front door to enquire if Branwell was there, upon which occasions Branwell would jump through the kitchen window, or go through the back door, when the landlord would be able to give a satisfactory answer.

There must have been some good in him, for his friends, and even those who were merely acquaintances, had much to say in his favour. Francis A. Leyland, January Searle (George Searle Phillips), Francis H. Grundy, and many who knew him in Haworth pitied rather than blamed him. They considered that he was easily led and unbalanced in character. No one took him seriously; people laughed at his conceited ways, and admired his ability and cleverness in doing things which were beyond them.

Mrs. Gaskell tells of a picture of his three sisters, which he



*Photo by*

*Percival M. Chadwick*

THE BLACK BULL, HAWORTH



Painted. The original has disappeared, though fortunately a photograph on glass was taken by a Haworth photographer. Mrs. Gaskell says—

“They all thought there could be no doubt about Branwell’s talent for drawing. I have seen an oil painting of his, done I know not when, but probably about this time. It was a group of his sisters, life size, three-quarters length; not much better than sign-painting, as to manipulation; but the likenesses were, I should think, admirable. I could only judge of the fidelity with which the other two were depicted, from the striking resemblance which Charlotte, upholding the great frame of canvas, and consequently standing right behind it, bore to her own representation, though it must have been ten years and more since the portraits were taken. The picture was divided, almost in the middle, by a great pillar. On the side of the column which was lighted by the sun, stood Charlotte, in the womanly dress of that day of gigot sleeves and large collars. On the deeply shadowed side was Emily, with Anne’s gentle face resting on her shoulder. Emily’s countenance struck me as full of power; Charlotte’s of solicitude; Anne’s of tenderness. The two younger seemed hardly to have attained their full growth, though Emily was taller than Charlotte; they had cropped hair, and a more girlish dress. I remember looking on those two sad, earnest, shadowed faces, and wondering whether I could trace the mysterious expression which is said to foretell an early death. I had some fond superstitious hope that the column divided their fates from hers, who stood apart in the canvas, as in life she survived. I liked to see that the bright side of the pillar was towards *her*—that the light in the picture fell on *her*: I might more truly have sought in her presentment—nay, in her living face—for the sign of death in her prime. They were good likenesses, however badly executed. From thence I should guess his family argued truly that, if Branwell had but the opportunity, and, alas! had but the moral qualities, he might turn out a great painter.”

Mr. Nicholls took the original to Ireland with him, but not liking the portrait of his wife and her sister Anne he cut out

Emily's portrait, which he considered a good likeness, and gave it to Martha Brown, who was then his servant in Ireland. Sir William Robertson Nicoll, in the *British Weekly* of 29th Oct., 1908, tells of seeing this painting on his first visit to Haworth, in the possession of Martha Brown, but he could not then afford to buy it. The Browns afterwards were not able to say what became of it, nor could they say what Mr. Nicholls did with the remainder, but they think he destroyed it. The people in Haworth who knew the Brontës said that the picture was a very good likeness of the three sisters, and Emily's was especially true. About the time when Branwell painted the picture, Charlotte described herself as getting very fat, which is borne out by the painting.

When it was decided that Branwell should go to the Royal Academy, Charlotte felt that she ought to do something to increase the family income. Several appointments were offered to her, amongst them one from her old schoolmistress, Miss Wooler, which she was glad to accept. It was decided that Emily, who had not attended a school since she was at Cowan Bridge, should go with Charlotte in order to improve her education.

Charlotte Brontë returned to Roe Head as governess in July, 1835, and remained there until May, 1838.

Writing to Miss Nussey on 6th July, 1835, Charlotte Brontë acquaints her with the various plans which have been formed at the Haworth Vicarage—

“Emily is going to school, Branwell is going to London, and I am going to be a governess. This last determination I formed myself, knowing that I should have to take the step some time ‘and better sune as syne,’ to use the Scotch proverb; and knowing well that papa would have enough to do with his limited income, should Branwell be placed at the Royal Academy, and Emily at Roe Head. ‘Where am I going to reside?’ you will ask. Within four miles of you, at a place neither of us is unacquainted with, being no other than the identical Roe Head mentioned above. Yes! I am going to teach in the very school where I was myself taught.”

Her experience as governess at Roe Head made it quite







plain that she had very little aptitude for teaching; she lacked the primary essential—love for young children, “horrid children,” as she called them.

But neither she nor her sisters were naturally fond of children. This opinion is quite borne out by Charlotte Brontë’s old pupils, who were not much impressed by her teaching ability. Those who remembered her thought of her as a small, prim, and strict teacher, always neat in appearance, and reserved in manner. Her failure to impress her personality on her pupils was probably owing to the fact that she hated teaching. “Teach, teach, teach,” she wrote to Ellen Nussey. Had she loved children, she would have been delighted to teach them, instead of looking upon teaching solely as a means of earning a livelihood, though it is not merely an ignorant governess protesting against teaching, but injured genius rebelling against uncongenial work.

Miss Taylor says in one of her letters at this time—

“She seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty.”

Charlotte Brontë worked hard as a teacher, but it was an uncongenial task, and she wore herself out. To add to her anxiety, Emily pined for the moors, trying hard to overcome her home sickness by extra exertion in school, which Charlotte brought to the notice of her father, requesting that he should send for Emily.

Charlotte paid week-end visits to the Red House at Gomersal, where the Taylors lived, and also to Helen Nussey’s home at Brookroyd, to which place she had removed. It is not mentioned that Emily visited either of these homes, and no one at Roe Head appears to have recollected much of her except that she was reserved and did not make friends with any of them: “She kept herself to herself, and had little to say to anybody.”

Without making any impression on Miss Wooler’s little happy school, Emily Brontë returned home, and so ended her school days as a pupil until she was a woman of twenty-four, when she went to Brussels.

After Emily’s departure, Charlotte Brontë, though happy

in the evenings with Miss Wooler, drifted into a state of nervous depression, and to add to her troubles, Anne, her younger sister who had come to take Emily's place at the school was taken ill too ; this was the only school education which Anne ever received. During Anne's illness Charlotte Brontë felt her responsibility very keenly, and even upbraided Miss Wooler for her supposed indifference to Anne's health. This was an example of that occasional ill-temper which clung to Charlotte throughout life, and was caused, most probably, by her overwrought nerves—

“I have some qualities that make me very miserable, some feelings that you can have no participation in—that few, very few, people in the world can at all understand. I don't pride myself on these peculiarities. I strive to conceal and suppress them as much as I can ; but they burst out sometimes, and then those who see the explosion despise me, and I hate myself for days afterwards.”

These attacks of nervous depression, from which Charlotte Brontë suffered when exhausted with anxiety, show how readily her mind would store up a grudge, especially if she had been thwarted ; this partly accounts for her hot denunciation of Cowan Bridge School and the Pensionnat Heger. Writing to Ellen Nussey, she says—

“You have been very kind to me of late, and have spared me all those little sallies of ridicule, which, owing to my miserable and wretched *touchiness of character*, used formerly to make me wince, as if I had been touched with a hot iron ; things that nobody else cares for enter into my mind and rankle there like venom. I know these feelings are absurd, and therefore I try to hide them, but they only sting the deeper for concealment.”

It was about Christmas time of 1836 that Miss Wooler transferred her school from the fine, open and breezy Roe Head, to Heald House, Dewsbury Moor—a much less bracing situation, which was sure to be less healthy to anyone accustomed, as the Brontës were, to the moors at Haworth ; Charlotte very much regretted the change, especially for the sake of her sister Anne.

As a consequence of the sharp quarrel, Miss Wooler wrote to Mr. Brontë, who, evidently believing in Charlotte's version, and no doubt remembering the death of Maria and Elizabeth, sent for both Anne and Charlotte the next day. Miss Wooler sought to be reconciled to her passionate young governess, and they became friends again, the consequence being that Charlotte returned to the school after the holidays. She did not, however, remain longer than May, 1838, as the doctor advised her to return to Haworth owing to an attack of hypochondria. After a quiet rest, her father invited Mary and Martha Taylor to spend a few days at the parsonage. He was anxious to remove the depression from which Charlotte suffered, and the visit of these two friends acted like a charm.

Charlotte at this time was influenced by a letter from Southey, to whom she had sent some of her poems; she took his reply quite seriously. Teaching was just as distasteful as writing was congenial to her; the fact that she had to follow the uninteresting life of a governess was calculated to bring about periods of depression. It is evident that this letter to Southey was somewhat flippant, judging by his reply. She, however, wrote to thank him for the advice he gave her, which led to a second letter from Southey, which suggests that he had a better opinion of Charlotte Brontë after her second letter to him.

Referring to Charlotte's first letter, which has never been forthcoming, Southey wrote to Caroline Bowles—

"I sent a dose of cooling admonition to the poor girl whose flighty letter reached me at Buckland. It seems she is the eldest daughter of a clergyman, has been expensively educated, and is laudably employed as governess in some private family. About the same time that she wrote to me her brother wrote to Wordsworth, who was disgusted with the letter, for it contained gross flattery and plenty of abuse of other poets, including me. I think well of the sister from her second letter, and probably she will think kindly of me as long as she lives."

ROBERT SOUTHEY (1837).<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Gaskell has given Charlotte's second letter and also

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles.

Southey's two letters in reply. Charlotte says in her second letter to Southey: "I trust I shall never more feel ambitious to see my name in print; if the wish should rise I'll look at Southey's letter and suppress it." For some time, literary work was laid aside, and she tried to give her mind to other duties.

It was during the Christmas holidays of 1837 that Tabby, the old servant, met with an accident and broke her leg. All the sisters had to take their share in nursing her and doing her work, which interfered with their Christmas festivities. Miss Branwell was very anxious that Tabby should be sent to her relatives, and she persuaded Mr. Brontë that this would be the best plan, but the Brontë girls adopted the "hunger strike" until they were allowed to have their own way. Miss Branwell and her nieces did not always take the same view, as the sexton's family, living close by, knew quite well.

Charlotte Brontë remained at Haworth about a year after leaving Miss Wooler's school at Dewsbury Moor. In *The Professor* she introduces an account of the illness of William Crimsworth, the original of whom was the novelist herself—

"I was temporarily a prey to hypochondria. She had been my acquaintance, nay, my guest, once before in boyhood; I had entertained her at bed and board for a year; for that space of time I had her to myself in secret; she lay with me, she ate with me, she walked out with me, showing me nooks in woods, hollows in hills, where we could sit together, and where she could drop her drear veil over me, and so hide sky and sun, grass and green tree; taking me entirely to her death-cold bosom and holding me with arms of bone. What tales she would tell me at such hours! What songs she would recite in my ears! How she would discourse to me of her own country—the grave—and again and again promise to conduct me there ere long; and drawing me to the very brink of a black, sullen river, show me on the other side shores unequal with mound, monument, and tablet, standing up in a glimmer more hoary than moonlight. 'Necropolis!' she would whisper, pointing to the pale piles, and add, 'It contains a mansion prepared for you.'"

Writing to Branwell from Brussels, six years later, Charlotte says—

“It is a curious, metaphysical fact that always in the evening . . . I always recur as fanatically as ever to the old ideas, the old faces, and the old scenes in the world below.”

## CHAPTER X

EMILY BRONTË AT LAW HILL, SOUTHOWRAM

1836-1839

EMILY BRONTË appointed governess at Law Hill School—Lack of training for her duties—Her account of school life—Her Character—The Misses Patchett—Law Hill School and neighbourhood—Poems composed whilst at the school—Material and inspiration gained by Emily's association with the school.

EMILY seems to have soon revived after reaching home from Roe Head, and she kept up her studies, partly with her father, but working more frequently alone, whilst Charlotte and Anne continued at Roe Head School.

After remaining at home about fifteen months, Emily, now aged eighteen, obtained an appointment as a governess, probably urged on like Charlotte, and later like Anne, by the feeling that she ought to earn something to enable Branwell to be sent to the Royal Academy. She was successful in obtaining a situation at the school kept by a Miss Elizabeth Patchett, at Law Hill, Southowram, some three or four miles from Halifax. Her experience for this position was somewhat limited. As a teacher she had received no training whatever, and it is not surprising, therefore, that she had a hard time at the beginning of her career at Law Hill, for she was incapable of submitting to regular routine; she loved to do things in her own way, and preferred to choose her own time: "I'll walk where my own nature would be leading; it vexes me to choose another guide," she says in one of her poems.

Charlotte Brontë wrote to Ellen Nussey from Roe Head School on 2nd October, 1836—

"My sister Emily is gone into a situation as teacher in a large school of near forty pupils, near Halifax. I have had one letter from her since her departure; it gives an appalling account of her duties—hard labour from six in the morning until near eleven at night, with only one half-hour of exercise between. This is slavery. I fear she will never stand it."

This is all the actual information which has been handed down by the Brontës concerning Emily's stay at Law Hill.

According to Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte wrote this letter to Ellen Nussey on 6th Oct., 1836.

In the privately printed volume of Charlotte's letters, which were compiled by Mr. Horsfall Turner for Ellen Nussey, the letter is also dated 6th Oct., 1836, and in the first Brontë Museum exhibition Mr. Horsfall Turner exhibited a letter of Charlotte's of that date, but in the *Life and Letters*, by Mr. Shorter, the letter is dated 2nd April, 1837, and is headed Dewsbury Moor, but there must be some mistake, for Miss Wooler was at Roe Head when Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey telling her of Emily having gone to a situation at Law Hill.

Mrs. Gaskell says: "Emily had given up her situation in the Halifax District School at the expiration of six months of arduous trial."<sup>1</sup> This would imply that Emily left Law Hill in the Spring of 1837. But, in a statement following a letter dated March, 1839, referring to Henry Nussey's proposal of marriage to Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Gaskell says: "Emily, who suffered and drooped more than her sisters when away from home, was the one appointed to remain. Anne was the first to meet with a situation." Anne accepted this appointment in April, 1839, according to Charlotte Brontë's letter, which Mrs. Gaskell quotes. This would show that Emily Brontë stayed at Law Hill for two and a half years.

Again, Anne Brontë, writing in her journal on 30th July, 1841, says: "Four years ago I was at school . . . Emily has been a teacher at Miss Patchett's and left it." As the second little journal was written exactly four years later, the one for 1841 points to the fact that the four years mentioned cover July, 1837, to July, 1841, showing that Emily was at Law Hill later than the Spring of 1837. In support of this evidence, Mrs. Watkinson of Huddersfield, who first went as a pupil to Law Hill in Oct., 1838, has kindly allowed me to see letters of hers written at that time from Law Hill, and she is absolutely certain that Emily Brontë was a teacher during the winter, 1838-39; she remembers

<sup>1</sup> The only authority for this statement appears to be a letter from Ellen Nussey to Mrs. Gaskell, dated Oct. 22, 1856. (*The Brontës: Life and Letters*, by Clement K. Shorter.)

her quite well, and the one thing that impressed her most about Emily Brontë was her devotion to the house-dog, which she once told her little pupils was dearer to her than they were.

It is unfortunate that all Emily's letters to her sisters have been destroyed by Charlotte Brontë. The letter to Ellen Nussey complaining of Emily's hardships is but another chapter in an old story. All the employers of the Brontës were slave-drivers, according to Charlotte, whereas whatever fault existed could be attributed largely to the temperament of the eccentric and reserved daughters of the moor. They had no aptitude for teaching, for the chains of their genius were dragging at them all the time.

Mrs. Gaskell has tried to prove that the employers of the Brontës were all unkind and even cruel. Those who knew Miss Elizabeth Patchett, of Law Hill School, have spoken very highly of her, and she was greatly respected and loved by her pupils. This is fully borne out by letters seen by the writer, all of which go to prove that she was a kind schoolmistress. This girls' school was conducted by two sisters, Miss Elizabeth and Miss Maria Patchett. Miss Maria Patchett was married before Emily Brontë went to Southowram, and Miss Elizabeth married the Rev. John Hope, Vicar of Southowram, shortly after Emily Brontë left in 1839.

From the testimony of several old pupils, Emily Brontë was not unpopular at Law Hill, though she could not easily associate with others, and her work was hard because she had not the faculty of doing it quickly. Unlike Charlotte, she was not good at needlework, and like her elder sister Maria, though clever in her own unique way, she was untidy, and fond of day-dreaming. The school was built away from the farm, across the yard; it was a long narrow building, divided into class-rooms, and the pupils slept in the bedrooms overhead, and not at the farm.

Miss Elizabeth Patchett, according to one of her pupils still living, was a very beautiful woman, wearing her hair in curls. She was fond of teaching, and after her marriage to Mr. Hope she lived in the Vicarage, and took a great interest in the old home. Her husband died in 1843, and when



visiting his grave in the old churchyard she never failed to call at her old home. Her relatives naturally were not pleased that Charlotte Brontë's letter to Miss Nussey should have been published by Mrs. Gaskell. Like Cowan Bridge, Law Hill School was ever afterwards marked as an institution which was conducted with lack of consideration, simply because one of the Brontës was unable to carry out the ordinary duties assigned to her. The consequence was that the friends and relatives of the Patchetts refrained from discussing Emily Brontë for many years. They quite ignored the Brontë connection with the school, being satisfied that their reputation should rest with other pupils and teachers who had passed through it.

The quaint village of Southowram, near Halifax, stands at the top of a very steep and long hill, higher than Haworth, and the approach to it to-day is by a steep and irregular road, which affords a hard climb to the pedestrian; but in Emily Brontë's time there was no real road, except a rugged moorland path, leading up Beacon Hill. From the village a magnificent view of hills on every side can be seen, stretching as far as Oxenhope Moors on one side and the Kirklees Estate on the other, whilst the winding Calder valley lies between, with its river and canal.

Law Hill is a gentleman farmer's house; it is a square three-storied building, with a pleasant view looking in the direction of the little church known as St. Anne's-in-the-Grove. A still older church, now used as a stable, was known as St. Anne's-in-the-Brier. From the windows of Law Hill there are fine views over the Calder valley to the heights around. On the lawn are large trees, which in summer hide the greater part of the front of the house. It was whilst at Law Hill that Emily wrote—

“ The night is darkening round me,  
The wild winds coldly blow;  
But a tyrant spell has bound me,  
And I cannot, cannot go.  
The giant trees are bending  
Their bare boughs weighed with snow,  
And the storm is fast descending,  
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,  
 Wastes beyond wastes below;  
 But nothing dread can move me,  
 I will not, cannot go."<sup>1</sup>

This poem is dated November, 1837, The uncultivated land around Law Hill was mostly "waste beyond waste" in 1837; now it is cultivated. When the writer last visited Law Hill, it was occupied by two brothers, who lived alone, no woman having dwelt in the house for years. The front gate being locked and barred, access was gained through a wide, open gateway close to the schoolroom, with stone pillars on either side of the path admitting to the back door. On knocking at the door the angry barking of dogs greets one, reminding the visitor of Lockwood's approach to Wuthering Heights, for this old house at Southowram has been credited with being the original of Wuthering Heights, and it is certain that Emily had it in mind when writing her masterpiece, for, as on Haworth moors, many weird tales are associated with this district. She seems to have taken Law Hill as the original for Wuthering Heights, and placed it on Haworth Moor.

The schoolroom across the farmyard, in which Emily Brontë dragged out her uncongenial duties, has been considerably altered, and it is now converted into three small cottages. The present owner remembers the last visit paid by Mrs. Hope (Miss Patchett), the former schoolmistress. She was then a very old lady, but still beautiful with her grey curls, and, though over eighty years of age, "could nip about from room to room quite gaily," as he expressed it. From the description of Miss Patchett, which has been given by those who knew her, it is evident that she was of a decided and practical turn of mind, and a person who knew how to carry out her duties as a schoolmistress. Her school, in consequence, had an excellent reputation. In Emily Brontë's time there was a farm attached to it, which practically supplied most of the produce that was required by the pupils, teachers and servants. It is possible that the original of "Joseph" in *Wuthering Heights* may have been connected with the farm, and it is

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by Clement K. Shorter.



LAW HILL, SOUTHOWRAM

The figure shows a 10x10 grid of cells. Each cell is either empty (white) or contains a black dot representing a tree. The trees are distributed as follows (row, column): (1,1), (1,2), (1,3), (1,4), (1,5), (1,6), (1,7), (1,8), (1,9), (1,10), (2,1), (2,2), (2,3), (2,4), (2,5), (2,6), (2,7), (2,8), (2,9), (2,10), (3,1), (3,2), (3,3), (3,4), (3,5), (3,6), (3,7), (3,8), (3,9), (3,10), (4,1), (4,2), (4,3), (4,4), (4,5), (4,6), (4,7), (4,8), (4,9), (4,10), (5,1), (5,2), (5,3), (5,4), (5,5), (5,6), (5,7), (5,8), (5,9), (5,10), (6,1), (6,2), (6,3), (6,4), (6,5), (6,6), (6,7), (6,8), (6,9), (6,10), (7,1), (7,2), (7,3), (7,4), (7,5), (7,6), (7,7), (7,8), (7,9), (7,10), (8,1), (8,2), (8,3), (8,4), (8,5), (8,6), (8,7), (8,8), (8,9), (8,10), (9,1), (9,2), (9,3), (9,4), (9,5), (9,6), (9,7), (9,8), (9,9), (9,10), (10,1), (10,2), (10,3), (10,4), (10,5), (10,6), (10,7), (10,8), (10,9), (10,10). The distribution is sparse, with clusters of trees in the top-left, top-right, and bottom-right areas, and a few isolated trees elsewhere.

probable that Emily Brontë quite unconsciously got material from this place when writing her famous novel. The road leading to these heights is known as Beacon Hill Road, and Law Hill can be seen from a long distance. A tramway now scales the Beacon Hill, but so steep was it near the top that a large slice of land was practically cut off to level it when the new road was made.

The girls at the school were taught all the usual accomplishments, and horse-riding in addition: Miss Patchett is said to have been a very skilful horsewoman. There is an old stone horsemount in the farmyard, near to the side entrance, leading to the front lawn. Emily Brontë pictures the elder Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* as a fearless rider. The white painted stoops on the moor between Haworth and Halifax are mentioned in *Wuthering Heights*, as are also the horse steps.

Emily Brontë would be sure to notice these upright stones which are still to be seen, when driving to and from Southowram. The fields and meadows around Law Hill were part of the farm, and Emily Brontë must have had them in mind when she portrayed Joseph looking for Heathcliff in Chapter IX of *Wuthering Heights*. There is mention of the moors, the hay-loft, the gate on the full swing, Miss's pony, and the meadow—all to be found near Law Hill, for the fields near the farm were cultivated, and the wastes stretched beyond. The Withens, by many claimed as the original of *Wuthering Heights*, on Haworth Moor, does not answer so well to this description, and the house seems smaller than *Wuthering Heights* as described by Emily Brontë. The tracts of waste land beyond the parsonage at Haworth and at Southowram have both been utilised in *Wuthering Heights*: both are lonely and desolate: here and there are the old farms, in which the rough and uncouth people lived, seldom associating with each other or with other people. When Charlotte said Emily had no more practical knowledge of the people among whom she lived than a nun has of those who passed her convent gates, she forgot that Emily had seen something of the life of the farmer and his servants during her two and a half years at Law Hill.

Emily Brontë, like Charlotte when at Roe Head and Dewsbury Moor, does not appear to have made much impression on her pupils; she was simply one of the governesses—nothing more. She had charge of the younger children, and they soon forgot the time she spent with them, though there is no record that she was ever unkind; on the contrary she was liked by some of her pupils. The girls were all boarders from Halifax and other towns in the neighbourhood, and the elevated position of the school counted in its favour. It was certainly a healthy spot for strong girls, but the Brontës were far from strong, and the taint of “consumption” predisposed them to illness, whilst other girls would be likely to flourish in such a bracing climate, but as Emily appears to have stayed at Law Hill from October, 1836, to the Spring of 1839, it seems as if the place agreed with her.

When Emily Brontë walked around Southowram, she would often be with the pupils or with Miss Patchett, and not alone as she would wish. As the Patchetts were a very old Halifax family, it is possible that Emily Brontë would learn much of the district from Miss Patchett, who at the time was a handsome woman of forty-four, just as Charlotte did from Miss Wooler at Roe Head; for the daily walks with the Head Mistress were a much prized recreation, a former pupil told me.

Unlike Cowan Bridge School, the church was not far away, and Emily Brontë was able to take her walks to the church and the moors with her pupils without any great inconvenience, even in bad weather. There was a choice of walks, one leading down the valley to Brighouse, whilst beyond is Hartshead-cum-Clifton, and further on is Roe Head and Kirklees. The long steep road to Halifax and back was nearly eight miles and obviously too severe a strain for the young scholars, but one of the pupils, who was at the school when Emily Brontë was there, allowed me to see a letter in which she mentions that Miss Patchett took some of the girls to Halifax to see the Museum occasionally, and the stuffed birds and animals are mentioned in the letter as being of great interest; doubtless Emily Brontë enjoyed the Museum. She never refers to her school days in

her novel, but she mentions her surroundings again and again, both in her novel and in her poems.

In spite of Emily's hard treatment, of which Charlotte Brontë complained, she wrote a number of poems during the period of 1836-1839 whilst at Law Hill, and the poem on "Home," beginning "A little while, a little while," was written there, in my opinion—

"A little while, a little while,  
The weary task is put away,  
And I can sing and I can smile,  
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—  
What thought, what scene invites thee now?  
What spot, or near or far apart,  
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

Still, as I mused, the naked room,  
The alien firelight died away;  
And from the midst of cheerless gloom  
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

The last verse reads—

Even as I stood with raptured eye,  
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,  
My hour of rest had fled by,  
And back came labour, bondage, care."

"Even as I stood with raptured eye" seems to point to the nearness of Emily Brontë's home, which, as the crow flies, was only a short distance away.

It is not possible to agree with Mrs. Humphry Ward, or Miss May Sinclair, that the poem was composed at Roe Head, even though Charlotte Brontë attributes it to that period. Charlotte says Emily was only sixteen when she wrote the poem; as a matter of fact Emily was seventeen on the very day after she arrived at Miss Wooler's school. Charlotte never seems to have heard much from Emily about Law Hill. Sir William Robertson Nicoll and Miss Robinson consider it to have been written when Emily Brontë was at Brussels, because Miss Robinson saw a copy of Emily Brontë's poems with dates; but this poem

may have been kept undated, as many others were; if it had been dated Charlotte Brontë would have seen it, and not guessed that it was written at Roe Head. It is much more likely to have been written at Law Hill, for at Roe Head there was little in Miss Wooler's school to lead her to write about "labour, bondage, care," nor was there at Brussels, as in each case Emily Brontë was a pupil, and study to her was not "labour, bondage, care." Her evenings at Roe Head and at Brussels were spent in her own way, with her studies, whereas at Law Hill she was said to have been at work until nearly eleven o'clock at night, possibly mending the pupils' clothing, preparing lessons for the next day, marking exercises, and caring for things belonging to her pupils. Moreover, it would be in keeping with Emily's character to compose poems in her solitude, but whilst at Roe Head and Brussels she had Charlotte's company in the evenings, and both she and Charlotte Brontë had gone to Brussels with the determination to acquire a good knowledge of French and German, and in consequence there was little time for writing poetry in the evenings. There is only one poem that can be attributed to Brussels, judging by the *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, recently published by Mr. Clement Shorter. Emily was in her nineteenth year when she went to Law Hill. The "alien firelight" mentioned in the poem could scarcely refer to Miss Wooler's kindly hearth, and at Brussels a stove was used, whereas at Law Hill the firelight might well be considered "alien," as Emily was a stranger amongst strangers. If the poem is carefully studied, it is evident that it is the lament of a governess, whose "labour, bondage, care" have well nigh overwhelmed her, rather than the moan of a pupil. Moreover, the poem could scarcely have been written at Roe Head, for Emily Brontë's previous poems of 1835 are far from being equal to the one commencing "A little while, a little while." If Emily stayed at Law Hill for two years and a half, as seems very probable, she may have composed this poem at any time in the interval between her eighteenth birthday and within a few months of her twenty-first birthday. Anne probably wrote her poem on "Home" when she was about eighteen. This helps to confirm



the assumption that Emily was about twenty when she wrote hers, for the sisters wrote on similar subjects, as on "The Gondals" and "The Last Lines." Granted that Emily was at the school for two years and a half, during that period she wrote no fewer than thirty-nine poems, according to the dates given in the recent edition of *The Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, published by Mr. Clement Shorter. Some of these poems evidently refer to her residence at Law Hill. In addition to these thirty-nine poems, there are seventeen which Charlotte published in 1850, which she called *Selections from the Literary Remains of Ellis and Acton Bell*. These were issued with a new edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., who took over the publication from Messrs. Newby, the original publishers. Charlotte Brontë tells us that the poems were written at twilight in the schoolroom when Emily was only sixteen. Charlotte Brontë makes several mistakes in her preface, which seems to imply that she and Emily were not in each other's confidence.

Referring to Roe Head, Charlotte says of Emily: "She only had been three months at school, and it was some years before the experiment of sending her from home was again ventured on. After the age of twenty, having meantime studied alone with diligence and perseverance, she went with me to an establishment on the Continent." This was in 1842.

This preface to the "Selections" does not touch on the stay of the two and a half years at Southowram, but Charlotte Brontë clearly implies that the moors were the source of Emily's inspiration. The district around Roe Head was not moorland, nor, of course, was it at Brussels. Southowram evidently helped to furnish Emily with material and inspiration for her poems and her one great novel.

Several of Emily Brontë's poems prove the existence of the *Gondal Chronicles*.

These *Gondal Chronicles* are first mentioned in a poem dated 19th August, 1834, when Emily was only sixteen. This poem was written a year before she went to Roe Head in July, 1835, and, from Anne's remarks, the Gondals had given them interest and amusement for many a long day.

" O Alexander ! when I return,  
 Warm as these hearths thy heart would burn ;  
 Light as thine own my step would fall,  
 If I might hear thy voice in the hall.

But thou art now on the desolate sea,  
 Thinking of Gondal and grieving for me ;  
 Longing to be in sweet Elbe again,  
 Thinking and grieving and longing in vain."<sup>1</sup>

If Emily Brontë left home in October, 1836—the date given by Charlotte—then the first poem that Emily wrote at Law Hill suggests the scenery around Southowram—

" All down the mountain-sides wild forests lending  
 The mighty voice to the life-giving wind ;  
 Rivers their banks in the jubilee bending,  
 Fast through the valleys a reckless course wending,  
 Wilder and deeper their waters extending,  
 Leaving a desolate desert behind."<sup>1</sup>

The poem, consisting of four stanzas, is dated December 13, 1836, and suggests the woods on the hill sides, which slope down to the winding river Calder in the valley below.

There is another poem showing that Emily, like Charlotte, suffered from insomnia, and, judging by the date, it must have been written at Law Hill.

The last two verses read—

" Sleep brings no friend to me  
 To soothe and aid to bear ;  
 They all gaze on how scornfully,  
 And I despair.

Sleep brings no wish to fret  
 My harassed heart beneath ;  
 My only wish is to forget  
 In endless sleep of death."<sup>1</sup>

*November, 1837.*

There are poems which range in date from December, 1836, to January, 1839, which covers the time when Emily was at Law Hill. The poem "To a wreath of snow" written in December, 1837, which tells of "my prison room," could scarcely refer to Haworth.

It was decided by the family in the Spring of 1839, according

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by Clement K. Shorter.

to Mrs. Gaskell, that Emily should remain at home, whilst Charlotte went as governess to Stonegappe, Anne to Blake Hall, and Branwell had a studio in Bradford, where he set up as a portrait-painter, and worked with Mr. Thompson.

It was in the April of 1839 that Emily wrote *The Absent One*, which was probably suggested by Anne's departure after her Spring holiday. The first stanza runs—

“ From our evening fireside now  
 Merry laugh and cheerful tone,  
 Smiling eye and cloudless brow,  
 Mirth and music all are flown.  
 Yet the grass before the door  
 Grows as green in April rain,  
 And as blithely as of yore  
 Larks have poured their daylight strain.”<sup>1</sup>

These poems have more than a bibliographical interest, for they prove that Emily Brontë was not altogether the visionary mystic which some writers have assumed. She had a kind heart, and her affection for her home and family was greater than it is supposed to have been. It has been thought that her poems had no biographical reference either to herself or her family, but this view is not correct. The poems written at Law Hill are distinct from the Haworth poems, and whilst they have some affinity with the *Gondal Chronicles* they reveal something of the life of the author of *Wuthering Heights*, and they prove that none but Emily Brontë could have written the tragedy of *Wuthering Heights* as it stands. Take, for instance, the poem beginning “Light up thy halls,” and dated 1st November, 1838, the last lines of which are characteristic of Emily—

“ Unconquered in my soul the Tyrant rules me still :  
 Life bows to my control, but *Love* I cannot kill ! ”

The poem beginning “The soft unclouded blue of air” could only have been written by one who was able to create a Heathcliff some eight years afterwards.

Environment confers nothing ; it can only develop innate capacity, which Emily showed both in her poetry and in her novel. One other poem written at this time shows her

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by C. K. Shorter.

ambition and the note of despair, that often went hand in hand all through her life. She had no "worldly wisdom," as Charlotte said after her death, but her work shows that not only did she possess genius, but that she had high ideals, which she ever struggled to attain.

Emily's one wish seems to have been to write her thoughts in verse. In August, 1837, when at Law Hill she writes—

"I asked myself, O why has Heaven  
 Denied the precious gift to me,  
 The glorious gift to many given,  
 To speak their thoughts in poetry?  
 Dreams have encircled me, I said,  
 From careless childhood's sunny time;  
 Visions by ardent fancy fed  
 Since life was in its morning prime.  
 But now, when I had hoped to sing,  
 My fingers strike a tuneless string;  
 And still the burden of the strain—  
 I strive no more; 'tis all in vain."<sup>1</sup>

The complete edition of Emily Brontë's poems has proved that some of the mysterious *Gondal Chronicles* lie buried in the poems. Whether Emily wrote any chronicles in prose will never be known, but it is clear that "the good many books" which Emily said she had in hand in July, 1841, must have been destroyed.

As previously mentioned, the pupils at Law Hill were taught horse-riding, and it is not at all unlikely that Emily learnt to ride whilst there, so that the poem, *To the horse, Black Eagle, which I rode at the battle of Zamorna*, though imaginative, suited Emily's fearless nature. Emily may have known the delights of horse-riding, and her love for animals would be sure to include horses. Branwell was fond of horse-riding when he could get the loan of horse, and a saddle-bag is now to be seen in the Brontë Museum, which was used both by him and by his father.

The battle of Zamorna was likely enough an incident in the *Gondal Chronicles*, and the mention of the word Zamorna proves that Emily joined in the writing of the imaginary

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by Clement K. Shorter.

chronicles. In the British Museum is a small volume of manuscripts by Charlotte Brontë, purchased in 1892 from a Mr. Nys of Brussels. The longest manuscript, consisting of twenty-six pages, is *The Spell: an Extravaganza by Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley* and signed Charlotte Brontë, July 21, 1834. In it she says, "I sign myself your guardian in peace, your general in war, your tyrant in rebellion, ZAMORNA," which was Charlotte's *nom de guerre* in 1834.

The story is dated from the Zamorna Palace (Emily writes of the Palace of Instruction) and in a postscript, addressed to the Earl of North Angerland—a *nom de guerre* used by Branwell Brontë—Charlotte writes: "Signed, your lordship's countryman, Zamorna, September 15th, 1834." Further, there is a reference to a speech by His Grace, the Duke of Zamorna.

There is also included in the volume in the British Museum a scrap-book written by Charlotte Brontë, dated March 17th, 1835, and described on the outer cover as "A mingling of many things compiled by Lord C. A. F. Wellesley"; this contains an "Address to the Angrians by His Grace, the Duke of Zamorna," and it is interesting to know that in May, 1912, a manuscript of some twenty-four pages was sold in London, entitled *The Rising of the Angrians*, by Branwell Brontë, dated January, 1836, which shows that Charlotte and Branwell were writing on similar subjects, indeed judging from these old MSS. the brother and sister became rivals, and tilted arguments at each other. In this address to the "Angrians," Charlotte begins: "Men of Angria": "If you would only pronounce Arthur Wellesley your chosen leader, etc.," and she signs herself "Your tyrant in rebellion."

As further proof that all the parsonage children were busy with these imaginative stories, it is interesting to find Charlotte addresses a Lady Helen Percy, and Emily in her recently published poems addresses "Percy" several times, whilst Branwell wrote in 1835, *The Life of Field Marshal the Right Honourable Alexander Percy, Earl of Northangerland*, in two volumes, by John Bud (P. B. Brontë). In 1837 he is credited with a story, *Percy*, by P. B. Brontë, and in *The Brontë Family*, by the late Mr. Leyland, is a long poem on "Percy Hall," which

Mr. Leyland tells us is signed "Northangerland" at the top and Alexander Percy, Esq., at the bottom. Emily Brontë seems to be the only one of the family that refused to use a *nom de guerre* in the early day. Either she signed her own name, or left the poem unsigned, so far as is known.

Even Anne uses Lady Geralda, Alexandrina Zenotia, and Olivia Vernon as pseudonyms.

Miss May Sinclair in her criticism on Emily Brontë's poems in *The Three Brontës* says: "You can track the great Gondal hero down by that one fantastic name Zamorna," which Miss Sinclair treats as purely impersonal. Seeing that the name is associated with Charlotte Brontë, it lends interest to the *Gondal Chronicles*, showing that these imaginative plays, like the Brontë novels, had some reference to the Brontë household, as they used each other as characters in the plays. In the light of my discovery in the British Museum MS. that Charlotte wrote as "The Duke of Zamorna" in 1834-35, and that Branwell was known as "Percy," the following stanza from page 229 of Mr. Shorter's *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë* is interesting.

"What! shall Zamorna go down to the dead.  
With blood on his hand that he wept to have shed?  
What! shall they carve on his tomb with the sword  
The Slayer of Percy, the scourge of the Lord?  
Bright flashed the fire in the young Duke's eye  
As he spoke in the tones of the trumpet swelling.  
Then he stood still and watched earnestly how these tones  
were on Percy's spirit telling."<sup>1</sup>

Charlotte heads one chapter of one of the early manuscripts addressed to Percy: "He comes, the conquering hero comes." For many years Brontë enthusiasts have been searching for the manuscript of the early part of a story sent to Wordsworth in the summer of 1840 (if Mrs. Gaskell's date is correct), but as Wordsworth's letter is undated, there is no proof; and Mrs. Gaskell has more than once put letters under the wrong date, and even placed an extract from one letter as being from a totally different one, though it is possible that the MS. was sent in 1840, but if it refers to the MS. now in the British Museum, that is dated 1834 and 1835.

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by Clement K. Shorter.

Comparing *The Spell* with Charlotte Brontë's letter to Wordsworth, we can perceive that it answers to the description, for there is the character of "Percy" mentioned repeatedly, and also a "Georgina" and "Eliza," which afterwards appear in *Jane Eyre*. The MS. is in very minute hand printing and needs a powerful magnifying glass to decipher it. It is evidently the MS. which Mr. Shorter says cannot be traced.

Since Mrs. Gaskell saw the MS. in 1855, it is clear that she saw it in Brussels. Referring to it Mrs. Gaskell says: "Some fragments of the manuscript yet remain, but it is in too small a hand to be read without great fatigue to the eyes; and one cares the less to read it, as she herself condemned it, in the preface to the *Professor*, by saying that in this story she had got over such taste as she might once have had for the 'ornamental and redundant in composition.'"

No fewer than eighty poems in the complete edition of Emily Brontë's poems contain imaginative names which possibly refer to the *Gondal Chronicles*. Had Emily Brontë lived to know of her success, both as a poet and a novelist, she might have given to the world her cycle of *Gondal Chronicles*, which were probably never completed. Charlotte possibly destroyed some, which she considered not to be of sufficient merit to be included in the second collection of poems published in 1850, though some are now published.

Of the selections made by Charlotte of Emily Brontë's poems, the best known are *The Philosopher*, *Remembrance*, *Hope*, *Honour's Martyr*, *The old Stoic*, *A little while, a little while*, *The Visionary* and *Last Lines*, which will always bear repeating, for they are not to be surpassed in dignity and self-reliance. Unfortunately these are not all dated. Charlotte and Anne have had some of their poems set to music, but most of Emily's are unsuitable for song. The voice of the soul is tense and suppressed, so much so that in reading them aloud there is a heart-ache. Emily Brontë was intensely introspective, and the gift of humour had passed her by. Her poems *grow* upon the reader and they gain by re-reading, for the spirit of the mystic broods over all she wrote and they provide food rather for the soul than for the intellect.

## CHAPTER XI

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S OFFERS OF MARRIAGE

1839

ANNE BRONTË becomes a governess at Blake Hall, Mirfield—*Agnes Grey* and Blake Hall—Charlotte Brontë's first offer of marriage—Her views on marriage—The Rev. Henry Nussey—a prototype of St. John Rivers in *Jane Eyre*—His unfortunate love affairs—Mr. Nussey's Diary—Charlotte Brontë's refusal of the offer—Christmas time at the Haworth Vicarage—Charlotte Brontë becomes a governess at Stonegappe—Mr. John Benson Sidgwick—Gateshead Hall in *Jane Eyre*—She complains of her treatment at Stonegappe—Mrs. Gaskell's Account—Charlotte Brontë visits Swarcliffe, Harrogate—Norton Conyers and Thornfield Hall—Her second offer of marriage—First visit to the sea—Easton and Bridlington—Ellen Nussey's account of the holiday.

IN the early part of 1839 the three Brontë sisters were at home, and Charlotte and Anne decided that they ought to take steps to earn their own living. Anne, the youngest daughter, secured an appointment first; she was now nineteen, and, though never so definite in her views as her sisters, she was not lacking in courage. The old people at Haworth described her as gentle, sweet and good, with very pretty features, and long curls of light brown hair. Her first situation was with a Mrs. Ingham, at Blake Hall, Mirfield—a fine country mansion surrounded by a park. The house is still in existence, and is occupied by a relative of the people who were the tenants in the time of Anne Brontë's governess days. As *Agnes Grey* never became popular, little attention has been directed to Anne's account of the family in her novel, but, in a preface to a new edition, she tells her critics who have accused her of exaggeration that the story is true enough. If that is so, she had a very hard time of it.

Charlotte Brontë was at that time hoping to find a suitable appointment in a private family, for her experience as governess in Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head and afterwards at Dewsbury Moor had proved too much for her highly-strung and conscientious nature.



It was after her serious breakdown at Dewsbury Moor that, on the advice of the local doctor, Mr. Brontë invited Mary and Martha Taylor to Haworth, and in one of her letters to Ellen Nussey Charlotte gives a pretty picture of the happy group at the parsonage, during the holiday. Branwell and lively little Martha Taylor, who was known as Miss Boisterous, seem to have got on well together, and the society of the sisters restored Charlotte to health. It was an attack of hypochondria which she mentions in *The Professor*.

It was just after Charlotte's serious illness that she received her first offer of marriage from the Rev. Henry Nussey, when she was twenty-three years of age. Her determined rejection of the proposal has been considered a proof that she had an aversion from marriage. Mrs. Gaskell writes of Charlotte: "Her first proposal of marriage was quietly declined, and put on one side. Matrimony did not enter into her scheme of life, but good, sound, earnest labour did." This, however, is quite a mistake, for few women ever gave more thought to matrimony than Charlotte Brontë. Marriage, in her view, should mean a real union between two souls, such as existed between Rochester and Jane Eyre, Heathcliff and Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, and Paul Emanuel and Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. There was to be a fusing of true passion between two spirits, such as few women could ever imagine, much less experience. Charlotte Brontë's idea of marriage for herself was much beyond that which she entertained for her friend Ellen Nussey, simply because she knew that Ellen Nussey could be satisfied with far less than she herself could be content ever to accept; hence her letters of advice about marriage are tame enough, which probably led Mrs. Gaskell to think that she had no eagerness for marriage, but the novels prove the opposite. No woman had a greater desire for a true marriage and the subject was never far from her thoughts. Charlotte Brontë's first offer of marriage was from the brother of her friend Ellen Nussey. He was a clergyman, and at the time he wrote proposing marriage to Charlotte Brontë he was curate at Earnley, near Chichester. To anyone who has read Mr. Nussey's diary, it is very certain he was not the man

to mate with Charlotte Brontë. In his diary Mr. Nussey mentions under date, Tuesday 25th (1831): "Went with my sister Ellen to the Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Mirfield." As Charlotte Brontë became a pupil at Roe Head School a few days before Ellen Nussey, it is possible she met Mr. Nussey there. He was evidently anxious to write his diary that others might see it, for in March, 1828, he enters—

"Whoever after my decease may be led to peruse these pages which have been written or may hereafter be written, I pray them not to read as critics, but for profit. These are private thoughts penned for my own personal profit."

Ellen Nussey wished to save Charlotte Brontë from the drudgery of teaching amongst strangers, and her deep concern for her friend, together with her love for her brother, caused her to try her hand at match-making. Miss Nussey was not afraid to own in later days that she had hoped the proposal would meet with success. This would have enabled her to be more closely associated with Charlotte Brontë, who was not unaware of the advantage of the engagement from this standpoint. She even mentioned it to Ellen Nussey in a letter after she had refused the proposal. A short time before, Charlotte Brontë had written to Ellen Nussey saying: "I often plan the pleasant life which we might lead together . . . . My eyes fill with tears when I contrast the bliss of such a state, brightened by hopes of the future, with the melancholy state I now live in." Although Charlotte Brontë hated teaching, she was answering advertisements with the hope of obtaining a situation. This Ellen Nussey knew, and the proposal from Mr. Nussey was sent on 28th February—three months before Charlotte Brontë got the situation at Stonegappe.

There is no record of the cool, calm, matter-of-fact proposal, which Charlotte Brontë received from Henry Nussey, though there is in his diary, now in the possession of Mr. J. J. Stead, of Heckmondwike, a brief reference to the circumstance, from which it is easy to guess that the offer was one of convenience rather than of genuine love.

"I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes, St. John, and I scorn you when you offer it," says Jane Eyre, and it is well known that the Rev. Henry Nussey was not really in love with Charlotte Brontë.

The young curate was evidently more intent on finding a housekeeper than a wife, and he told Charlotte Brontë frankly that he intended to take pupils, and in due time he should need a wife to take care of them. In *Jane Eyre* the author says—

"He asks me to be his wife, and has no more of a husband's heart for me than that frowning giant of a rock, down which the stream is foaming in yonder gorge. He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all."

Ellen Nussey was so anxious to know if Charlotte Brontë had received the proposal from her brother that she wrote to ask her. In reply Charlotte Brontë wisely says that if Ellen Nussey had not mentioned the matter she should not have done so.

"March 12, 1839.

". . . I had a kindly leaning towards him, because he is an amiable and well-disposed man. Yet I had not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and if ever I marry it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband. Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe*. Moreover, I was aware that he knew so little of me he could hardly be conscious to whom he was writing. Why! it would startle him to see me in my natural home character; he would think I was a wild, romantic enthusiast indeed. I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would laugh, and satirise, and say whatever came into my head first. And if he were a clever man, and loved me, the whole world, weighed in the balance against his smallest wish, would be light as air."

This answer refutes Mrs. Gaskell's description of Charlotte Brontë as being a sad, unhappy woman at this time, and it is noticeable that Charlotte wishes to marry a clever man; hence her enthusiasm for Mr. Heger in later days.

The Rev. Henry Nussey was undoubtedly the prototype of "St. John Rivers" in *Jane Eyre*, and the cold, heartless, though nevertheless business-like proposal to the little school-mistress in the novel is based on this first proposal of marriage in 1839. After an interval of seventy-four years, it is almost sacrilege to handle Mr. Nussey's diary, in which he has entered his unfortunate love affairs, for it is necessary to mention that just before proposing to Charlotte Brontë he had proposed to the daughter of his former Vicar, Mr. Lutwidge, and, on the day of receiving a refusal from this lady, he proposed to Charlotte Brontë. In his diary he says—

"Saturday, 16 [February, 1839]. Received a letter from Mr. L., senr., with a negative to my wishes. Thy will, O Lord, be done."

"Monday, 18. Wrote again to M. A. L. and to sister Ellen."

It was probably in answer to this that Ellen Nussey suggested the approach to Charlotte Brontë, for the next entry reads—

"Thursday, 28. (Henry Nussey's birthday.) On Tuesday last received a decisive reply from M. A. L.'s papa. A loss, but I trust a providential one. Believe not her will, but her father's. All right. God knows best what is good for us, for his Church. and for his own glory. This I humbly desire. And His will be done, and not mine in this or in anything else. Evermore give me this spirit of my lord and master. Wrote to Yorke, friend C. B. [Charlotte Brontë], John and George also" [his brothers].

"Saturday, 9th March. . . . Received an unfavourable report from C. B. The will of the Lord be done."

According to Mr. Nussey's diary, Mr. Lutwidge asked him to resign his curacy on account of "the inadequacy of my powers to fulfil its duties." Mr. Nussey was in ill health at the time.

It is probable that Charlotte Brontë knew of the proposal to Miss Lutwidge, for in *Jane Eyre* St. John Rivers has a somewhat similar experience with Miss Rosamond Oliver before proposing to Jane Eyre, and a reply telling of Miss Oliver's

engagement is received from Miss Oliver's papa ; Jane Eyre is as definite in her refusal as was Charlotte Brontë.

Not only with regard to the offer of marriage is Mr. Nussey the prototype of "St. John Rivers," but also in the fact that he wished to become a missionary, and was greatly interested in missionary work. In his diary there are no fewer than fifteen references to missionaries and his desire to help in the foreign mission work. It is noticeable the names Elliot and Poole appear in this diary and both are used in *Jane Eyre*.

Henry Nussey was one of a family of eleven children. One of his brothers, Joshua, was a clergyman, being curate of St. John's, Westminster. Two of the brothers were doctors of repute, being surgeons-in-ordinary to King William IV and to Queen Victoria.

He was born at Birstall in 1812, thus being four years older than Charlotte Brontë. He received a good education, and was, at an early age, destined for the Church. His diary reveals a character in many respects like St. John Rivers : "Zealous in his ministerial labours, and blameless in his life and habits, he yet did not appear to enjoy that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist." So closely does this describe him that Charlotte might have seen his diary.

At the age of twenty he entered Magdalene College, Cambridge, and was recognised as an evangelical. His diary contains many references to spiritual matters, and shows that he was a devout and spiritually-minded man. According to his diary he became greatly interested in foreign missions when about sixteen—

"I trust I shall be called to the ministry, and should it be the Lord's will, I would, for Christ's sake, gladly be called to be a missionary, if I could in any degree be an instrument in God's hands, of promoting the salvation of mankind."

He was prevented from carrying out his intention of becoming a missionary by an injury to his head, caused by a fall from a restive horse. He mentions this in his diary. He was ill

for a long time and he gave up the idea of going abroad, as it might be unfavourable to his ultimate recovery. In one of her letters, Charlotte Brontë speaks of the Nusseys as being "far from strong, and having no stamina." George Nussey, another brother, suffered for some time from mental trouble, and, in the privately printed volume of Charlotte Brontë's letters in which she mentions the brother's affliction, Miss Nussey has scored out the references to her brother in her own copy of the book.

It is very evident that the young curate did not break his heart after Charlotte Brontë's refusal, for he shortly afterwards became engaged to Miss Emily Prescott, of Eversley, and was married at Everton, near Lymington, Hampshire, on 22nd May, 1845. He had by then been appointed Vicar of Hathersage, in Derbyshire. Ellen Nussey sent Charlotte a portrait of her brother Henry in 1843 when she was at Brussels.

Charlotte Brontë never regretted refusing her friend's brother, and when, six months afterwards, she heard that he was engaged to be married she wrote a friendly letter, congratulating him on the event. An obituary column of the *Daily Mirror* of 12th February, 1907, thus recorded: "Nussey—On 2nd February, at Nice, Emily, widow of the late Rev. Henry Nussey, formerly Vicar of Hathersage, aged 95."

Mr. Nussey, like St. John Rivers, started a Sunday School at Hathersage, which figures as Morton in *Jane Eyre*, but the Vicar never gained the desire of his heart to go out as a missionary to India as was the case with St. John Rivers.

Christmas always found the Brontë sisters at home, and, though they seem never to have made it a very gay season, the sisters and brothers enjoyed it in their own quiet way. Haworth kept up Christmas in the old-fashioned manner, and as the villagers were typical Yorkshire people, renowned for their thrift, there were few homes that were not provided with an abundance of Christmas fare.

The Vicarage kitchen was modelled on the Yorkshire plan, and, although Miss Branwell would have liked to introduce Cornish pasties and clotted cream, Tabby Aykroyd and Martha Brown, and in earlier years Nancy and Sarah Garrs,

provided true Yorkshire fare. Emily Brontë was especially clever in cooking and in making delicious Yorkshire bread and cakes.

Christmas also seemed to be the time when the Brontë sisters met in conference to discuss ways and means, and at the end of 1839 Charlotte, Emily and Branwell were living at home, Anne being the only one who was employed at that time outside the Vicarage.

As the daughters of Mr. Brontë gained experience in teaching, they hoped to begin a school of their own on the east coast of Yorkshire, and naturally this was a constant topic of conversation during the Christmas time. The principal difficulty was to obtain sufficient money for such a venture, especially as both the Vicar and Miss Branwell were afraid to risk their small means on such an enterprise. It is quite certain that the father did not wish to lose his three daughters from the home, and in consequence he did not encourage the school plan; nor did Miss Branwell care to be left alone to manage the brusque Yorkshire servants, though it is evident that neither Charlotte nor Emily had a very tender regard for the old aunt, whose unsympathetic and dictatorial manners they much resented.

Much as Emily loved the old home and the moors, her little diary, written when she was just twenty-three, shows that she had her dream of getting away with her sisters, and she pictures the two sisters and herself happy in "a flourishing seminary" with plenty of money, and her father, aunt and brother either being on a visit to them, or just returning from a visit. After the Christmas vacation, Anne returned to her appointment at Thorpe Green, Little Ouseburn. As Emily was more or less essential at the Vicarage, Charlotte was left without definite employment, though, as Tabby, the old servant, had to leave for a time, Charlotte was happy blackleading stoves, ironing the linen and managing to burn it, much to Miss Branwell's vexation, whilst Emily was busy with the cooking.

Charlotte, in her outspoken way, says: "We are such odd animals; we prefer this to having a strange face amongst us."

Not to be daunted, she advertised for a situation as governess, and answered advertisements, but for some time her efforts met with no success.

In May, 1839, however, she obtained a temporary situation as governess to the children of Mrs. John Benson Sidgwick, at Stonegappe, Lothersdale, near Kildwick and Cononley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Mr. Sidgwick was a woollen manufacturer at Skipton, a few miles away. Mrs. Gaskell tells us that she did not visit Stonegappe, when collecting materials for the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*; neither did she visit Upper Wood House, Rawdon, the only other place where Charlotte Brontë was a private governess. We are not given any reason for her omitting visits to these places, but it is probable that she did not think that either place had influenced Charlotte Brontë very much. How mistaken this view was may be gathered from the most exciting chapters of *Jane Eyre*, for it is now known that Gateshead Hall, described in the early part of the novel, was based upon Stonegappe, and the incidents connected with Bertha Mason, the mad wife of Rochester, were suggested by a visit with the Sidgwick family to a house at Swarcliffe, near Harrogate, which Mrs. Sidgwick's father—Mr. Greenwood—had rented for the summer, during the time when Charlotte Brontë was a governess in his family.

Through the kindness of the owner of Stonegappe, I was allowed, some years ago, to go through the various rooms in the house, and it is quite evident that Charlotte Brontë had the place in her mind when she described Gateshead Hall in *Jane Eyre*. A bedroom was pointed out as being "the red-room" in which *Jane Eyre* was supposed to have had a fit. This room was shut off from the other parts of the house, and was approached by a long corridor. A child, locked in that bedroom, would naturally be terrified, and from the outside it was clear that it would have little chance of escape. The long, shady drive leading to the house, and the breakfast-room on the ground floor, are still as they were in Charlotte Brontë's time. It was in the cosy window-seat of this room that *Jane Eyre* was supposed to have read Bewick's *British Birds*,





*Photo by*

STONEGAPPE, LOTERSDALE

*J. J. Stead*



whilst secluded, as she imagined, by the folds of the scarlet drapery.

Stonegappe is a large, roomy house, beautifully situated on the slope of the hill overlooking the valley through which runs the Lothersdale beck. There is a fine view from the bay windows in the front of the house, and the beauty of the surrounding district appealed to Charlotte Brontë. Writing to her sister Emily on 8th June, 1839, she says—

“I have striven hard to be pleased with my new situation. The country, the house, and the grounds are, as I have said, divine; but, alack-a-day! there is such a thing as seeing all beautiful around you—pleasant woods, white paths, green lawns, and the blue sunshiny sky—and not having a free moment or a free thought left to enjoy them.”

She complained bitterly of the treatment which she received at Stonegappe from Mrs. Sidgwick—

“The children are constantly with me. As for correcting them, I quickly found that was out of the question; they are to do as they like. A complaint to the mother only brings black looks on myself, and unjust, partial excuses to screen the children. I have tried that plan once, and succeeded so notably I shall try no more. I said in my last letter that Mrs. Sidgwick did not know me. I now begin to find she does not intend to know me; that she cares nothing about me, except to contrive how the greatest possible quantity of labour may be got out of me; and to that end she overwhelms me with oceans of needlework; yards of cambric to hem, muslin night-caps to make, and, above all things, dolls to dress.”

Charlotte Brontë seemed to have a good opinion of Mr. Sidgwick, though, of course, he had little to do with the children. All through her life she thought more highly of men than of women, and, with the exception of Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor, her relations with men appear to have been more satisfactory than with her own sex.

Although Mrs. Gaskell did not give the names of the employers, they were very quickly traced, and much pain was caused to the family by the thinly-veiled references to

Mrs. Sidgwick. As a matter of fact, there was much to be said for those with whom Charlotte Brontë lived as a private governess. In spite of all efforts to prove the contrary, it cannot be said that she had any real love for children. The peevish reference in her letter to "above all things, dolls to dress," is too convincing. A woman of twenty-three who loved children would find the dressing of dolls an interesting occupation. It is quite certain that she was not adapted for the life of a governess ; it is doubtful if those committed to her care derived much benefit from her instruction and supervision. All Charlotte's Sunday school scholars agree that she was very strict, and, with one exception, her pupils' names never occur in her letters.

Mrs. Gaskell tells of Charlotte Brontë's heroism in shielding one of the little Sidgwicks, who had thrown a stone at her, and struck her on the temple. When Mrs. Sidgwick asked what had caused the mark, Charlotte Brontë quietly said, "An accident, ma'am." The children in consequence honoured her for not telling tales, and became more amenable to discipline. The little culprit especially showed his gratitude some time afterwards, by putting his hand into Charlotte Brontë's, and exclaiming : "I love 'ou, Miss Brontë." The mother was evidently surprised, for she exclaimed before all the children : "Love the *governess*, my dear !" Mrs. Gaskell does not tell us that at the end of the letter relating this incident Charlotte Brontë says to Emily : "Mrs. Sidgwick expects me to do things I cannot do—to love her children and be entirely devoted to them." So that the incident says more for the pupil than the governess.

The family at Stonegappe naturally resented Mrs. Gaskell's reference to incidents occurring within the family circle during Charlotte Brontë's stay with them.

Mr. John Benson Sidgwick was cousin to Archbishop Benson, who paid several visits to Stonegappe in his youth, but not during Charlotte Brontë's stay. In the *Life of Edward White Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury*, by Mr. A. C. Benson, who once wrote of Charlotte Brontë as "the first of women writers of every age," it is recorded—

"Charlotte Brontë acted as governess to my cousins at Stonegappe for a few months in 1839. Few traditions of her connection with the Sidgwicks survive. She was, according to her own account, very unkindly treated, but it is clear that she had no gifts for the management of children, and was also in a very morbid condition the whole time. My cousin Benson Sidgwick, now Vicar of Ashby Parva, certainly on one occasion threw a Bible at Miss Brontë! and all that another cousin can recollect of her is that if she was invited to walk to church with them, she thought she was being ordered about like a slave; if she was not invited, she imagined that she was excluded from the family circle. Both Mr. and Mrs. John Sidgwick were extraordinarily benevolent people, much beloved, and would not willingly have given pain to anyone connected with them."<sup>1</sup>

It is also on record that Charlotte Brontë, when with the Sidgwicks at Swarcliffe, stayed in bed the whole of one day, sulking, and thus left Mrs. Sidgwick to look after the children as best she could. Clearly Charlotte's genius was not helpful to her as a teacher.

During half the time that Charlotte Brontë was in the employ of Mrs. Sidgwick, she was with the family at Swarcliffe, near Harrogate. Whilst there she visited Norton Conyers, an old mansion, that has been in the Graham family since the seventeenth century.

Though she does not appear to have mentioned Norton Conyers in her letters, Ellen Nussey well remembered her giving an account of it, and relating the tradition of the mad woman associated with the place. A former owner said that he was convinced that the interior of Thornfield Hall, referred to in *Jane Eyre*, must have been taken from Norton Conyers, as it is true to the minutest detail.

Continuing her description, the novelist turns to the grounds around the Rydings at Birstall, and Thornfield Hall becomes a composite picture, for the Rydings is a two-storied building, whereas Thornfield Hall is a three-storied mansion, though the garden and the sunk fence are common to both houses.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Edward White Benson.*

A relative of a former resident of Norton Conyers said that when Charlotte Brontë was staying at Swardcliffe, the third storey of Norton Conyers was exactly as she described it in *Jane Eyre*, for Sir Bellingham Graham, who then owned the mansion, had sold his estate near by at Nunnington, and stored the furniture in the low upper rooms at Norton Conyers, which gave Charlotte Brontë the impression that the furniture had been put there to make room for the more costly in the lower rooms. It is possible that the Greenwood family was on visiting terms with the Grahams. As one of the ancestral homes of Yorkshire it has been open to the public from time to time.

One of the small rooms in the attic is shown as "the mad woman's room," and there is a tradition that it was once occupied by an insane woman. This most probably gave rise to the story of Bertha Mason, of the West Indies.

Bertha Mason is probably suggested by Charlotte Brontë's first school friend Mellany Hane, who was a Creole.

In later years, Charlotte Brontë mentioned more than once in her letters how unhappy she had been whilst with the Sidgwicks, whom she described as "proud as peacocks, and wealthy as Jews." Immediately after the regular governess returned she went home, disgusted with her experience.

There is no doubt that she was unhappy during her stay at Stonegappe, and the reason is not far to seek. In a letter to Ellen Nussey she once said: "I have a constant tendency to scorn people who are far better than I am." On the other hand, Mrs. Sidgwick—a good practical Yorkshirewoman—could not enter into the feelings of the little genius. They were poles asunder in their ideas of life, and the fact that Charlotte could say, "I hate and abhor the very thought of governess-ship," shows that it was not likely that any employer would be congenial to her. It is, however, just as well that teaching did not offer a satisfactory sphere of work to her, or one of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century might have been lost to the world.

Before the end of July, 1839, Charlotte Brontë was at home again and Ellen Nussey was trying to persuade her to go with her to the sea-coast, but Aunt Branwell was bent on a journey

to Liverpool with the whole family, and delays came, one after the other, until Charlotte Brontë lost heart and felt that she and Ellen would not get their longed-for holiday.

At this time, when she was twenty-three years of age, she had never seen the sea, and she was keenly desirous of carrying out her wish.

“The idea of seeing the *sea*,—of being near it—watching its changes by sunrise, sunset, moonlight and noonday—in calm, perhaps in storm—fills and satisfies my mind.”

The same letter, from which the above is quoted, contains an account of a second proposal of marriage—

“I have an odd circumstance to relate to you : prepare for a hearty laugh ! The other day, Mr. (——), a vicar, came to spend the day with us, bringing with him his own curate. The latter gentleman, by name Mr. B., is a young Irish clergyman, fresh from Dublin University. It was the first time we had any of us seen him, but, however, after the manner of his countrymen, he soon made himself at home. His character appeared quickly in his conversation ; witty, lively, ardent, clever too ; but deficient in the dignity and discretion of an Englishman. At home, you know, I talk with ease, and am never shy—never weighed down and oppressed by that miserable *mauvaise honte* which torments and constrains me elsewhere. So I conversed with the Irishman, and laughed at his jests ; and, though I saw faults in his character, excused them because of the amusement his originality afforded. I cooled a little, indeed, and drew in towards the latter part of the evening, because he began to season his conversation with something of Hibernian flattery, which I did not quite relish. However, they went away, and no more was thought about them. A few days after I got a letter, the direction of which puzzled me, it being in a hand I was not accustomed to see. Evidently it was neither from you nor Mary, my only correspondents. Having opened and read it, it proved to be a declaration of attachment and proposal of matrimony, expressed in the ardent language of the sapient young Irishman ! I hope you are laughing heartily. This is not like one of my

adventures, is it? It more nearly resembles Martha's. I am certainly doomed to be an old maid. Never mind. I made up my mind to that fate ever since I was twelve years old.

"Well! thought I, I have heard of love at first sight, but this beats all! I leave you to guess what my answer would be, convinced that you will not do me the injustice of guessing wrong."

This account has always been taken literally, but as a matter of fact match-makers had again been at work. Emily Brontë, however, might just as well have been the selected one, if she had shown the better side of her nature.

The Vicar referred to in the letter was Mr. Hodgson, who had been Mr. Brontë's first curate. He was anxious that his own young curate, Mr. David Bryce, should get married, and having suggested that the Vicar of Haworth had several eligible daughters, he took him off to pay a call at the Haworth Vicarage.

Mr. Bryce went quite prepared to choose one of the daughters, and as Charlotte Brontë was the most approachable, he naturally got on best with her, and with an Irishman's ready enthusiasm proposed as soon as possible. Charlotte Brontë does not tell us how long the interval was between the visit and the proposal, but it became known in Haworth that the chief reason why Charlotte Brontë and the young curate did not become engaged was that Mr. Bryce was consumptive, and Charlotte Brontë herself was delicate, too. Mr. Brontë was consulted, and several letters passed between them, but, knowing that his daughters inherited their mother's frail constitution, he did not think it wise for his daughter to marry a delicate man. His reasoning was quite sound, for, in less than six months after proposing to Charlotte Brontë, the Rev. David Bryce died at Colne and was buried in the Christ Church graveyard.

The second offer of marriage, which Mrs. Gaskell refers to as "uncommon in the lot of most women" and as "a testimony to the unusual power of attraction" in one "so plain in feature" is not quite so romantic as Mrs. Gaskell would have us believe.



Ellen Nussey afterwards renewed her attempts to get Charlotte Brontë to accompany her to the seaside, but she was not, at this time, successful. Mr. Brontë himself was willing, but Miss Branwell was reluctant to agree. She was always harder with Charlotte Brontë than Mr. Brontë himself. It was evidently a question of means, and the result was that Miss Nussey was invited to stay at the Haworth Vicarage, which Charlotte urged would be less costly ; but Miss Nussey was determined Charlotte should have a holiday, and the visit to Easton and Bridlington was arranged. Thirty years afterwards Ellen Nussey wrote an interesting account of this memorable holiday.

“Charlotte’s first visit to the sea-coast deserves a little more notice than her letters give of the circumstances—it was an event eagerly coveted, but hard to attain. Mr. Brontë and Miss Branwell had all manners of doubts and fears and cautions to express, and Charlotte was sinking into despair—there seemed only one chance of securing her the pleasure ; her friend must fetch her ; this she did through the aid of a dear relative, who sent her to Haworth under safe convoy, and in a carriage that would bring both Charlotte and her luggage—this step proved to be the very best thing possible, the surprise was so good in its effects, there was nothing to combat—everybody rose into high good humours, Branwell was grandiloquent ; he declared ‘it was a brave defeat, that the doubters were fairly taken aback.’ You have only to *will* a thing to *get* it, so Charlotte’s luggage was speedily prepared, and almost before the horse was rested there was a quiet but triumphant starting ; the brothers and sisters at home were not less happy than Charlotte herself in her now secured pleasure. It was the first of real freedom to be enjoyed either by herself or her friend, a first experience in railway travelling, which, however, only conveyed them through half of the route, the stage-coach making the rest of the journey. . . . They walked to the sea, and as soon as they were near enough for Charlotte to see it in its expanse, she was quite overpowered, she could not speak till she had shed some tears—she signed to her friend to leave her and walk on ; this she did for a few steps,

knowing full well what Charlotte was passing through, and the stern efforts she was making to subdue her emotions—her friend turned to her as soon as she thought she might without inflicting pain ; her eyes were red and swollen, she was still trembling, but submitted to be led onwards where the view was less impressive ; for the remainder of the day she was very quiet, subdued, and exhausted. Distant glimpses of the German Ocean had been visible as the two friends neared the coast on the day of their arrival, but Charlotte being without her glasses, could not see them, and when they were described to her, she said, ‘ Don’t tell me any more. Let me wait.’ Whenever the sound of the sea reached her ears in the grounds around the house wherein she was a captive guest, her spirit longed to run away and be close to it. . . .

“ The conventionality of most of the seaside visitors amused Charlotte immensely. The evening Parade on the Pier struck her as the greatest absurdity. It was an old Pier in those days, and of short dimensions, but thither all the visitors seemed to assemble in such numbers, it was like a packed ball-room ; people had to march round and round in regular file to secure any movement whatever.”

This old farm at Easton, near Bridlington, is still in existence, but it is in a dilapidated condition. A friend of the writer’s wished to photograph it some three years ago, but was not allowed. “ What would the landlord think of it, I wonder, if you showed a photograph of this old place as it is now ? ” said the tenant. It is comforting to know that there is a water-colour painting of it by Charlotte Brontë herself, and there is also an oil-painting of the farm, by a well-known artist.

Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, who entertained Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë, at Easton, were, in after years, very proud of the fact that they had Charlotte Brontë as a guest. The water-colour painting of the farm is still held sacred by a member of the Hudson family, but the letters of thanks and the slippers worked for Mr. Hudson by Charlotte Brontë have disappeared.

The walks around Easton are most delightful, and Charlotte

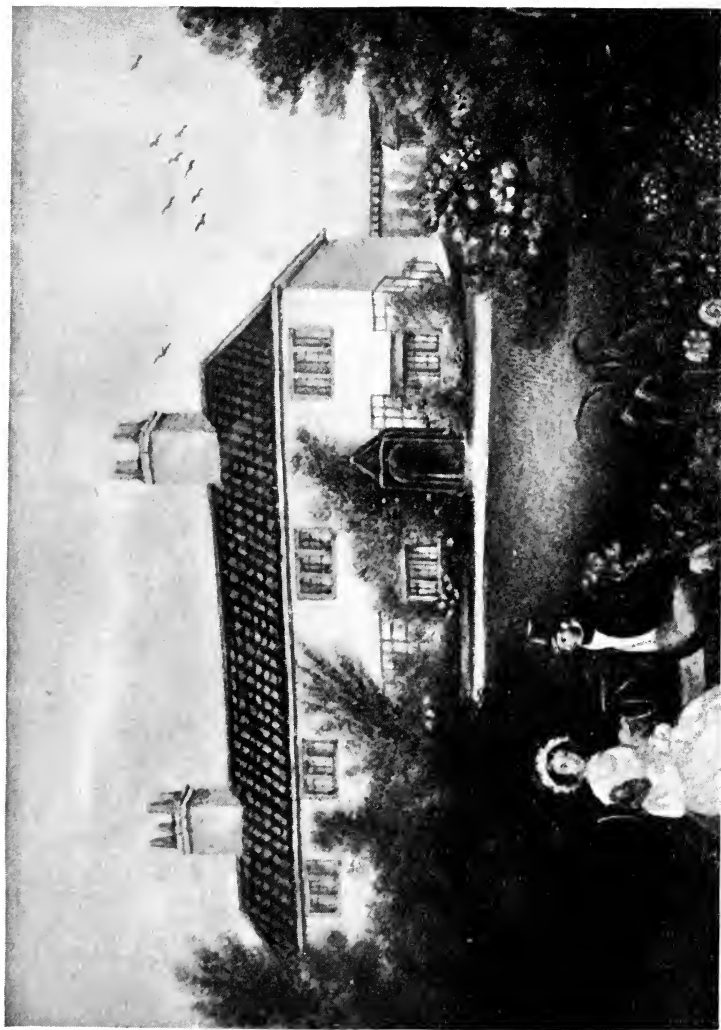


Photo by

MR. HUDSON'S FARM, EASTON  
*From a water-colour painting by Charlotte Brontë*

*I. J. Sted*



Brontë very much enjoyed her month's stay with the family, which included Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and their niece, Fanny Whipp, who was then a child of eight whom Charlotte Brontë called "little Hancheon." This holiday stood out as a real bit of freedom for Charlotte Brontë, who generally got the best out of such visits. Again and again she refers to old Burlington or Bridlington, as it is now called—

"Have you forgotten the sea by this time, Ellen? Is it grown dim in your mind? Or can you still see it, dark, blue, and green, and foam-white, and hear it roaring roughly when the wind is high, or rushing softly when it is calm? . . . I am as well as need be, and very fat. I think of Easton very often, and of worthy Mr. Hudson and his kind-hearted helpmate, and of our pleasant walks to Harlequin Wood, and to Boynton, our merry evenings, our romps with little Hancheon, etc., etc. If we both live, this period of our lives will long be a theme for pleasant recollection."

Fanny Whipp is said to have suggested Paulina in *Villette*, but Paulina has affinity with Charlotte Brontë's own childhood, in so far as she was little for her age.

Such was the favourable impression made on Charlotte Brontë by her visit to Easton and Burlington, that she longed to make her home there, and in later days she planned to have a school in the vicinity, to be managed by her sister and herself—

"In thinking of all possible and impossible places where we could establish a school, I have thought of Burlington, or rather of the neighbourhood of Burlington. . . . I fancy the ground in the East Riding is less fully occupied than in the West."

She employed part of her time when at Easton in writing and drawing, and on a subsequent visit, ten years afterwards, when Anne Brontë had just been buried in Scarborough churchyard, Charlotte Brontë went to kind Mrs. Hudson's for rest and quiet, before going home to her father at Haworth. It is possible that the chapter in *Shirley*, headed "The valley of the shadow of death," was written there, for the genial

farmer and his wife remembered that she often took her writing material into the garden and wrote for hours.

She never forgot the kindness of these Easton friends, and she sent them several presents. One was a painting of Mrs. Hudson, whose maiden name was Sophia Whipp; a Mrs. Whipp figures in *Shirley* as the landlady of Mr. Sweeting of Nunnerly. In the painting of the farm Mr. and Mrs. Hudson are seated in the garden, and as a flock of birds passed by Mr. Hudson remarked, "Be sure you put the crows in, Miss Brontë."

## CHAPTER XII

### BRANWELL BRONTË AND THE CURATES AT HAWORTH

1839-1842

BRANWELL BRONTË obtains an appointment as tutor—His journey to Broughton-in-Furness—Account of his life at Broughton—Rev. Patrick Brontë's mode of life at Haworth—Mr. Leyland's *Brontë Family*—Branwell Brontë becomes a clerk near Halifax—Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden Foot—His life as a railway clerk—Charlotte Brontë's unflagging industry—The Curates at Haworth.

BRANWELL secured an appointment on the 1st of January, 1840, as private tutor at a Mr. Postlethwaite's, at Broughton-in-Furness, in Cumberland. He had had a little experience as an usher in a school near Halifax some two years previously, but he had not remained long at the school. Both the father and aunt were disappointed with Branwell's failure to make for himself a position in life, and it was even suggested that he should qualify for holy orders, for which the office of teacher was considered to be a suitable preparation, as was the case with his father.

Like some other misguided parents, Mr. Brontë assumed that, when all other openings in life failed, his son might turn his attention to the Church; but Branwell, much to his credit, declined to consider the sacred ministry as a possible sphere of work, and afterwards, writing sarcastically to his friend Mr. Grundy, he stated that the only qualification he had for the ministry was a certain amount of hypocrisy.

At Broughton-in-Furness Branwell had a comfortable appointment with a highly respectable family, and those left behind at the Vicarage hoped he would do well, though Charlotte, who was always the farseeing member of the family, appears to have had some doubts. She writes—

“One thing, however, will make the daily routine more unvaried than ever. Branwell, who lived to enliven us is to leave us in a few days and enter the situation of a private tutor in the neighbourhood of Ulverston. How he will like

to settle remains yet to be seen. At present he is full of hope and resolution. I, who know his variable nature, and his strong turn for active life, dare not be too sanguine."

Evidently the members of the family were anxious to get Branwell away from the associations of the Black Bull, where the masonic "Lodge of the Three Graces," of which Branwell was secretary, held its meetings.

On the Christmas day previous to starting for Broughton-in-Furness, Branwell acted as organist, and in the minute book of the Masonic register at Haworth, Branwell's name appears for the last time. Although, no doubt, he made many good resolutions, he could not get from Haworth to Ulverston without joining with a drunken set of travellers at the Royal Hotel, Kendal. If this had been found out, it would most likely have cost him his appointment before he had really entered upon his duties.

The late Mr. Francis A. Leyland, of Halifax, in his *Brontë Family*, published in 1886, tries to excuse Branwell, but a letter written by Branwell himself reveals a man devoid of ordinary virtues, though in the earlier part of the letter there is evidence of some intention to reform. It seems a pity that this versatile young man of so many gifts could not be kept healthily employed away from his former associates.

This damaging letter was written to Mr. John Brown, the sexton, one of whose daughters admitted to me that her father "liked his glass," and was much to blame for "leading young Branwell on." Branwell loved a joke, and in order to cause amusement, he did not mind becoming "the fool for the company." John Brown was fond of telling of Branwell's cleverness, and like others in Haworth, he expected that Branwell would ultimately bring much credit to the Haworth Vicarage after "he had sown his wild oats." No one was more sorry, when Branwell died, than the Haworth sexton, and it is in some respects unfortunate that this letter to John Brown was not destroyed, for Miss Robinson, in her monograph on Emily Brontë, only quoted from a memorised copy, omitting the postscript, "Write directly. Of course, you won't show this letter, and for Heaven's sake, blot out all



lines scored with red ink." The original was said, by the sexton's family, to have been lost in the early seventies, but one of the Browns knew it by heart, and it was this version, which got into the possession of Mr. Wood, the local carpenter, that Miss Robinson used. But before the original was lost, one of Branwell's friends had made an accurate copy, taking care to blot out the names of certain people in Haworth, whose families are still well known in the village, and it was this reproduction that the late Mr. Francis A. Leyland, of Halifax, used in his *Brontë Family*. The letter was written some ten weeks after Branwell left Haworth, and was addressed to the sexton who was referred to as "Old Knave of Trumps."

Everyone who knew Branwell, except the members of his family, had an opportunity of reading this unfortunate communication, and John Brown's brother prided himself on being able to repeat the whole of it from memory. Branwell's friends did not take the letter so seriously as the biographers of the Brontës have done, for the simple reason that they knew the writer. At home he was allowed great liberty, and it was expected that he would escape all contamination; whilst care was exercised in determining the friends of the girls, he was allowed in the main to go his own way. He had neither the balance of mind nor the strength that his father possessed; nor could he claim that dignity and reserve which always proved useful to the Rev. Patrick Brontë.

Branwell, much to his own disgust, was, like Charlotte, small and insignificant in appearance, and the Haworth people were fond of saying that he brushed his hair high to give him a few extra inches. Although many people thought him conceited, he was the most approachable in the family, and was always welcome wherever he went.

The Vicar could often be seen visiting his parishioners, some at a great distance across the moors, but father and son were rarely seen together. Previous to going to Broughton, Branwell was secretary of a temperance society, and it is only fair to say that certain efforts were made to keep him from drink.

After the death of Patrick Brontë's wife in 1820, when Branwell

was a boy of three, the father seems to have lived somewhat the life of a recluse, and, whilst omitting no duty connected with his church, he left his children far too much to themselves. The girls found companionship with each other, but it was difficult to find a place for an only boy in such a home. It is not, therefore, a matter for surprise that Branwell never acquired sufficient self-control or will power to steer a clear course in his brief career. Even to this day, however, he is remembered with pride, not unmixed with pity, in his native village. Only the other day, an old man in Haworth who remembered Branwell, said, "Mrs. Gaskell told a pack o' lies about him." His silly letter to his old friend probably was more highly coloured than was necessary, and, like Charlotte, he wrote with much enthusiasm and a tendency to undue exaggeration.

He had the gift of imagination like his sisters, and not unfrequently he would romance about incidents for the mere pleasure of entertaining and "showing off" to his friends.

A letter not only betrays the character of the writer, but sometimes gives some indication of the character of the receiver. This epistle could only have been written to friends who delighted in hearing what may be described as "spicy" news.

Like everything else that is associated with the Brontës, Branwell's letter was greatly discussed, though, if Charlotte and Emily Brontë had not become famous novelists, the letter would soon have passed into oblivion.

Branwell has suffered probably more than any member of the family owing to contrast with his two brilliant sisters, and he has received more blame than he deserved from those who have followed Mrs. Gaskell and Harriet Martineau in attributing to him "the coarseness of Charlotte Brontë's novels." "Because Patrick Branwell Brontë was what he was, the Brontë novels were what they were," but that is not so; Branwell was not a "brainless sot," as Mr. Shorter describes him; probably Mr. Nicholls gave Mr. Shorter that impression, but, as he did not know him well until after his dismissal from Thorpe Green, even he was not able to judge. The Haworth people well remember his tramping the moorland district, gun

in hand ; for, like his father, he loved shooting. A military career, with its necessary discipline, might have suited him, but his shortness of stature was an insuperable obstacle.

Mr. Francis A. Leyland's *Brontë Family* is worthy of recognition, because he gave the better side of Branwell's life. But one of Branwell's letters, published in the *Yorkshire Observer* in November, 1911, proves that Branwell had contracted debts when in Bradford, which Mr. Leyland denies. Ellen Nussey thought he had conveyed a too favourable impression of Branwell, and had not shown sufficient appreciation of Charlotte, and for that reason she proposed to tell the true story of Charlotte Brontë through her letters. None of the biographers suited Ellen Nussey, and unfortunately she was not capable of writing a *Life* herself.

Broughton-in-Furness is a beautiful district on the northern shores of Morecambe Bay, and Branwell seems to have been impressed by the charm of the place, for some of his crude oil-paintings are of the district around Black Comb. Whilst there, he came under the influence of the Lake District associations. Like Charlotte, he had always been attracted by Wordsworth's poems on nature, and he was devoted to Coleridge and Christopher North. Before going to Broughton-in-Furness, Branwell had written to Wordsworth in 1837, and also to Hartley Coleridge, and whilst living in Broughton he paid at least one visit to Hartley Coleridge. Mrs. Gaskell saw his letter, when she was staying in the Lake District many years afterwards, for although Wordsworth was disgusted with Branwell's letter and did not answer the "would-be" poet, he kept his letter, and when the name of Brontë became famous it was given to Mr. Quillinan, Wordsworth's son-in-law, who showed it to Mrs. Gaskell.

At a distance of some four or five miles from Broughton-in-Furness is a hill known as Black Comb, which overlooks the small seaside village of Silecroft. It is probable that Branwell climbed the Black Comb, for he composed a short poem about it, as it appeared to him in the distance.

"Far off, and half revealed, 'mid shade and light,  
Black Comb half smiles, half frowns."

Evidently he knew Wordsworth's fine description of the view from the summit of the Black Comb, which is one of great beauty on every side. Branwell, like his father, was no poet, though he liked to flatter himself that he was, and he wrote several vain letters to Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Mrs. Oliphant says that Blackwoods probably thought the letters were from a madman, and so they never replied to them. At the same time, they felt sufficiently interested to preserve them, and because they were written by a member of the Brontë family, and not at all for their intrinsic value, they appear in Mrs. Oliphant's book, *The House of Blackwood*.

Branwell left Broughton-in-Furness at the end of six months, it is said at his father's desire, and his next appointment was as a clerk on the Leeds and Manchester railway, first at Sowerby Bridge and then at Luddenden Foot. Charlotte writes of him, when in one of her gay humours—

“A distant relation of mine, one Patrick Boanerges, [Mrs. Gaskell puts ‘Patrick Branwell,’ showing that she knew it referred to the brother] has set off to seek his fortune in the wild, wandering, adventurous, romantic, knight-errant-like capacity of clerk on the Leeds and Manchester Railroad. Leeds and Manchester—where are they? Cities in the wilderness like Tadmor, *alias* Palmyra—are they not?”

Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden Foot are only a mile apart, and, although the appointment which Branwell had obtained was uncongenial and unsuitable, the district was one that ought to have inspired his mind, and provided material for the novels he proposed to write. Mr. Leyland says he did write at least one volume.

The district is still recognised as a holiday resort for picnic parties. Hardcastle Crag, near by, is well worth a visit, and Hebden Bridge, with its Golden Valley, Sowerby, Mytholmroyd and Erringden have pretty surroundings. Erringden was a royal deer park in the time of the Plantagenets. Hebden Bridge is a pleasant walk from Haworth in summer over the moors, and the frugal Yorkshiremen, anxious to visit

Manchester or other towns on the Lancashire side of the Pennine Range, often make this journey to Hebden Bridge, thus saving the cost of the roundabout railway route through Keighley and Halifax. Charlotte Brontë, in the lonely days before her marriage, would sometimes walk, or occasionally drive to Sowerby Bridge, where lived the Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden, who had the honour of performing the marriage ceremony between Charlotte Brontë and Mr. Nicholls.

The valley of Hebden is beautifully wooded, and Charlotte Brontë was very fond of this district and also that of Heptonstall, where there is an old church of St. Thomas of Canterbury. One of the smaller glens is known as Crimsworth, which furnished the name to the English teacher in *The Professor*.

William Crimsworth had for his original Charlotte Brontë herself, and this was her first attempt to masquerade as a man. Mr. Francis A. Leyland considers that Branwell was the original of Crimsworth in the earlier chapters, where Crimsworth is in a manufacturer's office. Branwell may have suggested the poorly paid clerk, but, when he gets to Brussels, Crimsworth is undoubtedly Charlotte herself.

The rush of water from the surrounding heights beneath the Hardcastle Crag, on its way to the river Calder at Hebden Bridge, was a sight that appealed to Charlotte and Emily Brontë, just as the roar of the sea did at Bridlington, and after her marriage she and Mr. Nicholls were fond of walking over the moor to see the Hebden Bridge district, and also to visit the incumbent of Mytholm at his home at Hanging Royd, Hebden Bridge. Mr. Sutcliffe Sowden knew Branwell Brontë when he was engaged at Sowerby station and at Luddenden Foot, and sometimes he walked over to the wooden shed, which did duty for the railway clerk's office. Like many of his friends, Mr. Sowden was sorry for the youth, who never found his right sphere of work.

It is pleasant at this time to turn to Mr. Francis A. Leyland's description of the unfortunate youth as he knew him at this time.

"It was on a bright Sunday afternoon in the autumn of 1840, at the desire of my brother, the sculptor, that I accompanied him to the station at Sowerby Bridge to see Branwell. The

young railway clerk was of gentleman-like appearance, and seemed to be qualified for a much better position than the one he had chosen. In stature he was a little below the middle height. . . . He was slim and agile in figure, yet of well-formed outline. His complexion was clear and ruddy, and the expression of his face, at the time, lightsome and cheerful. His voice had a ringing sweetness, and the utterance and use of his English were perfect. Branwell appeared to be in excellent spirits, and showed none of those traces of intemperance with which some writers have unjustly credited him about this period of his life.”<sup>1</sup>

Others who lived near to Sowerby Bridge, and who met Branwell about this time, testified to his uniformly good conduct and respectable appearance. After being at Sowerby Bridge for a few months, he was transferred to Luddenden Foot, a new station about a mile away. Mr. Francis H. Grundy, who was assistant engineer on the line when Branwell was at Luddenden Foot, wrote in his *Pictures of the Past*, “Had a position been chosen for this strange creature, for the express purpose of driving him several steps to the bad, this must have been it.”

Unfortunately Luddenden Foot was a small village with practically no suitable society for Branwell Brontë, and the two public houses—The Red Lion and The Anchor—proved an attraction which he could not resist. He had not sufficient work fully to employ his time, and with his want of “balance” he quickly deteriorated. If he could have met with some good friend to take him in hand, he might have been saved.

Branwell soon began to neglect his duties, and often left the young porter to attend to the station whilst he visited Halifax. As might be expected, this could not be continued but for a short time, and he was dismissed. His books were found to be in an unsatisfactory state, and the margins were covered with sketches and drawings. When he returned home, Charlotte and Anne were away, and Emily was his only friend; she pitied him and refrained from scolding him, though conscious of his faults.

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontë Family*, by Francis A. Leyland.

Whilst Branwell had been at Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden Foot, Charlotte had been working hard at French. Her replies to advertisements for a private governess had not at first been successful, and by the kindness of her friends at Gomersal—the Taylors of Red House—she had got the loan of a number of French novels which she describes as “another bale of books, containing upwards of forty volumes. I have read about half,” she writes at this time, “They are like the rest—clever, wicked, sophistical and immoral. The best of it is, they give one a thorough idea of France and Paris, and are the best substitute for French conversation.” It was one of the ambitions of Charlotte Brontë’s life to see the French capital.

If there was one virtue more than any other which stood out in Charlotte Brontë’s character, it was her unflagging industry. She was never idle, and more than any other member of the family she took advantage of every opportunity to improve her qualifications. She was attached to the quiet home life, but she felt that it was necessary that she should contribute to the family exchequer.

“Verily, it is a delightful thing to live at home, at full liberty to do just what one pleases. But I recollect some scrubby old fable about grasshoppers and ants, by a scrubby old knave, yclept Æsop; the grasshoppers sang all the summer and starved all the winter,” she writes to Ellen Nussey.

It was about this time that Mr. Brontë obtained help in his church work; hitherto he had been single-handed. His first curate, the Rev. William Hodgson, seems to have given his services without remuneration from the parish of Haworth from 1837 to 1838. The second curate, Mr. William Weightman, was at Haworth from 1839 to 1842; he caused quite a flutter amongst the women at the Parsonage, for, with the exception of a visit now and again from the neighbouring clergy, few men entered the Haworth Vicarage, so that, when “Papa had a curate of his own,” life at the Parsonage became less monotonous. Charlotte Brontë, who loved change, was delighted, whilst Emily seems somewhat to have resented the intrusion

of the curates. Miss Branwell found a certain amount of pleasure in welcoming one more member of the cloth to the hospitality of the parsonage, whilst Anne—modest and demure—felt some diffidence in meeting with one of the opposite sex.

It might have been better for Branwell Brontë if his father had engaged a curate at an earlier period. Mr. Weightman and Branwell seem to have been very friendly to each other and were in the habit of corresponding when either was away from Haworth.

Charlotte Brontë has plenty to say to Ellen Nussey about the gay, young curate, who formed the subject of much correspondence between the two friends. Afterwards it was discovered that he was a flirt, who experienced no difficulty in transferring his affections from one girl to another. The innocent banter which went on shows that the Brontë girls formed a merry party, and Charlotte especially was not the melancholy person which Mrs. Gaskell pictures. The curate rather enjoyed the badinage of these girls, who loved to tease him, and he did not resent Charlotte's drawings of his lady-loves, nor did he mind her scoldings when he got a new fiancée. Possibly at Ellen Nussey's request, Mrs. Gaskell left out from Charlotte Brontë's letters all the references to Mr. Weightman, except the account of his visiting one of her Sunday School scholars and his sermon about Dissent.

When Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published, the old friends of the curate wondered that more was not included about this amiable young clergyman, who was known to have been popular at the Vicarage, for they could remember seeing him walking over the moors with the Vicar's daughters. It could not be said that many of the curates enjoyed this privilege ; as a rule they were ignored.

Emily Brontë got the soubriquet of "Major" at this time, because she determinedly guarded Ellen Nussey from Mr. Weightman's attentions, and insisted on walking with her, rather than let the young curate have the honour of Ellen's company. It is possible that she took this course because Mr. Weightman had paid some attention to Anne Brontë; and Emily wished to safeguard the interests of her sister.



Charlotte tells us that it was a picture to see the curate making "sheep's eyes" at Anne, as she sat in the family pew. It was this versatile curate who discovered that the Brontë girls had never received a valentine, and in order to give them a little innocent pleasure he walked to Bradford to post three precious missives. Of course, they soon guessed where they were from, and gave Mr. Weightman "a Roland for his Oliver." Some of the neighbouring clergy also joined in the fun of sending valentines to the Brontë girls, for in the *Whitehaven News* there was a copy of the return valentine sent by Charlotte Brontë to one of the clergy of the district in 1840. It had been kept as a souvenir of those happy days when Charlotte was quite unconsciously gathering the material for her portraits of the curates who come on the scene so quickly in *Shirley*, which made Charles Kingsley close the book with the determination to read no more.

Charlotte sent a poem of eleven verses, the first and second verses read—

"A Roland for your Oliver  
We think you've just earned;  
You sent us such a valentine,  
Your gift is now returned.  
  
We cannot write or talk like you;  
We're plain folks every one;  
You've played a clever jest on us,  
We thank you for the fun.  
(Signed) CHARLOTTE BRONTË."

February, 1840.

Mr. Weightman was known as Celia Amelia at the Parsonage. Ellen Nussey, in a foot-note to her volume of Charlotte Brontë's Letters, compiled by Mr. J. Horsfall Turner, gives a short account of Mr. Weightman.

"Celia Amelia, Mr. Brontë's curate, a lively, handsome young man fresh from Durham University, an excellent classical scholar. He gave a very good lecture on the Classics at Keighley. The young ladies at the Parsonage must hear his lecture, so he went off to a married clergyman to get him to write to Mr. Brontë to invite the young ladies to tea, and offer

his escort to the lecture, and back again to the Parsonage. Great fears were entertained that permission would not be given—it was a walk of four miles each way. The Parsonage was not reached till 12 p.m. The two clergymen rushed in with their charges, deeply disturbing Miss Branwell, who had prepared hot coffee for the home party, which of course fell short when two more were to be supplied. Poor Miss Branwell lost her temper, Charlotte was troubled, and Mr. Weightman, who enjoyed teasing the old lady, was very thirsty. The great spirits of the walking party had a trying suppression, but twinkling fun sustained some of the party.

“There was also a little episode as to valentines. Mr. Weightman discovered that none of the party had ever received a valentine—a great discovery! Whereupon he indited verses to each one, and walked ten miles to post them, lest Mr. Brontë should discover his dedicatory nonsense, and the quiet liveliness going on under the sedate espionage of Miss Branwell and Mr. Brontë himself. Then I recall the taking of Mr. Weightman’s portrait by Charlotte. The sittings became alarming for length of time required, and the guest had to adopt the gown, which the owner was very proud to exhibit, amusing the party with his critical remarks on the materials used, and pointing out the adornments, silk, velvet, etc.”

Evidently Ellen Nussey had enlightened Mrs. Gaskell as to the Celia Amelia of the letters, as she puts Mr. Weightman where Charlotte Brontë had written Celia Amelia. Mr. Brontë managed to live on good terms with the Dissenters in Haworth, but just about the time that Mr. Weightman came there was a certain amount of opposition to church rates, and a stormy meeting was held in the Parish Church room, to which the Dissenters were invited.

This was followed by two sermons preached in the church; one by Mr. Weightman, “a noble, eloquent, High-church Apostolical-Succession discourse, in which he banged the Dissenters most fearlessly and unflinchingly,” and another sermon on the same subject, by a Mr. Collins, a neighbouring clergyman. Charlotte Brontë’s conclusion of the two sermons shows her passion for justice. “*Mais*, if I were a Dissenter,





I would have taken the first opportunity of kicking or of horse-whipping both the gentlemen for their stern, bitter attack on my religion and its teachers."

Mr. Weightman died during the third year of his curacy. Charlotte and Emily Brontë were at Brussels at the time, and Anne was at Thorpe Green; only Branwell was at home, and he watched by the bedside of his friend, and felt his death keenly. The Rev. Patrick Brontë preached the funeral sermon in Haworth Parish Church on Sunday, 2nd October, 1842, when the church was crowded, but only Branwell sat in the Parsonage pew, as Aunt Branwell was ill at home.

Charlotte Brontë's letters reveal a rather frivolous young man, and it is well to have the Vicar's opinion—

"There are many, who for a short time can please, and even astonish—but who soon retrograde and fall into disrepute. His character wore well; the surest proof of real worth. He had, it is true, some peculiar advantages. Agreeable in person and manners, and constitutionally cheerful, his first introduction was prepossessing. But what he gained at first, he did not lose afterwards."

Mr. Brontë visited Mr. Weightman twice a day during his last illness, and Branwell often went to see his friend. In one of his letters to Mr. Francis H. Grundy, he says: "I have had a long attendance at the death-bed of the Rev. Mr. Weightman, one of my dearest friends." A tablet was erected to his memory in the north aisle of Haworth Old Church by the parishioners of Haworth, by all of whom he was greatly loved.

Mr. Brontë's published appreciation of Mr. Weightman, and the esteem in which he was held by the whole village, go far to correct the opinion given by Charlotte Brontë. She says, in a letter to Ellen Nussey, "He is a thorough male flirt," and "He ought not to have been a parson, certainly not," but this may have been said in sarcasm.

In *Agnes Grey*, the curate whom Agnes marries is a Mr. Weston, and he is said to have been based on William Weightman. A poem written by Anne Brontë is considered

to have been an expression of her feelings at the death of the young curate, for during her lifetime, Mr. Weightman was the only curate with whom she was closely associated. Charlotte Brontë gives this poem the first place in the small collection of the poems of Anne Brontë or rather Acton Bell.

“ A REMINISCENCE

By ACTON BELL.

Yes, thou art gone ! and never more  
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me ;  
But I may pass the old church door,  
And pace the floor that covers thee.

May stand upon the cold, damp stone,  
And think that, frozen lies below  
The lightest heart that I have known,  
The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,  
'Tis still a comfort to have seen ;  
And though thy transient life is o'er,  
'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been ;

To think a soul so near divine,  
Within a form so angel fair,  
United to a heart like thine,  
Has gladdened once our humble sphere.”

In *Agnes Grey*, which Anne Brontë admitted was to a great extent autobiographical, she writes—

“Shielded by my own obscurity and by the lapse of years, and a few fictitious names, I do not fear to venture ; and will candidly lay before the public what I would not disclose to the most intimate friend.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### ANNE BRONTË

SCANT notice by Biographers—Her Education at home—Her character—*Agnes Grey*—Charlotte's solicitude for Anne—Her difficulties as governess at Blake Hall—She obtains a situation as governess at Thorpe Green—Branwell Brontë a tutor in the same family—Anne leaves Thorpe Green—*Wildfell Hall*—Branwell's dismissal.

OF the three sisters, the youngest, Anne, has received very little notice ; there is no biography of her, and she is simply the sister of Charlotte and Emily Brontë. Even the ne'er-do-well Branwell has had his life story related by Mr. Francis Leyland, but no one has ever thought it worth while to chronicle the doings of this gentle little sister, and yet she is a character well worth studying, and, if her genius cannot rank with that of her more famous sisters, she was, as Charlotte Brontë said of her, "genuinely good and truly great."

Anne Brontë, born on 17th January, 1820, at Thornton, was the youngest child of Patrick Brontë, and her mother lived only a year and eight months after her birth. In consequence, the baby was in the charge of servants and the older sisters for almost a year. When Aunt Branwell came to tend the little flock, it was Anne that she was most attached to, and the little one looked upon her as a mother. Anne was more like the Branwells than the Brontës, and in this respect she differed from her two sisters. With the exception of a short period of less than three months, she never attended any school, but was educated entirely by her father, her aunt and her sister Charlotte. To have retained her last appointment at Thorpe Green for four years was no small testimony to her ability as a governess, and to her home training. Her pupils loved her, and in after years came to see her, and were wonderfully attached to her. There is no record that either Charlotte or Emily kindled such kindly feeling in the hearts of their pupils.

All the people at the Vicarage were very fond of this quaint little child. Nancy Garrs used to tell that once, when Anne

was a baby, Charlotte rushed into her father's study to say that there was an angel standing by Anne's cradle, but when they returned, it was gone, though Charlotte was *sure* she had seen it.

Every effort was made to keep this "darling of the home," as one of the old servants called her, from going out as governess, but at nineteen Anne was determined not to be dependent upon others, but to earn her own living. She was not domesticated like the other sisters, for the simple reason that her services in the household were not required. She had a pleasant voice, and could both play and sing. Like her sisters, she revelled in books, and knew how to choose them. Her father taught her English subjects, Latin and Scripture, and Charlotte was responsible for her German and French.

Anne Brontë was determined not to be a burden at home, although, like the others, she loved the home life dearly, but she had the family love of adventure, and wished to see the world that lay beyond the Haworth Hills.

The Rev. Patrick Brontë has been accused of driving his girls from home to be governesses, but it is evident that he *did* not wish his youngest child to leave home according to Anne Brontë's account in *Agnes Grey*.

" 'What, my little Agnes a governess ! ' cried he, and, in spite of his dejection, he laughed at the idea.

" 'Yes, papa, don't *you* say anything against it : I should like it *so* much, and I am sure I could manage delightfully.'

" 'But, my darling, we could not spare you.'

Charlotte Brontë, writing to Ellen Nussey at this time, says—

" April 15, 1839.

" I could not write to you in the week you requested, as about that time we were very busy in preparing for Anne's departure. Poor child ! she left us last Monday ; no one went with her ; it was her own wish that she might be allowed to go alone, as she thought she could manage better and summon more courage if thrown entirely upon her own resources. We have had one letter from her since she went. She expresses



herself very well satisfied, and says that Mrs. Ingham is extremely kind ; the two eldest children alone are under her care, the rest are confined to the nursery, with which and its occupants she has nothing to do. . . . I hope she'll do. You would be astonished what a sensible, clever letter she writes ; it is only the talking part that I fear. But I do seriously apprehend that Mrs. Ingham will sometimes conclude that she has a natural impediment in her speech."

Anne gives the account of becoming a governess in the first chapter of *Agnes Grey*.

The Mary of this story is undoubtedly Emily Brontë. Anne and Emily were devoted to each other, whilst Charlotte acted the part of mother, rather than sister.

The picture of the youngest member of the family going out to earn her own living is given in Anne's characteristic way ; she was openly more religious than the other members of the family. It is possible that Aunt Branwell had taught her some of the Methodist doctrines, which she brought from her Methodist home in Penzance.

In the chapter of *Agnes Grey*, headed "First Lessons in the Art of Instruction," Anne gives a carefully detailed account of her trials at Blake Hall, and yet, unlike Charlotte, she sent a cheering letter home after her arrival, but later she told her sisters of her trials as a governess. Emily sent a message of hope to Anne,<sup>7</sup> and Charlotte told Ellen Nussey that she could never bear the worries of the life of a governess such as Anne was experiencing.

Charlotte, ever solicitous for Anne, for whose sake she had once and only once quarrelled with Miss Wooler, wrote to Ellen Nussey—

"I have one aching feeling at my heart (I must allude to it, though I had resolved not to). It is about Anne ; she has so much to endure ; far, far more than I ever had. When my thoughts turn to her, they always see her as a patient, persecuted stranger. I know what concealed susceptibility is in her nature, when her feelings are wounded. I wish I could be with her to administer a little balm. She is more lonely—

less gifted with the power of making friends, even than I am. 'Drop the subject.' "

Anne's reign as governess at Blake Hall was over in a year. In the earlier chapters of *Agnes Grey* she gives an appalling account of the life of a governess in a wealthy family where the children were badly trained.

Though it is well known that Mrs. Gaskell, after the publication of her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, received many letters concerning people identified in her book, the account of Anne Brontë's hardships at Blake Hall was kept in all the editions. To make it look not quite so black against the employers of the Brontës Mrs. Gaskell gives, by way of explanation, the sisters' want of tact in managing children. There is no doubt that Anne Brontë deserved sympathy, but the mistake from the first was that, in the days of the Brontës, girls were supposed to know how to teach without receiving any training of any sort.

After her holidays, Anne returned to Blake Hall and the naughty little children.

"I returned, however, with unabated vigour to my work—a more arduous task than anyone can imagine." Then she tells of hard, stubborn fights with the children, and of her greater troubles with their parents, who could see nothing wrong, but found fault continually with the governess.

At a later period, when *Agnes Grey* had been reviewed, and some had complained of the extravagant colouring of certain parts, Anne Brontë replied that those scenes "were carefully copied from the life, with a most scrupulous avoidance of all exaggeration." With characteristic truthfulness, she tells of her dismissal by Mrs. Bloomfield [Mrs. Ingham] who attributed the backwardness of the pupils to "the want of sufficient firmness and diligent persevering care" on the part of the governess. The meek way in which Anne Brontë submitted "like a self-convicted culprit" and returned to her home "vexed, harassed and disappointed," shows how difficult her life as a governess had really been, and yet how determinedly this frail girl decided to go out again as a teacher. The three sisters seem to have been troubled by their father's

ill-health, and the thought of being left alone to struggle with the world appears to have spurred both Charlotte and Anne to seek a situation, with the idea of earning their own living, and gaining experience which would, at a later stage, enable them to start a school of their own.

Just about this time Charlotte writes—

“No further steps have been taken about the project [starting a school of their own] I mentioned to you, nor probably will be for the present ; but Emily, and Anne, and I keep it in view. It is our pole star, and we look to it in all circumstances of despondency.”

In *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, *The Professor* and *Agnes Grey*, the heroine looks forward to having a little school of her own, and in each case this is referred to as a haven of peace. The nightmare of poverty never seemed to leave Anne and Charlotte in those days, and after remaining at home a little more than a year Anne determined to try her luck again as a governess. Like Charlotte, she was tired of answering advertisements, and decided to advertise for a situation, giving her qualifications.

Her next appointment was in the home of a clergyman, the Rev. Edmund Robinson, of Thorpe Green, Little Ouseburn, near York. Here she seems to have had a better time than at Blake Hall, and the fact that she stayed there for nearly four years proves that her services were appreciated. After she had been at Thorpe Green Vicarage for about a year and a half, her brother Branwell was engaged as tutor in the same family, and, in spite of the fact that he had ultimately to leave in disgrace, he kept his appointment for two and a half years. He did not live at the Vicarage like Anne, but he lodged at a farm a short distance away.

Anne speaks of him as having “much ill-health and tribulation” whilst at Thorpe Green, and she does not appear to have known of his duplicity until all was over. She had charge of the girls in the family, whilst Branwell was tutor to the only son. Both Mrs. Robinson and her daughters were quite smart society people, and very different from their little Puritan governess ; balls, parties, and flirtations occupied

much of the time of the girls in the home. Both the mother and her daughters were quite a worldly set, and one who knew them personally said that the account which Mrs. Gaskell gave was not so far wrong as many were given to understand, and that Branwell was badly treated by those who ought to have known better. Both Anne and Charlotte always believed Branwell had been deceived and made sport of to such an extent that he became quite crazy. Although Anne was able to carry out her duties satisfactorily, the Thorpe Green Vicarage was never the place for Branwell. His presence might be a source of fun for Mrs. Robinson, but it meant disaster to him, and certainly unhinged his brain.

Mrs. Gaskell was blamed for relating such an unpleasant story about Mrs. Robinson, and in order to avoid an action for libel she had to publish an apology in *The Times*. So certain, however, was she that she had told the truth that she refused to interfere with the account in the third edition, but she confessed in later years that it was altered by her husband, who was much concerned about the matter.

Mrs. Gaskell believed Charlotte Brontë, for she had seen her letter to Ellen Nussey, in which she wrote of Mrs. Robinson "as a hopeless being, calculated to bring a curse wherever she goes." That letter has since been published and is sufficient to explain Mrs. Gaskell's indignation.

Mrs. Gaskell was mistaken when she blamed Branwell Brontë for being the cause of anxiety to his sister Charlotte during her second year at Brussels, for Charlotte herself writes to say "Anne and Branwell are wondrously valued in their situations," and Branwell stayed on at Thorpe Green for a year and a half after Charlotte Brontë returned to Haworth, so that he had nothing to do with her return home.

Anne Brontë's second novel, *Wildfell Hall*, has almost escaped notice. That *Agnes Grey* should have been accepted by any firm of publishers and *The Professor* refused is a mystery, for *Agnes Grey* is quite a colourless story, told in a very school-girl fashion, and Anne Brontë brings in her scripture references frequently, giving the novel a very didactic tone, and conveying the impression that it was written by a much older person.

Anne meant to write a story with a purpose, and she was not afraid to point the moral.

*Wildfell Hall* was a didactic temperance novel, and had it not been that *Jane Eyre* had made the name of Brontë famous, it is questionable if the publishers would have accepted it so readily.

## CHAPTER XIV

1841

RAWDON, (MARCH TO DECEMBER)

CHARLOTTE BRONTË's limited range of accomplishments—Her experience at Rawdon—Advice from her employers—The village of Rawdon—Charlotte Brontë's lack of interest in children—The project of a Brontë school—Letter from Mary Taylor—Proposal that Charlotte and Emily Brontë should enter a school at Brussels—The Heger Pensionnat at Brussels.

IN March, 1841, Charlotte was successful in obtaining an appointment—

"I told you some time since, that I meant to get a situation, and when I said so my resolution was quite fixed. I felt that, however often I was disappointed, I had no intention of relinquishing my efforts. After being severely baffled two or three times—after a world of trouble, in the way of correspondence and interviews—I have at length succeeded, and am fairly established in my new place."

The appointment to which she refers was with a Mr. and Mrs. White, of Upperwood House, Rawdon. Mr. White, a Yorkshire manufacturer was said to be interested in literature, and Charlotte Brontë was more comfortable at Rawdon than she had been elsewhere.

Rawdon has received very scant notice from the biographers of Charlotte Brontë, and yet it proved to be the turning-point in her life. It was owing to her stay at Rawdon that both she and Emily decided to continue their education by becoming pupils in a school at Brussels. The step was taken owing to the kindly interest and wise counsel of Charlotte's employers, whilst she was governess in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John White, which is less than two miles from Woodhouse Grove School, Apperley Bridge, where her father and mother first met nearly thirty years before. The year previous to this visit to Rawdon had been an "outwardly eventless year."

Though Charlotte had been happy, her conscience would not let her stay quietly at home, adding nothing to the family income, but rather taking from it. Emily, who was always considered the more domesticated of the sisters, was also at home, and Charlotte set herself the uncongenial task of answering the advertisements of people in want of a governess for their children. Her limited range of accomplishments and qualifications prevented her from obtaining a first-class appointment; she knew little of foreign languages, and less of music, but she had a good knowledge of English literature: had some taste for drawing: and was an excellent needlewoman—qualifications which proved very serviceable to her.

She has sometimes been pictured at this time as a morbid, melancholy creature, but a letter written to Ellen Nussey, just before she obtained the appointment at Rawdon, proves how inaccurate such a description was. When she was happy, she had more than the average share of animal spirits—

“ ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.’ That, I believe, is Scripture, though in what chapter or book, or whether it be correctly quoted, I can’t possibly say. However, it behoves me to write a letter to a young woman of the name of E., with whom I was once acquainted, ‘in life’s morning march, when my spirit was young.’ This young woman wished me to write to her some time since, though I have nothing to say—I e’en put it off, day by day, till at last, fearing that she will ‘curse me by her gods,’ I feel constrained to sit down and tack a few lines together, which she may call a letter or not, as she pleases. Now, if the young woman expects sense in this production, she will find herself miserably disappointed. I shall dress her a dish of salmagundi—I shall cook a hash—compound a stew—toss up an *omelette soufflée à la française*, and send it her with my respects. The wind, which is very high up in our hills of Judea, though, I suppose, down in the Philistine flats of B. parish it is nothing to speak of, has produced the same effects on the contents of my knowledge-box that a quaiigh of usquebaugh does upon those of most other bipeds. I see everything *couleur de rose*, and

am strongly inclined to dance a jig, if I knew how. I think I must partake of the nature of a pig or an ass—both which animals are strongly affected by a high wind. From what quarter the wind blows I cannot tell, for I never could in my life ; but I should very much like to know how the great brewing-tub of Bridlington Bay works, and what sort of yeasty froth rises just now on the waves.

“A woman of the name of Mrs. B., it seems, wants a teacher. I wish she would have me ; and I have written to Miss W. to tell her so.”

The Mrs. B. referred to was a Mrs. Thomas Brooke, of Huddersfield. In a letter dated 12th November, 1840, Charlotte Brontë tells of exchanging letters with Mrs. B. and how she expresses herself as pleased with the candour of her application for the post of governess. Charlotte had taken care to tell her that if she wanted “a showy, elegant, fashionable personage—she was not the man for her.” But as Mrs. Brooke required a governess capable of teaching music, including singing, Charlotte Brontë was not eligible.

After failing to obtain this appointment at Huddersfield, Charlotte Brontë took the initiative, and began to advertise for a post as governess. It would be interesting to find these advertisements. Her advent to Rawdon was in consequence of her own advertisement, which no doubt would be modest enough.

At this time she was a woman of nearly twenty-six, and though she felt the need of earning money, she was careful not to estimate too highly the mere salary offered ; she preferred comfort and kindly disposed people to a large salary. She appears to have had an opportunity of going to Ireland as governess about the time she accepted the post at Rawdon, and she offered “the Irish concern” to Mary Taylor, who also declined it. Charlotte Brontë always had a longing to see her father’s native place, which was not gratified until fourteen years later.

It was early in March, 1841, that she went to Rawdon, and in one of her letters she praises the house and grounds, but does not say anything about the appointment itself ; her



experience at Rawdon was much pleasanter than the time she spent at Stonegappe.

She says, "The house is not very large, but exceedingly comfortable." Her employers proved to be wise friends, and their timely advice helped to guide her in what proved to be the great turning-point in her life. Had they not encouraged her to go abroad and gain a knowledge of foreign languages, thus fitting herself to become a competent teacher, it is very doubtful if she would have gone to Brussels. It was Mr. and Mrs. White's support that carried weight with Mr. Brontë and Miss Branwell, for the "heartening on" of Mary Taylor might not have been sufficient to induce Patrick Brontë to agree to the scheme by which his daughters entered a continental school. "Mary's price is above rubies," said Charlotte Brontë at this time, and there is no doubt that Mary Taylor did all she could to get Mr. Brontë's daughters to Brussels.

Not only would Charlotte and Emily Brontë have missed the chance of seeing foreign places, but we should never have had Charlotte's great novel, *Villette*, nor her first and oft-rejected novel *The Professor*. Nor would *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* have been produced, for M. Heger's great personality was an inspiration. Previous to the visit to Brussels, the writing by the two sisters was quite mediocre, and did not show sufficient promise to warrant publication at a later stage. Some of Charlotte's unpublished and unfinished stories do not by any means give great indication of genius.

It is to the honour of M. Heger that the great Brontë novelists were the two members of the Brontë family who came under his influence. If Branwell and Anne could have had a year or two under M. Heger, he might have left his mark upon them. If anyone could have given Branwell "balance," it was M. Heger; Anne would have acquired more confidence, and the wider outlook would have broadened her views, and given her a larger scope for her novels. Neither Branwell nor Anne had any training as teachers, and, as they lacked aptitude, the wonder is that they met with any success whatever in teaching. Their experience of life was also too limited, and it is scarcely a matter for wonder that Branwell went to "The

Black Bull " for some diversion. When Charlotte and Emily visited Brussels, they entered a new and larger world ; their active imagination was now turned into other channels, unknown to their quiet, uneventful lives at Haworth.

Rawdon is still a delightful district, being now quite a suburb of Leeds. Upperwood House has been demolished, and one more Brontë landmark has passed into oblivion. The village stands on high ground, and is very healthy. The place suited Charlotte Brontë, who was very well during her stay there, and was able to do a great amount of work. This is seen by her high-spirited letters and her self-assertion ; she not only had the courage to ask for a day's holiday in order to visit Birstall, but, when a week was offered for her summer's vacation, she boldly claimed three, and won the day. Her experience at Stonegappe and Roe Head had taught her to " fend for herself," as Yorkshire people say. She had an additional claim as she had taken charge of the household during the time that Mr. and Mrs. White were absent on their holidays.

Rawdon is chiefly employed in the manufacture of wool, but its trade is not so extensive as it once was. It is proud of the honour of manufacturing the first batch of wool brought by the Rev. Samuel Marsden, a native of Farsley near by, from Botany Bay, Australia, in 1809.

Rawdon to-day is worthy of a visit ; fine villas are dotted here and there on the sunny slopes, and from the top of the Billing Hill an extensive view of the surrounding country is obtained. It is possible on a clear day to see the spires of no fewer than twenty-three churches, and on a clear moonlight night the view is equally beautiful. In the distance are to be seen the Pennines, and, on a very clear day, York Minster, thirty miles away, is visible.

The district abounds in delightful walks to such places as Calverley, Apperley Bridge, Guiseley and the more distant and beautiful Kirkstall Abbey. All these places were visited by Charlotte Brontë's mother and father before their marriage, as Maria Branwell's letters prove, but, judging from Charlotte Brontë's letters, she seems to have had little time for expeditions, being kept busy with the children and with needlework.

Some five or six years later, William Edward Forster lived at Lane Head, Rawdon, and there Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle visited him in 1847. Sir Wemyss Reid, in his *Life of W. E. Forster*, tells of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle being thrown out of the dog-cart when Forster was driving. Charlotte Brontë appears to have met very few people at Rawdon, and, as in the case of most governesses in those days, all her time was claimed by her employers. Mr. Strickland Halsteads, of Hastings, writing to the *Westminster Gazette* in May, 1901, says—

“My mother, now in her seventy-ninth year, distinctly remembers meeting the afterwards distinguished authoress at the house of Mr. White, a Bradford merchant, something like sixty years ago. At that time Miss Brontë was acting as governess to Mr. White’s children, and my mother has a vivid recollection of seeing her sitting apart from the rest of the family in a corner of the room, poring, in her short-sighted way, over a book. The impression she made on my mother was that of a shy, nervous girl, ill at ease, who desired to escape notice and to avoid taking part in the general conversation.”

Charlotte Brontë describes her pupils as being “wild and unbroken,” and with reference to her duties she says: “How utterly averse my whole mind and nature are to the employment.” She clearly had no love for children, and it was the lack of this sympathy which made her task so distasteful. In a recent publication on the Brontës, Miss May Sinclair strives hard to convince her readers that Charlotte Brontë was passionately fond of children, and she sarcastically dismisses the view of Mr. Augustine Birrell, Mr. Swinburne and Mr. George Henry Lewes that Charlotte Brontë had no love for children and failed to portray child life in her novels. It is strange that Miss Sinclair does not quote Mrs. Gaskell on the subject; she not only had a personal knowledge of Charlotte Brontë, but had also discussed children and children’s little ways with her, and fortunately she has given us her own views on this question. She attributes Charlotte Brontë’s lack of interest in children to the fact that the little Brontës had no real childhood, nor had they experienced a mother’s love. This

would seem to show that Miss Branwell, capable housekeeper though she may have been, failed to gain the real affection of those in her charge, for Mrs. Gaskell herself lost her mother when only a year old, and, like the young Brontës, she was brought up by one of her mother's sisters, and yet she never had to complain of the lack of parental love. The fact was, the Brontës were brought up by a maiden lady, whilst the aunt in Mrs. Gaskell's case had a daughter of her own, and was a most lovable woman.

What Charlotte Brontë said of her charges—children of six and eight years of age—and of her distaste for teaching, proves that she had no affection for children, nor interest in associating with them. She hated teaching, and came perilously near hating children, unless they were well-mannered, pretty, and naturally affectionate like Mrs. Gaskell's own little daughters.

Charlotte Brontë speaks of her feeling towards children whom she *likes*, and not of children in general, and instead of saying she loves their little ways she says, "Their ways are all matter of half-admiring, half-puzzled speculation," which proves that she had been analysing their feelings, instead of spontaneously returning their love as it was given. This is shown by a little incident which Mrs. Gaskell relates—

"Once when I told Julia to take and show her the way to some room in the house, Miss Brontë shrunk back: 'Do not *bid* her do anything for me,' she said; 'it has been so sweet hitherto to have her rendering her little kindnesses *spontaneously*.'"

This is evidence that Charlotte Brontë suspected that the child had been told to be kind to her. She had little faith in the natural love of a little child; but no wonder when we remember her own childhood.

Her Sunday School scholars at Haworth were very proud of her when she became known as a distinguished author, but they all admitted that in her early days, and even later, she was very strict, and the children in the day school, who had to submit their specimens of needlework to her, when she paid her surprise visits to the school, remembered with regret, how severe she could be if the back-stitching was not perfect.

"Three threads for each stitch" was Miss Brontë's rule, they told me, and the mistress who was responsible for the needlework in the Haworth Church School was very nervous as to the results of Miss Brontë's visit. One of these very pupils, visiting Haworth a few years ago, and standing at Charlotte Brontë's grave, testified to the fear of the children when Miss Brontë came to school to examine the sewing and knitting. As Mrs. Gaskell says, all this severity was the result of having no mother, a strict father, and an aunt who was lacking in affection for children. Tabitha Brown once remarked to me—

"You know Miss Branwell was a real, old tyke. She made the girls work at their sewing, and what with their father's strictness over their lessons, and the hours they devoted to needlework, they had little time for themselves until after nine o'clock at night, and that was when they got time for their writing." Mary Taylor confirms this in one of her letters.

This severity, however, was helpful to the girls afterwards. Emily was the least efficient at needlework; she had no patience for such a task, and she did not "finish off" neatly as Charlotte and Anne did. Specimens of needlework done by Charlotte and Emily, in the writer's possession, prove this.

It was at Rawdon that Charlotte Brontë had to act as nurse during the Spring cleaning, and she tells us "She suspected herself of getting rather fond of the baby." This is not the language of a woman of twenty-six, who was passionately fond of a young child committed to her temporary charge.

The fact is, she lacked patience in dealing with children, and she was deficient in the saving grace of humour, when she had charge of children. When she visited Thackeray at his home in Young Street, she thought his little girls were very forward because they chatted naturally rather than waited until they were spoken to, and the girls did not take kindly to the little Jane Eyre as they called her. Take the incident where Adèle is allowed to accompany Rochester and Jane Eyre in the conveyance. Would any woman who had ordinary interest in a young girl's welfare have allowed her to take part in the conversation between Rochester and Jane Eyre?

The motherly feeling for a child was entirely absent, and it showed how Charlotte Brontë failed to grasp the true relations which should exist between a young girl and her elders on such subjects of conversation. Then there was Georgette in *Villette*, to say nothing of Polly. But, says one critic, Mr. Swinburne had forgotten Georgette. Not at all! Georgette was not a creation by Charlotte Brontë; she was a character taken from life, and represented Louise Heger, the second child of Madame Heger, and Polly was a character unlike any other child, unless it be Paul Dombey, to whom Charlotte Brontë probably owes something, though she need not have gone further than the Haworth parsonage, where the children were almost as quaint as Polly. In addition, there is the letter from Charlotte Brontë to Miss Wooler, about the disappointing trip to Scotland with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor and the baby, "that rather despotic member of modern households," as Charlotte Brontë says. The whole letter seems to show that she thought that too much fuss was being made of the baby, although she says, "had any evil consequences followed a prolonged stay, I would never have forgiven myself." She, however, is careful to say that she considered the ailment trivial and temporary, and she left "bonnie Scotland" with reluctance.

After Charlotte Brontë had been at Upperwood House for a few months, Miss Wooler, her old schoolmistress, offered her the goodwill of Heald's House School, which had been in charge of Miss Wooler's sister, but had "got into a consumptive state," to quote Charlotte Brontë's letter. At this time the three Brontë girls had no outlook in life other than that of being teachers, unless they married, the probability of which seemed very remote, as no offer which Charlotte had accepted, and Emily and Anne seemed destined not to marry. The question of the three girls starting a school had been discussed for some time: Charlotte was anxious to try the East Riding, in the neighbourhood of Bridlington, but no place could be definitely fixed upon, and, as they were unknown in that part of Yorkshire, they were afraid to venture. Anne, the youngest of the sisters, was very delicate, and was then in the employ

of the Rev. Edmund Robinson as governess. She found teaching even more trying than had been the case with Charlotte, who, in consequence, was anxious to get a school where the three sisters could live together, and where Anne might, as far as possible, be relieved of any anxiety. Writing in July, 1841, to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte says—

“There is a project hatching in this house, which both Emily and I anxiously wished to discuss with you. The project is yet in its infancy, hardly peeping from its shell ; and whether it will ever come out a fine full-fledged chicken, or will turn addle, and die before it cheeps, is one of those considerations that are but dimly revealed by the oracles of futurity. Now, don’t be nonplussed by all this metaphorical mystery. I talk of a plain and every-day occurrence, though, in Delphic style, I wrap up the information in figures of speech concerning eggs, chickens, etcætera, etcæterorum. To come to the point : papa and aunt talk, by fits and starts, of our—*id est*, Emily, Anne, and myself—commencing a school ! I have often, you know, said how much I wished such a thing ; but I never could conceive where the capital was to come from for making such a speculation. I was well aware, indeed, that aunt had money, but I always considered that she was the last person who would offer a loan for the purpose in question. A loan, however, she *has* offered, or rather intimates that she perhaps *will* offer in case pupils can be secured, an eligible situation obtained, &c. This sounds very fair, but still there are matters to be considered which throw something of a damp upon the scheme. I do not expect that aunt will sink more than £150 in such a venture ; and would it be possible to establish a respectable (not by any means a *showy*) school, and to commence house-keeping with a capital of only that amount ? Propound the question to your sister, if you think she can answer it ; if not, don’t say a word on the subject.”

Whilst this project was being discussed, Charlotte received a letter from Mary Taylor, who was finishing her education with her sister Martha, at Brussels. “Mary’s letter spoke of some of the pictures and cathedrals she had seen—pictures

the most exquisite, cathedrals the most venerable." Ste. Gudule's and other churches, and some of the pictures which Mary Taylor described can still be seen in Brussels. "I hardly knew what swelled in my throat as I read her letter," said Charlotte, "such a vehement impatience of restraint and steady work ; such a strong wish for wings—wings such as wealth can furnish ; such an urgent thirst to see, to know, to learn ; something internal seemed to expand bodily for a minute. I was tantalised by the consciousness of faculties unexercised—then all collapsed and I despaired."

It was well that Miss Wooler did not come to terms with Charlotte Brontë, for in that case the £100 which Miss Branwell offered to lend would probably have been used to purchase the goodwill of Heald's House. Apart from the possibility of the venture being unsuccessful, Dewsbury might not have been fortunate from a health standpoint, and it was well that the suggestion was not carried out. Moreover, Miss Wooler's offer extended only to Charlotte ; she would not have Emily or Anne for the first half-year, and Charlotte was the only one whom Miss Wooler thought capable of making a teacher.

It was whilst at Rawdon that Charlotte proved herself a clever diplomatist, by writing a well thought-out letter to her aunt asking for a loan of money to enable her and Emily to go to Brussels—

"I would not go to France or to Paris. I would go to Brussels, in Belgium. The cost of the journey there, at the dearest rate of travelling, would be £5 ; living is there little more than half as dear as it is in England, and the facilities for education are equal or superior to any other place in Europe. In half a year, I could acquire a thorough familiarity with French. I could improve greatly in Italian, and even get a dash of German ; *i.e.*, providing my health continued as good as it is now. Mary is now staying at Brussels, at a first-rate establishment there. . . . I feel certain, while I am writing, that you will see the propriety of what I say. You always like to use your money to the best advantage. You are not fond of making shabby purchases ; when you do confer a favour, it is often done in style ; and, depend upon it, £50 or £100, thus laid



out would be well employed. Of course, I know no other friend in the world to whom I could apply on this subject, except yourself. I feel an absolute conviction that, if this advantage were allowed us, it would be the making of us for life. Papa will, perhaps, think it a wild and ambitious scheme ; but who ever rose in the world without ambition ? When he left Ireland to go to Cambridge University, he was as ambitious as I am now. I want us *all* to get on. I know we have talents, and I want them to be turned to account. I look to you, aunt, to help us. I think you will not refuse. I know, if you consent, it shall not be my fault if you ever repent your kindness."

The masterful way in which Charlotte Brontë managed everything is to her credit. Although she only asked for six months in Brussels, she made up her mind that she and Emily should stay for a year, earning sufficient in the second half to pay their expenses, if possible.

It is clear that the father and aunt both worked under Charlotte's direction, and Emily seems to have acquiesced in all that Charlotte suggested. The hot haste in which she made her preparations showed how she was fretting under the restraint. "Brussels is still my promised land, but there is still the wilderness of time and space to cross before I reach it."

When the Brussels plan was all but settled, Mr. Brontë heard an unfavourable account of the Belgian schools, and it was hastily decided that Charlotte and Emily should go to Lille, probably to a French Protestant school highly recommended by the Rev. Baptist Noel and by other clergymen. Mrs. Gaskell was unable to discuss the reasons for a sudden change of plan, but Charlotte Brontë was extremely anxious to go to Brussels and she ultimately prevailed.

It appears there was an English lady who had been a governess in the family of Louis Philippe, and when his daughter Marie Louise married Leopold I, King of the Belgians, the lady accompanied her to Brussels in the capacity of reader. This lady's grand-daughter was being educated at the Pensionnat in the Rue d'Isabelle, and so satisfied was the grandmother with the education given that she recommended the

school to the wife of Mr. Jenkins, the English chaplain in Brussels. Mr. Jenkins' brother was a clergyman in the West Riding, and through him the recommendation was passed to Mr. Brontë, and it was decided that, if the terms suited, Charlotte and Emily should proceed to Brussels. M. Heger, who had known what it meant to be poor in his younger days, was so much struck with the simple and earnest tone of the letter that he suggested to his wife that very generous and easy terms should be named, and an inclusive amount was fixed.

When Mrs. Gaskell visited Brussels in 1856, she interviewed M. Heger, who told her that it was Charlotte Brontë's letter which led his wife and himself to take the two Brontës as pupils, for Charlotte made very particular enquiries with regard to the possible "extras," and he and Madame Heger were so struck by the simple, earnest tone of the letter, that one remarked to the other: "These are the daughters of an English pastor, of moderate means, anxious to learn with an ulterior view of instructing others, and to whom the risk of additional expense is of great consequence. Let us name a specific sum, within which all expenses shall be included." These terms were accepted, but whether they exactly corresponded to the school prospectus is not mentioned.



# MAISON D'ÉDUCATION

## Pour les jeunes Demoiselles,

Sous la direction

DE MADAME HEGER-PARENT,

Rue d'Isabelle, 32, à Bruxelles



*Cet établissement est situé dans l'endroit le plus salubre de la ville.*

*Le cours d'instruction, basé sur la Religion, comprend essentiellement la Langue Française, l'Histoire, l'Arithmétique, la Géographie, l'Écriture, ainsi que tous les ouvrages à l'aiguille que doit connaître une demoiselle bien élevée.*

*La santé des élèves est l'objet d'une surveillance active les parents peuvent se reposer avec sécurité sur les mesures qui ont été prises à cet égard dans l'établissement*

*Le prix de la pension est de 650 francs, celui de la demi-pension est de 350 francs, payables par quartiers et d'avance Il n'y a d'autres frais accessoires, que les étrennes des domestiques*

*Il n'est fait aucune déduction pour le temps que les élèves passent chez elles dans le courant de l'année. Le nombre des élèves étant limité, les parents qui désireraient reprendre leurs enfants, sont tenus d'en prévenir la directrice trois mois d'avance.*

*Les leçons de musique, de langues étrangères, etc., etc., sont au compte des parents*

*Le costume des pensionnaires est uniforme.*

*La directrice s'engage à répondre à toutes les demandes qui pourraient lui être adressées par les parents, relativement aux autres détails de son institution*

### OBJETS A FOURNIR :

Lit complet, bassin, aiguière et draps de lit  
Serviettes de table  
Une malle fermant à clef.  
Un couvert d'argent  
Un gobelet.

Si les élèves ne sont pas de Bruxelles, on leur fournira un lit garni moyennant 34 francs par an



The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagonal unit cell with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $i$ . The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with some vertices highlighted in black and others in white, illustrating a specific configuration of sites.

## CHAPTER XV

### LONDON

1842-1848

LONDON, the Brontës' "Promised Land"—Mr. Brontë accompanies Charlotte and Emily to Brussels—Their stay in London—The Chapter Coffee House—References in *The Professor* and *Villette* to the journey to Brussels.

LONG before Brussels had been thought of, London had loomed large in the imagination of the Brontës; it was their first Promised Land, especially for the only brother. Sir Wemyss Reid in his monograph on Charlotte Brontë tells the story of Charlotte, when a girl of four, wandering away from home to find Bradford, which she thought must be a heaven compared with Haworth, and how the nurse found her near Bridgehouse, at the lower end of the village, crying because she thought Bradford was too far away. The vivid imagination of the Brontë children took them to places they had heard or read about, far away from home. Charlotte and Branwell especially seemed to have cherished a wish, early in life, to gaze upon other scenes than their moorland environment supplied, and London in imagination was their Mecca—their El Dorado.

When Ellen Nussey first visited London in 1834, Charlotte Brontë was wildly excited, and not a little inquisitive. In replying to a letter she takes her friend to task for not appreciating the great capital—

"I was greatly amused at the tone of nonchalance, which you assumed, while treating of London and its wonders. Did you not feel awed while gazing at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey? Had you no feeling of intense and ardent interest, when in St. James's you saw the palace where so many of England's kings have held their courts, and beheld the representations of their persons on the walls? You should not be too much afraid of appearing *country-bred*; the magnificence of London has drawn exclamations of astonishment from

travelled men, experienced in the world, its wonders and beauties. Have you yet seen anything of the great personages whom the sitting of Parliament now detains in London—the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Earl Grey, Mr. Stanley, Mr. O’Connell? If I were you, I would not be too anxious to spend my time in reading whilst in town. Make use of your own eyes for the purposes of observation now, and, for a time at least, lay aside the spectacles with which authors would furnish us.”

In a postscript she adds—

“Will you be kind enough to inform me of the number of performers in the King’s military band?”

This postscript was sent at the suggestion of her brother, who was hoping to visit London later; he was greatly interested in Ellen Nussey’s letters from the metropolis. Mrs. Gaskell did not give the whole of the postscript, which concludes: “Branwell very much wishes to know.”

The efforts of the Brontës had long been directed to London as the destination of Branwell, who was sent there to study painting. Mrs. Gaskell had the impression that Branwell Brontë never visited London, and Ellen Nussey evidently had the same impression, but as early as 1835, when Branwell was only eighteen, he wrote to the Secretary of the Royal Academy for information concerning the best means of obtaining admission, and at a later period he certainly went to London and studied painting. On 5th July, 1835, Charlotte Brontë wrote: “We are all about to divide, break up, separate. Emily is going to school, Branwell is going to London, and I am going to be a governess.”

Branwell was the first member of the family to see the “Great Babylon,” but it proved too much for him; he frequented the public-houses, amongst them the Castle Tavern in Holborn, then kept by Tom Spring, a well-known prize fighter. He was not twenty years of age, and before he really reached the City he had fallen a prey to “sharpers,” and very soon the money which his father had so generously given him was either squandered or obtained from him by fraud.

The sacrifice which his sisters had made to enable him to go to London was not of much use, and it soon became necessary to get Branwell back to Haworth ; he had visited most of the sights of the City and was much interested in the Elgin Marbles, drawings of which he intended to make.

Ten years later, and shortly before his death, he wrote to his friend Leyland—

"I used to think that if I could have, for a week, the free range of the British Museum—the library included—I could feel as though I were placed for seven days in Paradise ; but now, really, dear Sir, my eyes would rest upon the Elgin marbles, the Egyptian saloon, and the most treasured columns, like the eyes of a dead cod-fish."<sup>1</sup>

Thus Branwell's visit to London in 1835 turned out a miserable failure, and the family evidently did not talk much about it. This accounts for Mrs. Gaskell's not having heard of the visit, which led her into the further error in writing of Branwell's ability to direct a traveller, who had called at the Black Bull, as to the best means of getting from place to place in London. Mrs. Gaskell tells us that Branwell confessed he had never been to London, which was untrue. Whenever this idolised brother of the Brontës was away from home, he was met by some temptation which he was incapable of resisting.

Branwell had described London to his sisters, and now, with the loan from their aunt, they found it possible to realise their dream.

Charlotte Brontë was a woman of twenty-six and Emily was twenty-four when they proceeded to Brussels in the company of Mary Taylor and her brother, both of whom were well acquainted with the journey. Mr. Brontë also determined to go with them and see a few of the sights of London on the way. He was now a man of sixty-five and apparently had not visited London since he was ordained at Fulham in 1806, unless he visited it when a curate at Wethersfield.

The journey was likely to afford Charlotte Brontë the most pleasure ; she had gained that for which she had striven,

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontë Family*, by Francis A. Leyland.

whilst Emily was more attached to her home. Charlotte had evidently discussed London with her brother Branwell, as we gather from a letter written by Mary Taylor to Mrs. Gaskell, which, curiously, was not published in the first or second edition of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, though it finds a place in subsequent editions.

"In passing through London she [Charlotte] seemed to think our business was, and ought to be, to see all the pictures and statues we could. She knew the artists, and knew where other productions of theirs were to be found. I don't remember what we saw except St. Paul's. Emily was like her in these habits of mind, but certainly never took her opinion, but always had one to offer."

It was some four or five years afterwards that Charlotte, in her *Professor*, put on record her first impressions of London, which later on she amplified in *Villette*. Her wonderful memory had retained the details of that first visit, and, although the party only remained in London two nights and one day, Charlotte managed to see many of the great sights which London had to offer; her enthusiasm knew no bounds when she was breaking new ground and gaining fresh knowledge.

The father took his daughters to The Chapter Coffee House in Paternoster Row, with its side entrance in St. Paul's Alley, which still retains its old name. The house has been demolished, and what is now known as The Chapter Wine House has been built on the same site. Judging from a drawing of the old Chapter Coffee House, the present building, so far as the exterior is concerned, is very similar in design, the reflecting lights in the narrow alley between Paternoster Row and St. Paul's Churchyard still being necessary for the rooms on that side. Charlotte evidently had a bedroom looking towards St. Paul's Cathedral. The upper rooms of the present tavern are used by one of the large drapery establishments in St. Paul's Churchyard.

In the *Professor*, Charlotte, who is represented by William Crimsworth, compares her little room in the Coffee House with that of the large room in the hotel at Ostend, but she is grateful for her first night in London, for she says—



“How different from the small and dingy, though not uncomfortable apartment I had occupied for a night or two at a respectable inn in London while waiting for the sailing of the packet ! Yet far be it from me to profane the memory of that little dingy room ! It, too, is dear to my soul ; for there, as I lay in quiet and darkness, I first heard the great bell of St. Paul’s telling London it was midnight, and well do I recall the deep, deliberate tones, so full charged with colossal phlegm and force. From the small, narrow window of that room I first saw *the* dome, looming through a London mist. I suppose the sensations, stirred by those first sounds, first sights, are felt but once ; treasure them, Memory ; seal them in urns, and keep them in safe niches ! ”

Seven years later in *Villette* is a more detailed account, but in both cases the novelist represents herself as travelling alone, which, in the first visit to Brussels was not so ; yet, in a sense she was alone, for none of the party could quite enter into her thoughts and feelings. In *Villette* she mentions both the first and second visit, when she was quite alone. Arriving in London much later than she expected, she feared to ask for a bed at the Chapter Coffee House after ten o’clock at night, thinking that it was not respectable for a lady to be out so late, especially as it was winter time. Haworth people even to-day go to bed soon after nine o’clock in winter, and few women are in the streets at that hour. In *Villette* she unburdens her heart and shows her glee in her new environment—

“When I awoke, rose, and opened my curtain, I saw the risen sun struggling through fog. Above my head, above the house-tops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orbéd mass, dark-blue and dim—THE DOME. While I looked, my inner self moved, my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose ; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life. In that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah’s gourd.”

Evidently the sitting-room window, as is now the case, looked on to Paternoster Row, still held sacred as then to booksellers and publishers—

“Finding myself before St. Paul’s, I went in ; I mounted to

the dome : I saw thence London, with its river, and its bridge, and its churches ; I saw antique Westminster, and the green Temple Gardens, with sun upon them, and a glad, blue sky, of early spring above ; and, between them and it, not too dense, a cloud of haze. Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment ; and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last : I got into the Strand ; I went up Cornhill ; I mixed with the life passing along ; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure.”

The Chapter Coffee House was noted as a rendezvous of authors and publishers in the eighteenth century ; and in the early half of the nineteenth century it was frequented by University men and the clergy.

Oliver Goldsmith used to dine at the Chapter Coffee House, and his favourite place became a seat of honour, and was pointed out to visitors. Leather tokens of the Coffee House are still in existence. It was closed as a coffee house in 1854.

It was after leaving Cambridge and possibly when curate at Wethersfield that Patrick Brontë occasionally stayed at the Chapter Coffee House. It was not quite the place to take young women to, for Mrs. Gaskell tells us that all the servants except one were men, and that women did not frequent the place ; but, from a literary standpoint, no haunt in London could have been more appropriate for the *début* of two future authors than this old coffee house, where Goldsmith and Johnson were wont to enjoy the discussions. Here it was that poor Chatterton was proud to associate with the literary geniuses of London. On 6th May, 1770, only a few months before he died, and when he was literally starving, he tried to deceive his mother by writing as cheerfully as he could : “ I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee House, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary ; an author carries his genius in his pen.”

When collecting the material for her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1856, Mrs. Gaskell visited the old Coffee House with Mr. George Smith, though the house was empty.

She gives a detailed account of the place—

“It had the appearance of a dwelling-house, two hundred years old or so, such as one sometimes sees in ancient country towns ; the ceilings of the small rooms were low, and had heavy beams running across them ; the walls were wainscoted breast high ; the stairs were shallow, broad, and dark, taking up much space in the centre of the house.”

In 1858 John Lothrop Motley visited the house after it had become a wine shop, but he tells us in the first volume of his *Letters* that the man in charge did not know the name of Brontë, and he concludes : “The slender furrow made by little Jane Eyre in the ocean of London had long been effaced.” That was written more than fifty years ago, but there are still many, including Americans, worshippers of the Brontës, who, when visiting this part of London, locate the place where Charlotte and Emily Brontë once lodged as testified by the descriptions in the *Professor* and *Villette*.

The late Mr. Elliot Stock, once one of the oldest publishers and booksellers in Paternoster Row, possessed a set of the first edition of the Brontë novels bound in wood made from one of the old beams of the Chapter Coffee House. Another admirer of the Brontës has a set of the novels bound in wood taken from an old beam in the Haworth Parish Church.

The most interesting association of the Brontës with the Chapter Coffee House was when Charlotte and Anne took their hurried flight to London in 1848, to prove their separate identity to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., who had received a communication from America which threw suspicion on the separate individuality of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. At the same time Messrs. Newby were advertising a novel by Acton Bell as by the author of *Jane Eyre*. The account of Charlotte and Anne walking through a snowstorm from Haworth to Keighley, and about eight o'clock on Saturday morning arriving at the Chapter Coffee House, not knowing where else to go, may be gathered from a graphic description by Charlotte in a letter to Mary Taylor. Mrs. Gaskell was surely more accurate when she described it as a thunderstorm and not a snowstorm, as it occurred in July.

Mrs. Gaskell was fortunate in finding "the old grey-haired elderly man" who waited on the two women in 1848. He said he was touched from the first by the quiet simplicity of the two ladies, and he tried to make them feel comfortable and at home in the long, low, dingy room upstairs. When Mr. George Smith, with his mother and sister, called on them, he found them clinging together on the most remote window seat. Mrs. Smith thought the place was scarcely suitable for two country-bred women to stay at, and she and her son begged them to accept their offer of hospitality at Westbourne Place, Bishop's Road, Paddington, but with characteristic independence they refused, though they accepted an invitation to the Grand Opera and went to dinner at Westbourne Place the next day.

This was Anne's only visit to London and the only occasion on which she travelled beyond Yorkshire; she does not make any use in her novels of this visit to the Metropolis. The two sisters returned home laden with books given them by Mr. George Smith, well pleased with the memorable journey, which gave them much to talk about when they returned to the old parsonage at Haworth. Their love of painting was shown by their visit to the Royal Academy, and to the National Gallery, during this flying visit in 1848.

## CHAPTER XVI

BRUSSELS, 1842 (JANUARY TO NOVEMBER)

BRUSSELS in 1842—Charlotte Brontë's account of the journey—The Heger Pensionnat as described in *The Professor* and *Villette*—The Rue d'Isabelle—Ste. Gudule's Church—Charlotte Brontë's confession—Mrs. Gaskell's account—Thackeray's *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches*.

BRUSSELS to-day is very different from what it was in the time of Charlotte Brontë. Then the river Senne flowed through the city, where now are the Boulevard de la Senne, the Boulevard d'Anspach, and the Boulevard du Hainaut, and almost in a straight line connecting the Gare du Nord and the Gare du Midi. It is now, through the greater part of its course in the city, covered over, but when Charlotte Brontë was in Brussels it was quite open, and houses, which have since been demolished, were built along its banks. In the Hotel de Ville are some beautiful oil-paintings of Old Brussels, with the River Senne, as it was in the time of the Brontës, and giving it quite a picturesque appearance.

Charlotte Brontë gives an account in *Villette* of her second eventful crossing to Belgium, when she was quite alone. Of her first voyage from London to Ostend there is no record. In the *Professor* she says of the journey in February, 1842.

"I gazed. . . Well ! and what did I see ? I will tell you faithfully. Green, reedy swamps ; fields fertile but flat, cultivated in patches that made them look like magnified kitchen-gardens ; belts of cut trees, formal as pollard willows, skirting the horizon ; narrow canals, gliding slow by the roadside ; painted Flemish farm-houses ; some very dirty hovels ; a grey, dead sky ; wet road, wet fields, wet house-tops ; not a beautiful, scarcely a picturesque object met my eye along the whole route ; yet to me, all was beautiful, all was more than picturesque. It continued fair so long as daylight lasted, though the moisture of many preceding damp days had sodden the whole country ; as it grew dark, however, the rain recommenced, and it was through streaming and starless darkness my eye caught the first gleam of the lights of Brussels."

Even to-day her description of the country between Ostend and Brussels is very true, though there are more buildings to be seen on the journey.

St. Michel is the patron saint of Brussels, and a fine statue representing that saint in the Hotel de Ville, at the foot of the grand staircase, attracts much attention. The Haworth Church was also dedicated to St. Michael, so that for the Brontës there was a link which connected Haworth and Brussels.

In the *Professor*, Charlotte Brontë does not even give the streets fictitious names ; she writes quite openly of Brussels,—the Rue d’Isabelle, and the Rue Royale. The only names she alters are those of characters ; the narrator figures as William Crimsworth, a teacher in Brussels, though with all the facts now known of Charlotte Brontë there is not the slightest difficulty in recognising her as Crimsworth.

In the manuscript, which was purchased by the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan, the title was originally *The Master* ; on the front page a slip of paper is pasted over with the new title *The Professor*.

Charlotte Brontë’s first description of the pensionnat in *The Professor* is quite accurate to the letter.

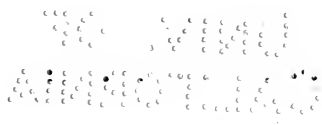
“ I was soon at the entrance of the pensionnat, in a moment I had pulled the bell ; in another moment the door was opened, and within appeared a passage paved alternately with black and white marble ; the walls were painted in imitation of marble also ; and at the far end opened a glass door, through which I saw shrubs and a grass-plot, looking pleasant in the sunshine of the mild spring evening—for it was now in the middle of April.

“ This, then, was my first glimpse of *the* garden ; but I had not time to look long, the portress, after having answered in the affirmative my question as to whether her mistress was at home, opened the folding doors of a room to the left, and having ushered me in, closed them behind me. I found myself in a salon with a very well-painted, highly varnished floor ; chairs and sofas covered with white draperies, a green

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



HEGER PENSIONNAT, RUE D'ISABELLE  
*From a water-colour painting*





porcelain stove, walls hung with pictures in gilt frames, a gilt pendule and other ornaments on the mantelpiece, a large lustre pendent from the centre of the ceiling, mirrors, consoles, muslin curtains, and a handsome centre table completed the inventory of furniture. All looked extremely clean and glittering, but the general effect would have been somewhat chilling had not a second large pair of folding-doors, standing wide open, and disclosing another and smaller salon, more snugly furnished, offered some relief to the eye. This room was carpeted, and therein was a piano, a couch, a chiffonnière—above all, it contained a lofty window with a crimson curtain, which, being undrawn, afforded another glimpse of the garden, through the large, clear panes, round which some leaves of ivy, some tendrils of vine were trained. . . . It was a long, not very broad strip of cultured ground, with an alley bordered by enormous old fruit trees down the middle; there was a sort of lawn, a parterre of rose trees, some flower borders, and on the far side, a thickly planted copse of lilacs, laburnums, and acacias.”

Miss Frances Wheelwright, who died on the 6th March, 1913, considered this description quite accurate as she remembered it, and she was at school in Brussels with the Brontë sisters.

With all Charlotte Brontë's powers of imagination, she was quite dependent on actual models and original places; her purely imaginative stories, written before she went to Brussels, do not ring true, and she herself confessed her inability to write except from actual experience. “Details, situations which I do not understand and cannot personally inspect, I would not for the world meddle with. Besides, not one feeling on *any* subject, public or private, will I ever affect that I do not really experience.” This confession settles once for all the question whether the books written by Charlotte Brontë came from her own life-story or were entirely imagination; and though her books are not literally true, they are drawn from what came within her own little world of experience.

The Heger Pensionnat has now been demolished, not a brick being left. All the old fruit trees have been uprooted,

and the garden, which had become classic ground to Brontë pilgrims, is gone for ever. Just a few branches of some of the trees nearest to the road are to be seen above the *débris*, as if protesting against the burial of the old trees which dated back to the time of the ancient Hospice of Terarken. It is well that Charlotte Brontë has pictured the old school and its garden so faithfully, for as long as her masterpiece *Villette* lives the old garden, with its *allée défendue*, will be a source of interest to all lovers of the Brontë literature.

This old part of the city, much lower than the Rue Royale on the East and the Rue Montagne de la Cour on the South, of which the Rue d'Isabelle formed a part, is being completely transformed. A new road resting on arches has been constructed at very great cost, almost entirely filling the cup-shaped depression of land in this central part of Brussels; at the same time, another somewhat similar road will join it almost at right angles, leading from the Rue Royale. This scheme will completely destroy that part of Brussels with which the Brontës were associated. The approaches to the Rue d'Isabelle by the steps in the Rue de la Bibliothèque, the Rue Villa-Hermosa and the Rue Ravenstein will shortly disappear, and the site of the Rue d'Isabelle itself will only be obtained by consulting old plans and drawings of this part of Brussels. The statue of Count Belliard still stands as if keeping sentinel over the old Rue d'Isabelle, but it is said that it will shortly be taken to another part of the town, or find a home in the park opposite.

The school premises have not been inhabited for years, and it is now only possible to walk down the first flight of stone steps on which Lucy Snowe paced in front of what was the Hegers' old home, and very soon these will have disappeared also.

The Rue Royale has also undergone great changes since Charlotte and Emily Brontë traversed its wide thoroughfare. The Hotel Cluysenaar, doubtless, was the original of the Hotel Crécy. "It was an hotel in the foreign sense: a collection of dwelling-houses, not an inn—a vast, lofty pile, with a huge arch in its street door, leading through a vaulted covered way, into a square, all built round." It was here, in a small

flat in 1842, so Miss Wheelwright told me, that her father, Dr. Wheelwright, and his family lived, and it was here that Charlotte Brontë often found a kindly English welcome. This building, too, has been demolished. The name Cluysenaar was in honour of a noted Brussels architect, who had much to do with the new buildings in Brussels; the hotel on the same site has been re-named several times. From being known as the Hotel Cluysenaar, its name was changed to Hotel Mengelle, then Hotel Astoria et Mengelle, but now it is the fashionable family Hotel Astoria, 105 Rue Royale, and is conducted quite as an English hotel.

Soon all the landmarks of the Brontës' brief sojourn in the gay capital will have disappeared. The Park is still left to remind us of Lucy Snowe and Paul Emanuel in that wonderful description of the fête given in *Villette* under the title of "Old and New Acquaintances." It reads more like a dream than an actual experience; the topography of the route which Lucy took is not quite accurate, nor is that of Lucy Snowe's first visit to Madame Beck's establishment. The visit to the fête was drawn from actual experience, for M. Heger took Charlotte Brontë to see it whilst she was in Brussels; this annual festival for many years was held in the Park on the first Sunday after the 23rd of September. It is now celebrated on 21st, 22nd and 23rd July, when the weather is usually more settled than in September. It commemorates the martyrs and patriots who lost their lives in defence of their country in 1830, when Belgium refused to be forced under the yoke of Prince Frederick of the Netherlands. As M. Heger took part in the defence of his country and his first wife's brother was slain whilst fighting by his side, he would have sad memories of the event.

The space now occupied by the Park was the centre of the struggle for freedom in 1830, and the district around abounds in reminiscences of the revolution. Between the Rue Fossé aux Chiens and the Rue St. Michel by the Rue Neuve is the Place des Martyrs. In the centre stands the monument erected to the memory of the Belgian troops who fell in the struggle against the Dutch in 1830. An allegorical figure

representing liberated Belgium is recording the time from 23rd September to 26th September, the four days of the struggle. The Belgian lion rests at the foot of the figure, and broken chains indicate the happy era thus begun. Four designs in marble represent the gratified country, and the names of the 445 patriots, who died in the struggle, are inscribed in an underground gallery. The great fête now held in July is attended by the civic and military authorities, as well as by representatives of the government. A feature of the celebration used to be the gathering of the old veterans, who took part in the struggle for freedom, but now all are gone.

The great Church of St. Michel and Ste Gudule, generally called Ste Gudule's Cathedral, where Charlotte Brontë made an actual confession, good Protestant as she was, is a prominent feature of the Belgian capital. It is approached by more steps than in the Brontë days, but the interior is much the same. Charlotte Brontë tells us that hers was a real confession, and for once the Roman Church appealed to her. She says she felt so lonely that she did not mind what she did, provided it was not wrong.

Sir Wemyss Reid was the first to show that this incident in *Villette* was founded on fact, for he had talked with Ellen Nussey who knew of Charlotte's actual confession; moreover, a letter written by M. Heger in 1863 to Ellen Nussey (which will be quoted later) had also been seen by him, and that accounts for his assertion that Charlotte Brontë left Brussels, disillusioned, after having "tasted strange joys and drunk deep waters, the very bitterness of which seemed to endear them to her."

A letter written to Emily Brontë, and dated 2nd September, 1843, confirmed this story of the confession. Charlotte tells how in the long vacation she was feeling ill, miserable and lonely, and one evening after spending the day walking about the streets of Brussels, she made a pilgrimage to the cemetery where Martha Taylor was buried, and on her return she was reluctant to enter the almost deserted pensionnat. As she was passing Ste. Gudule's Church, the bell was ringing for Salut, and an irresistible impulse seemed to compel her to go in.

In her letter, Charlotte gives the substance of the episode mentioned in *Villette*, but she says that she "promised faithfully" to go to the priest's house for further counsel, though she tells Emily that there the matter ended. "Go, my daughter, for the present; but return to me again." I rose and thanked him. I was withdrawing when he signed me to return.

"You must not come to this church," said he; "I see you are ill, and this church is too cold; you must come to my house: I live —— (and he gave me his address). Be there to-morrow morning, at ten," says Lucy Snowe in *Villette*.

In reply to this appointment, she says "I only bowed; and pulling down my veil, and gathering round me my cloak, I glided away.

"Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace."

Harriet Martineau held no brief for the Romanists, but she considered Charlotte Brontë overstepped the ordinary rules of Christian charity by her bitter attack on the Romanist religion. Having gone to Brussels to learn French, she considered she treated the Heger family and Roman Catholic Brussels very meanly.

Now that the old Court Quarter of Brussels is being swept away, it is important that the history of the pensionnat should be preserved, especially for those who will always associate it with Charlotte and Emily Brontë.

Mrs. Gaskell's account of the history of this old part of the city is not quite accurate; she probably did not clearly understand her informants, and she did not get her statements checked by some one who knew the history of the place.

Like many other Brontë pilgrims who have followed in her footsteps, she was misled by the imposing gateway leading to the old garden of the school, with its ancient Latin inscription; she evidently assumed that this was the old gate leading to the former "great mansion," built by the Infanta Isabella for the Arbalétriers du Grand Serment, and not

merely the gate leading to the exercise ground, for the house itself had been demolished before the Brontës went to the Rue d'Isabelle, and the site had been used to make an entrance to the Rue Royale by putting four flights of steps to gain the level of the higher part leading into the Rue Royale, past the Belliard statue, and directly opposite to one of the entrances to the Park. Mrs. Gaskell was also wrong in assuming that Madame Heger's school was built in the time of the Spanish possession of the Netherlands. If she had examined the school closely, she would have noticed a great difference, both in architecture and appearance with regard to age, between the old stone gateway and the more modern house and school-room. The Heger pensionnat had only been built about forty years when the Brontës went there, and consequently when Mrs. Gaskell visited it fourteen years afterwards it was little more than fifty years old, whereas the Infanta Isabella built the stone gateway in the first half of the seventeenth century, and near by she erected several small houses for the "garde bourgeoise"; those old houses were demolished before the Heger pensionnat was built.

This elaborate gateway was still standing in the Rue d'Isabelle until 1910, though in the Haworth edition of *Villette*, published in 1905, the gateway was said to have been demolished.

The "Pensionnat de Demoiselles" owed its origin to an aunt of Madame Heger, who had been a nun in a French convent, which was destroyed in the time of the Revolution. On coming to Brussels she opened a school and had for her first pupils her five nieces including Mdlle Claire Zoë Parent, who afterwards became Madame Heger. This may account for Charlotte Brontë's theory that a nun was buried under the slab at the foot of the "Methuselah of a pear tree," but, as the founder of the school was not buried in the garden, the story originated in Charlotte Brontë's imaginative brain. The actual fact was that, in the days of the cross-bowmen, the slab, which was there until recently, covered the entrance to an underground passage leading to another part of the town, probably to enable the cross-bowmen to escape if attacked from the surrounding heights.

In the Palais des Beaux Arts in the Rue de la Régence is a large oil-painting by Antoon Sallaert of the Flemish School, showing the grand fête of the Arbalétriers du Grand Serment, and the Infanta Isabella shooting at the popinjay in the presence of the numerous members of the Guild on the 15th of May, 1615, and bringing down the bird.

The pensionnat was vacated by the Heger family in 1897, and was afterwards used as a boys' school. Going through the Heger Pensionnat, with a copy of *Villette* in hand, it was easy to people the rooms with the characters of the novel, so carefully has Charlotte Brontë kept to the correct arrangement of the interior, and no guide was necessary to find the Rue d'Isabelle, with a copy of *The Professor* at hand.

The Park, which happily will remain, was the gift of the Empress Maria Theresa. It was through the Central Park—so called to distinguish it from the Leopold Park—that Lucy Snowe was piloted from the bureau of the diligence by the chivalrous Dr. John, on the night when she, solitary and helpless, arrived in Villette.

As Charlotte did not arrive at the Rue d'Isabelle unexpectedly and a stranger on her second stay at Brussels, her account does not ring true, but she evidently thought she was doing the best for herself, for she says, "Fate took me in her strong hand; mastered my will, and directed my actions."

Again, her description of the forest "with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the foliage" on the night of the fête brings to mind Thackeray, who later became Charlotte Brontë's literary hero. He was actually in Brussels in August, 1842, when Charlotte Brontë was staying at the pensionnat alone, and it may be that these two great novelists, who came "to their own" about the same time, may have passed each other in the park or in the streets of the capital. In *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches*, published in *Punch*, Thackeray says, "The Park is very pretty, and all the buildings round about it have an air of neatness—almost of stateliness. The houses are tall, the streets spacious, and the roads extremely clean. In the Park is a little theatre, a café somewhat ruinous, a little palace for the king of this little kingdom,

some smart public buildings (with S.P.Q.B. blazoned on them, at which pompous inscription one cannot help laughing), and other rows of houses, somewhat resembling a little Rue de Rivoli; whether from my own natural greatness and magnanimity, or from that handsome share of national conceit that every Englishman possesses, my impressions of this city are certainly anything but respectful. It has an absurd kind of Lilliput look with it." Possibly the Rue d'Isabelle, hidden below this central part of the city, escaped his notice, for the chimneys were only just visible from the steps leading from the Rue Royale. It is just possible that Thackeray's view prompted Charlotte Brontë to give the title of *Villette* to her novel, for she read *Punch* and had met Thackeray before she wrote her story. To her, however, Brussels was a big city compared with the little village of Haworth, though, when she came to know London, she would think Brussels was small in comparison.

Almost all the windows that overlooked the garden at the pensionnat had each its relation to *Villette*. There was the one from which M. Paul watched Lucy as she sat or walked in the *allée défendue*, dogged by Madame Beck; from the same window were thrown the love letters which fell at Lucy's feet. Then there was the old pear tree near the end of the alley. At the base of this tree, one miserable night, Lucy buried her precious letters, and tried also to bury her love for Dr. John. Here she leaned her brow against Methuselah's knotty trunk, and uttered to herself those words of renunciation, "Good-night, Dr. John; you are good, you are beautiful, *but you are not mine*. Good-night, and God bless you." Charlotte Brontë's recently-published letters in the *Times* prove that M. Heger was the original of Dr. John in some parts of the novel. It was in the garden that Lucy and M. Paul saw the ghost of the nun descend from the leafy shadows overhead, and, flitting past their own stricken faces, dart behind the shrubbery into the darkness. By one of the tall trees near the class rooms, the ghost gained access to its non-spiritual fiancée, Ginevra Fanshawe. In this garden, Charlotte and Emily Brontë walked and talked apart from the other



pupils, Emily, though much the taller, leaning on Charlotte's arm.

How few women, if any, could have found in that garden so much material for romance. Though, in later years, it was not so large as in the days of the Brontës, yet it was full of reminiscences. Here was the *berceau* underneath which the girls sewed, whilst a French book was read to them by Madame Heger, or one of the teachers, and the *allée défendue* was *défendue* no longer.

"That old garden had its charms. On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone ; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryst with the rising moon, or taste one kiss of the evening breeze, or fancy rather than feel the freshness of dew descending. The turf was verdant, the gravelled walks were white ; sunbright nasturtiums clustered beautiful about the roots of the doddered orchard giants. There was a large *berceau*, above which spread the shade of an acacia ; there was a smaller, more sequestered bower, nestled in the vines which ran all along a high and grey wall, and gathered their tendrils in a knot of beauty, and hung their clusters in loving profusion about the favoured spot where jasmine and ivy met and married them."

At the back of the garden, until within the last few years, was an old picturesque building known as the "Galerie," probably dating from the days of the Hospice, and hence Mrs. Gaskell's opinion that it was part of the school building. This old "galerie," with its balcony, was used by the girls on summer evenings as a theatre, and here they acted their little plays. At other times, Madame Heger took the girls to the old building for needlework. It had a large, open fireplace, with a plate of iron at the back bearing a coat-of-arms, and dated 1525. This appealed to the English girls, for it was more homely than the Belgian stoves.

The pensionnat was altered from time to time, but the interior remained much the same as when the Brontës were pupils there. How well the second division class room has been pictured. On the platform at one end, Charlotte Brontë stood to give her first lesson to the unruly Belgian girls, and

behind the room was the cupboard under the stairs, into which Lucy Snowe cleverly pushed the unruly pupil, locking it quickly, and thereby securing order in the class and the respect of the other girls.

What tales those walls in the second division class room could have told ; here it was that Charlotte and Emily Brontë sat in the furthest corner, oblivious of all around them ; here Mdlle Henri received her lessons from Crimsworth ; here Lucy Snowe's desk was searched by Paul Emanuel—the tell-tale odour of his cigar betraying him ; here, in the evenings, Lucy taught Paul Emanuel French, and here he taught her arithmetic, and perhaps without knowing it—love, to be named friendship. It was in this room that Paul Emanuel tried to induce Lucy Snowe to become a Roman Catholic ; here they partook of the supper of biscuits and baked apples, and here the violent scene occurred between Paul Emanuel and Madame Beck, when she came suddenly upon him and Lucy Snowe. It was from the desk on the platform, at the end of the room, that M. Heger himself gave those masterful lectures on literature to succeeding groups of Belgian and English girls, and it was from that position that Paul Emanuel uttered the spiteful tirade against the English. On that desk were heaped up the bouquets, and from there Lucy Snowe accidentally brushed off the professor's spectacles.

At a later date, the dormitories were used as class rooms, when the premises were used only for day pupils—the pensionnat being in another street. The oratory was converted into a library, on the walls of which were portraits of distinguished residents of Brussels, but no place was assigned to Charlotte Brontë. She gave the school a character which implied censure rather than praise.

The large dormitory of the old pensionnat was probably converted into a class room, because the story of the ghost in *Villette* got abroad ; it was in one corner of this long room that the Brontës slept, in a space curtained off from the other eighteen beds, and it was there that Lucy Snowe suffered the horrors of hypochondria, so graphically told in *Villette*, and it was on her bed in the farthest corner that she found the costume

of the spectral nun, lying on the bed. It was here that Charlotte Brontë spent the miserable night which Mrs. Gaskell describes so sympathetically. The réfectoire or dining-hall was a long narrow room, where M. and Madame Heger took their meals with the boarders, and where the girls prepared their evening lessons. Here the evening service was held, when Charlotte Brontë, hating the Roman Catholic doctrines, escaped to the garden. It was in this large room that Paul Emanuel read to the teachers and pupils. Some of the scenes in *Villette* which are literally true, as other pupils in later years testified, are described with all the novelist's passion. She mentions the church of St. Jean Baptiste, "whose bell warned the pupils in the Rue Fossette of the flight of time," and whose cupola was plainly to be seen from the windows of the pensionnat. This was undoubtedly the church of St. Jacques-sur-Caudenberg on the elevated ground above the Rue d'Isabelle. On one side adjoining is an hotel, and on the other an antique shop, whilst in front is one of the finest statues in Brussels—an equestrian statue of Godfrey de Bouillon, erected in 1848, five years after the Brontës left Brussels.

At the annual fête, a solemn Te Deum is always sung in the Church of St. Jacques, though to commemorate royal events the Church of Ste. Gudule is used.

Charlotte Brontë refers to the Te Deum in the Church of St. Jacques in *Villette*, and thus proves her careful observation of events which occurred during her stay in Brussels.

The Church of the Béguinage is mentioned by Lucy Snowe as the place where she was found in a faint by Dr. John. This large church, which was said to have been designed by Rubens, is in the Basse-Ville, near the Grand Hospice and the Rue de Laeken. That Lucy Snowe should have wandered round this part from Ste. Gudule is strange, as it took her completely away from the Rue Fossette. The description fits the real Church of the Béguinage with its massive front, though it certainly has no giant spire. Before Charlotte Brontë's days, there had been a church in the Rue d'Isabelle, which belonged to the Béguines, an Order devoted to the sick and

poor—the members being willing to render help to all ranks, as they were bound by no vows and were supported by the Belgians generally.

Madame Heger arranged little excursions to the pretty villages around Brussels, one of which is the picturesque Boisfort, in the cemetery of which M. and Madame Heger are buried. One of the favourite excursions taken from Brussels is to the Field of Waterloo, and it is strange that Charlotte Brontë never mentions Waterloo in her letters and not often in her novels.

## CHAPTER XVII

### M. AND MADAME HEGER

THE Hegers of German origin—Birth of M. Heger—His marriage—Death of his first wife—His second marriage—The Royal Athénée of Brussels—Mlle Claire Zoë Parent—M. Heger's success as a teacher—His methods of teaching—Celebration of M. and Madame Heger's golden wedding—References in the Belgian Press—M. Heger's death.

ALTHOUGH Belgium may rightly claim to be the home of the Hegers for 200 years, originally they came from Vienna and for that reason they adopted the German method of writing the surname—Heger—without any accent mark, as is usually adopted by English and Belgian writers. The *devoirs* written by the Brontës whilst at Brussels and corrected by M. Heger, and letters addressed to members of the Brontë family, are signed "C. Heger."

Romain Constantin Georges Heger was born on July 10th, 1809, at Brussels and was the son of Joseph Antoine Heger and Marie Thérèse Maré. He received a good education and would have preferred to be a barrister according to one of Charlotte Brontë's letters, but he devoted himself to the profession of teaching for which he had special gifts. When a young man of twenty-one, he married Mariè Joséphine Noyer, who died very early in their married life on the 26th September, 1833. In 1830, when the Belgian Revolution broke out, M. Heger joined the Belgian forces, taking part in several battles against the Dutch, and was proud to have had a share in obtaining the Independence of Belgium. His brother-in-law was killed in battle. At the conclusion of the war, he again took up his work as a teacher, and remained throughout his life a professor at the Athénée Royal of Brussels. Here he showed great aptitude in managing large classes of boys, especially the lowest form, and subsequently was appointed head master of the school. Owing to some differences of opinion with regard to the methods to be adopted he resigned the head mastership, and became again a class master in the institution.

Near the Athénée Royal was a school for girl boarders and day pupils taught by Mdlle Claire Zoë Parent, to whom he was married on 3rd September, 1836. It was to this school—the Heger Pensionnat, in the Rue d'Isabelle—that Charlotte and Emily Brontë were sent as boarders in 1842. Mdlle Claire Zoë Parent was born on 13th July, 1804, so that she was five years older than her husband, M. Heger, and was thirty-two years of age when she was married. Charlotte Brontë was born on 21st April, 1816, and it is a matter of some importance that the relative ages of the Hegers and Charlotte Brontë should be clearly recognised, as tending to throw light on the question of the correspondence and relations between them.

M. and Madame Heger had six children: Marie Pauline Emma, born on the 20th September, 1837; Elise Marie Louise Florence, born on the 14th July, 1839; Eugène Claire Zoë Marie, born on the 27th July, 1840; Prospère Edouard Augustin, born on the 28th March, 1842; Julie Marie Victorine, born on the 15th November, 1843; and Paul Marie François Xavier, born on the 14th December, 1846.

The older of the two sons was trained as an engineer and had just entered on his engineering career when he contracted typhoid fever and died on 13th January, 1867 at Torquay, where he had been sent to recoup his health, and where he is buried. The younger son has had a distinguished career as a doctor and has been for many years a Professor of Medicine at the University of Brussels. Of the daughters, two are still living, Mdlle Louise and Mdlle Claire.

In addition to his duties at the Athénée Royal, M. Heger found time to give lessons in literature at the Heger Pensionnat, which, however, was entirely managed by his wife.

His success as a teacher was widely recognised, and it is interesting to quote some remarks made by the late Abbé Richardson at a lecture given in connection with the Polyglot Circle of Brussels at the Hotel Ravenstein, overlooking the Rue d'Isabelle, on 26th July, 1901. In 1873, as a young man in deacon's orders, Mr. Richardson was appointed a teacher at the Institut St. Louis, a large college in Brussels. He was expected to be able to manage a class of forty or fifty boys,



M. HEGER

*On his golden wedding day, September 3, 1886*

The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagon with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $f$ . The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $i$ . The lattice is composed of interconnected hexagons forming a honeycomb pattern.



although he had received no training in the art of teaching. Knowing of M. Heger's excellent reputation as a teacher he decided to consult him. M. Heger was then an old man, and had retired from public life, but he not only gave advice to the young teacher but undertook to give several lessons to a class of pupils at the Institut.

"The method M. Heger revealed to me," said Mr. Richardson, "was no easy or royal road to teaching. His first requirement was perfect self-sacrifice of self : *un dévou absolu* were his words. 'If, young man, you do not feel ready to give this *dévou absolu* to your pupils, in heaven's name ask your superiors to give you other work, for you will never do any good as a professor.' For him the foundation, and the essential requirement for success were order and discipline, but order and discipline obtained not by fear, but by patience and unfailing watchfulness. For him the first point was to establish a perfect discipline in a class, even if for a time, say a month or more, little direct classical work was done. Once obtain order and an absolute command over a class, and progress was assured to a professor without brilliant talents, whereas the most brilliant master with an unruly or undisciplined class could obtain nothing except perhaps the success of one or two exceptional pupils. His next precept was to study the pupils, to know each one of them, to neglect none, and above all, never to allow an aversion towards any one even to enter into the heart of the teacher. He gave me an example of a naturally vicious and difficult pupil, whose lasting friendship he gained, and whose character he entirely changed, simply by visiting him daily during a rather long illness, and devoting hours of his valuable time to playing with him and reading to him during his convalescence. M. Heger was kind enough to come into my schoolroom and to give me a model lesson. Never shall I forget that lesson and the magic his genial presence and clever and almost dramatic manner had on my boys."

One of M. Heger's favourite methods of teaching was to give a lecture to his pupils on some literary subject or character and then ask them to write an essay on some cognate subject. When these essays or *devoirs* were finished and handed to him,

he made necessary corrections, adding notes of praise or blame in the margin, and correcting faulty expressions by re-writing between the lines. Where he considered the pupil was at fault in matters of principle he pointed these out by a written statement at the end of the essay. After examining a number of these corrected *devoirs*, it is not difficult to understand the success which M. Heger met with in his teaching experience. The essays are marked with much more thoroughness than is customary in English schools at the present day. An illustration of this is furnished by his correction of Charlotte Brontë's essay on a poem "La Chute des Feuilles," which is dated 30th March, 1843, and was consequently written during her second year at Brussels. This is one of four *devoirs* written by Charlotte Brontë still in the possession of Dr. Heger, the others being "L'Ingratitude," 16th March, 1842; "La Chenelle," 11th August, 1842, and "La Mort de Moïse," dated 27th July, 1843. In addition Dr. Heger possesses a *devoir* or letter written by Emily Brontë. In the essay on "La Chute des Feuilles," Charlotte Brontë was expected to study the poem and then record in French the impression which the poem made upon her, and explain by what means the poet made this impression. She expressed the view in her *devoir* that genius was a gift from God, and that the possessor of the gift had nothing to do but use it. This M. Heger recognised as a dangerous doctrine, and at the end of the essay he dealt fully with the question and pointed out with many beautiful and apt illustrations that work by itself would not make a poet, but that a study of style would enhance the value of the effort made. "Genius without study, without art, without the knowledge of what has been done, is force without a lever . . . . . a musician with only a poor instrument upon which to play, anxious to convey to others the beautiful music he hears himself, he only gives expression to this in an uncultivated voice."

Emily Brontë's *devoir* was a letter in French which she was supposed to have written to her parents in England. It was dated 26th July (1842). Although it did not require very serious correction by M. Heger, so far as the French was

concerned, he criticised it very briefly but very severely because it was cold and was void of sentiment. He complained that it showed no affection and so was of little value.

Although M. Heger could exalt the need of patience in teaching, as shown in his advice to Father Richardson, like most people with special aptitude for his work, he could be choleric enough when he had to deal with stupid or indifferent pupils, and he naturally preferred to teach students who were keen about their studies and were intelligent and capable of following out the instruction he gave them. It is thus quite easy to understand his appreciation of the diligence, determination and rapid progress of the Brontë sisters, and his willingness to give them special lessons, which caused some dissatisfaction among the other girls in the pensionnat.

When Charlotte and Emily Brontë entered the Pensionnat, in February, 1842, the Hegers had three children, and in the following month a son—Prosperè—was born. In the November of 1843 a fifth child, Victorine, was born, so that Madame Heger was the mother of five young children when Charlotte Brontë left Brussels. All who have known Madame Heger agree that she was of a quiet and kind disposition, and the various portraits of her, taken from time to time, picture her as a motherly person, in many respects the right type of woman to have at the head of a boarding school for girls. The continued success of the school, even after the publication of *Villette*, and especially the unanimous testimony of the many pupils who have been educated at the pensionnat are sufficient testimony both to the ability and the kindness of heart of Madame Heger. She acted as superintendent or house-mother of the school, and in order that she might cause as little interference as possible in the rooms that she visited she was in the habit of wearing soft slippers. Her duties and her quiet manner of carrying them out probably led Charlotte Brontë to think that she was in the habit of acting as a spy. She took little part in the actual teaching, except the instruction in the catechism with the younger scholars.

Neither Charlotte nor Emily Brontë had much opportunity

of knowing the real Madame Heger and consequently they failed to appreciate her sterling worth. If they had availed themselves of the hospitality of the Hegers' private sitting-room, they might have got to know more of the inner life of the family.

On 3rd September, 1886, M. and Madame Heger celebrated their golden wedding, and in the Belgian paper *L'Indépendance* of 4th September, there was a lengthy appreciation of their work in Brussels, and especially referring to M. Heger's skill in training very young children.

#### L'INDÉPENDANCE

"SAMEDI, 4th September, 1886.

"M. et Mme Heger ont célébré hier leurs noces d'or. Cinquante ans de mariage heureux, cinquante ans de famille honorable et prospère, cinquante ans de travail utile à soi et aux autres, et cinquante ans de bonne humeur. Cela est beau, et vaut bien que non seulement les intimes, mais aussi les amis d'à côté, le public et la presse elle-même adressent leurs félicitations aux jubilaires.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Plusieurs générations d'élèves de l'Athénée royal de Bruxelles ont connu le père Heger en septième.—Quoi, vraiment en septième ! En voilà, un titre de gloire ! Parlez-nous d'un professeur de rhétorique ou d'université ; mais la septième, la classe infime, celle des bébés, la transition de la crèche à l'école !—Eh ! messieurs, ne le prenez pas de si haut. Commencer l'enfance, croyez-vous que ce soit peu de chose ? Eveiller les âmes, et, à peine écarquillées, leur inspirer la curiosité rudimentaire de la science et, mieux que le sentiment encore obscur, le goût naïf du devoir, c'est là au contraire parmi les tâches professorales une des plus importantes et des plus difficiles. Le savoir n'y suffit pas, il y faut le don ; aussi le vrai maître de septième est-il l'oiseau rare, et quand on le tient on le garde et on lui coupe les ailes pour peu qu'il se laisse faire. . . . Le père Heger, s'était acquis une véritable

renommée dans cet art qui consiste à dégourdir les intelligences et à échauffer les cœurs. Et s'il y excellait c'est qu'il l'aimait. Il l'aimait tant que, promu par ses succès aux classes de quatrième et de troisième pour y donner le cours de français, il n'y passa que peu d'années ; non pas que son enseignement fût moins heureux dans ces sphères supérieures ; loin de là, il y était très apprécié de son jeune auditoire, et les autorités scolaires lui rendaient justice. Mais sa chère septième l'attirait, et il ne tarda pas à y rentrer. . . . .

"Sans compromettre la gravité nécessaire à l'homme d'école, sans rien perdre de son autorité, il égayait la grammaire, il faisait vivre la syntaxe. Il avait le mouvement, le mot et le trait, avec un grain de fantaisie. Ses exemples, qui parfois frisaient la bizarrerie, ne s'en gravaient que mieux dans la mémoire, et il est telle de ses démonstrations dont la forme capricieuse nous est restée plus présente que la règle même dont elle nous impose encore le respect.

"Chacun sait que M. et Mme Heger ont fondé à Bruxelles un établissement qui eut longtemps le monopole, ou peu s'en faut, de l'éducation des jeunes filles de notre bourgeoisie. Voilà donc deux époux qui ont formé des centaines de familles, élevé toute une société. Le pays leur doit beaucoup. Et parmi tant de jeunes gens et de jeunes filles d'antan qui leur ont passé par les mains, il n'en est pas un, nous en sommes persuadés, qui ne leur ait gardé un souvenir affectueux, pas un qui à cette heure jubilaire ne s'associe du fond du cœur à leur joie et au bonheur de leurs enfants et petits enfants."

Both M. and Madame Heger were intensely religious people, being attached, like most Belgians, to the Roman Catholic Church.

Madame Heger died on 9th January, 1890, in her eighty-sixth year. Her husband survived her six years, dying on the 6th of May, 1896, in the eighty-seventh year of his age.

On the 9th of May under the heading "*Échos de la Ville*," there appeared in the Belgian paper *L'Indépendance* the following account of M. Heger.

## L'INDÉPENDANCE

"SAMEDI, 9 Mai, 1896.

*"Échos de la Ville*

" M. Constantin Heger, dont nous avons annoncé la mort, fut un homme remarquable dans la spécialité pédagogique qui lui fit un nom. Nos anciens l'ont connu professeur de septième à l'Athénée royal de Bruxelles. Comme il avait fait preuve de capacités exceptionnelles dans cette chaire modeste et périlleuse, il fut promu professeur de quatrième et de troisième françaises à la section des humanités, et ceux qui passèrent alors sous sa railleuse ferule peuvent dire sa conscience professionnelle, ses mérites de lettré, et l'art merveilleux avec lequel il intéressait à ses leçons des adolescents indisciplinés. Mais le père Heger, comme on l'appelait déjà, homme d'esprit clair et de jugement sûr, se fit un jour ce raisonnement : ' Sans doute, ce que je fais là est très bien, ce n'est même pas mal du tout ; mais d'autres s'en tireraient comme moi. Rendons nous justice : si je suis supérieur, c'est dans les classes inférieures. Donc, retournons en septième.' Et il y retourna.

" Etait-ce de la modestie ? De l'héroïsme plutôt. Il en faut pour préférer une tâche obscure et primaire, dont on s'acquitte mieux que personne, à un panache rehaussant une besogne plus relevée qu'on accomplit aussi bien que tout le monde. Mais, homme d'école jusqu'aux moëllles, M. Heger se rendait compte des difficultés du commencement. Le commencement, c'est ce que nous savons le mieux, tous Petit-Jean que nous sommes ; mais c'est aussi ce qu'on enseigne le plus malaisément. Et M. Heger y excellait. Il eut le panache tout de même, puisqu'il fut préfet des études de l'Athénée et officier de l'Ordre de Léopold ; mais son titre le plus glorieux est le talent rare qu'il déploya au seuil de son école dans cette première initiation d'où dépendent pour l'élève le goût du travail et les succès de l'avenir.

" Ce talent exercé par l'expérience et un constant souci de perfection avait pour principe un don précieux, une sorte

de magnétisme intellectuel à l'aide duquel le professeur s'introduisait dans l'esprit de l'élève, excitant sa curiosité, la tenant incessamment en éveil, et, pour s'imposer à son attention, utilisant d'inspiration toutes les ressources d'une nature généreuse et forte, recourant à l'humeur quand le précepte faiblissait, égayant l'aridité de la leçon, secouant la grammaire, animant la syntaxe, ne dédaignant aucun artifice pour donner quelque relief aux notions qu'il s'agissait de graver dans la mémoire, et cela sans perdre un instant de vue le but éducatif de l'instruction. Et si l'on songe à la multiplication de l'effort du maître par le nombre des élèves et la variété de leurs aptitudes, on devine ce qu'il lui fallait de charme dans l'autorité pour maintenir attentive et amusée une classe alors plus peuplée que ne sont aujourd'hui les auditoires de nos collèges.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ C'est assez dire que l'influence pédagogique de Constantin Heger fut considérable.

“ Hors de l'école, dans la famille et l'amitié, l'homme était plein de vie et d'originalité. Il y a une légende sur son cléricisme. Catholique, il l'était, et croyant, et profondément chrétien, mais sans étroitesse ni intolérance, ayant le respect des convictions sincères et des recherches de bonne foi, et partisan résolu de l'intervention scolaire de l'Etat.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Quel que fût son grand âge, sa mort n'en laisse pas moins les siens en proie à une inconsolable douleur ; mais sa longue carrière a été noblement remplie, et il en reste des traces fécondes qui perpétueront sa mémoire.”

The family grave is in the cemetery of the pretty village of Boisfort, a few miles from the centre of Brussels. There, a modest gravestone, weather-beaten, except where it is protected by a small tree at the head, covers the remains of M. and Madame Heger, who are still remembered in many parts of Belgium for their long and meritorious educational work in the Belgian capital.

Visiting this grave only a few weeks ago, I found it in the picturesque cemetery not far from the entrance. The little garden that surrounds the gravestone looked very English; white violets were in bloom, and a laurel tree sheltered the upper part of the grave from the sun.

On the gravestone are the following inscriptions—

“A la mémoire de Mademoiselle Marie Pauline Heger, née à Bruxelles le 20 septembre 1837, pieusement décédée le 2 mars 1886.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*

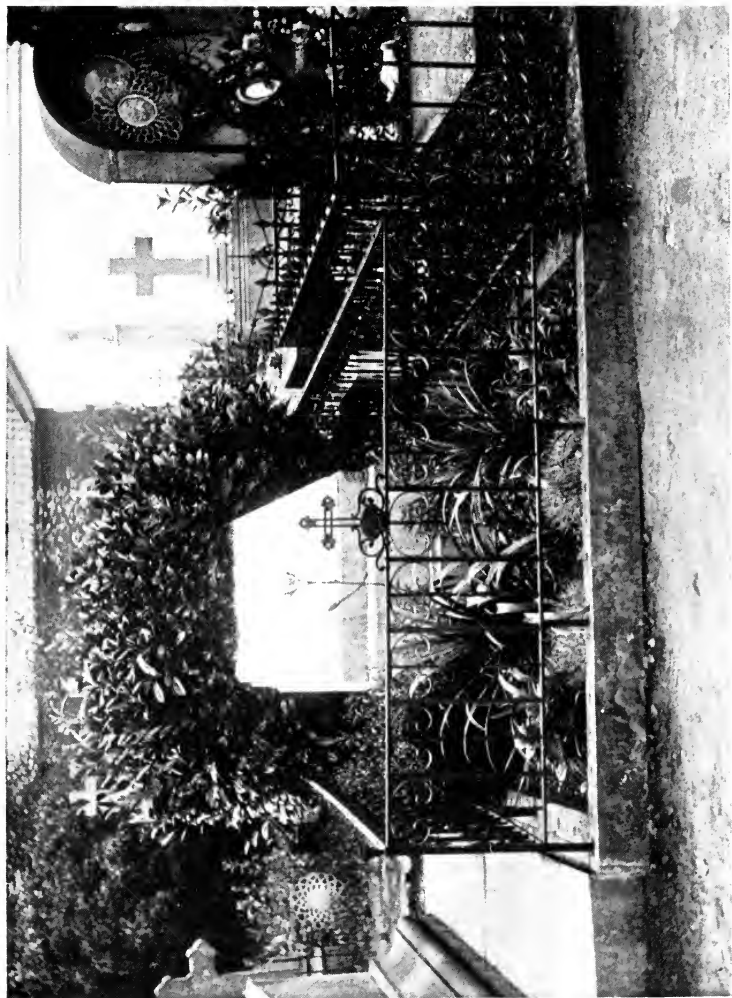
“Madame Constantin Heger née Claire Zoë Parent, pieusement décédée à Bruxelles le 9 janvier 1890 à l'âge de 88 ans et six mois.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*

“Monsieur Constantin Georges Romain Heger, veuf de Madame Claire Zoë Parent, ancien Préfet des études de l'Athénée Royal de Bruxelles, officier de l'ordre de Léopold, né à Bruxelles le 10 juillet 1809 et décédé le 6 mai 1896.”

R. I. P.





*Photo by*

**M. HEGER'S GRAVE**

*Percival M. Chadwick*



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE BRONTËS' EXPERIENCE AT THE PENSIONNAT

LIFE at the Héger Pensionnat as described in *The Professor*—Charlotte and Emily Brontë are offered positions as governess pupils—Dr. Wheelwright and his family—Death of Julia Wheelwright—Death of Miss Branwell—Her will—Christmas at the Haworth Vicarage—M. Heger's sympathy—His opinion of Emily Brontë.

IN February, 1842, the Brontës would leave the diligence at the Porte de Flandres, the main entrance to Brussels in those days, armed with a letter of introduction from a Mr. Jenkins, a clergyman who lived near Haworth, and whose brother was the English chaplain at the Embassy in Brussels. Mr. Brontë took his daughters to call first on the chaplain, who afterwards accompanied them to the pensionnat of Madame Heger, which was to be their home for the next eight months. In *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë says, "I felt free to look up. For the first time I remarked the sparkling clearness of the air, the deep blue of the sky, the gay clean aspect of the whitewashed or painted houses; I saw what a fine street was the Rue Royale, and, walking leisurely along its broad pavement, I continued to survey its stately hotels, till the palisades, the gates, the trees of the park appearing in sight offered to my eye a new attraction. I remember, before entering the park, I stood a while to contemplate the statue of General Belliard, and then I advanced to the top of the great staircase just beyond, and I looked down into a narrow back street, which I afterwards learnt was called the Rue d'Isabelle. I well recollect that my eye rested on the green door of a rather large house opposite, where on a brass plate, was inscribed, 'Pensionnat de Demoiselles.'"

Though in after years Madame Heger regretted having admitted the Brontës to her school, feeling naturally very sore about the caricature in *Villette*, she was glad to remember she gave the girls a very hearty welcome, as they were introduced by the English chaplain, although he was not a Roman Catholic. She had great admiration for the clergy and for the

English people, and the fact that the father of the two pupils was an English clergyman commended them to her. Charlotte Brontë's letter had won her esteem, and she claimed to have taken an interest in the two pupils from the first; her one attitude towards the shy English girls was that of pity; she knew they were motherless, and in after years one who knew Madame Heger well said she never spoke of Charlotte but with compassion, always referring to her as "poor Charlotte." Madame Heger's mother was named Charlotte.

After having paid their respects to Madame Heger, they had the pleasure of spending a few hours looking round Brussels before the father said "Good-bye" after spending a night at the residence of Mr. Jenkins, whom Charlotte Brontë afterwards referred to as "that little Welsh pony Jenkins."

All the arrangements with the Brontës were made with Madame Heger. M. Heger did not even put in an appearance, and Mr. Brontë never saw the man who was so greatly to influence his clever daughters. Hence both he and Miss Branwell gave the girls into the hands of Madame Heger without any thought of her husband, and it is very questionable if Mr. Brontë ever heard much of him. Paul Emanuel was merely a character so far as Mr. Brontë was concerned; hence his anxiety that all should end well between Paul Emanuel and Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. But Charlotte Brontë, with an eye to the original Paul Emanuel, determined that no marriage should take place. The conclusion of the last chapter in *Villette* is one of the choicest pieces of word painting in the English language; it was Charlotte Brontë at her best, and even M. Heger, whatever he thought of the story, must have been proud of his former pupil, and as "her master of literature" must have recognised the beauty of her diction and her ability to portray character.

Charlotte Brontë, finding herself at the Brussels pensionnat, though a woman of twenty-six, was most anxious to occupy her place as a pupil; both she and Emily were conscientious and exemplary in their conduct. "They wanted learning. They came for learning. They would learn." So determined were they, that they ignored everything else, and this devotion

to work and desire for seclusion may account to some extent for their lack of entire association with the other pupils. It is evident that there was a certain amount of shyness with strangers. Mrs. Jenkins said that she gave up asking them to her home on Sundays and holidays as she saw that it gave them more pain than pleasure, and the two sons of Mrs. Jenkins—John and Edward—who were sent to the pensionnat to escort the Brontës when they were invited to their home, declare that they were most shy and awkward, and scarcely exchanged a word with them during the journey. In the home, Mrs. Jenkins said, "Emily hardly ever uttered more than a monosyllable, and Charlotte was sometimes excited sufficiently to speak eloquently and well—on certain subjects—but, before her tongue was thus loosed, she had a habit of gradually wheeling round on her chair, so as almost to conceal her face from the person to whom she was speaking." Their taciturnity often gave offence to those who did not know that they could not help it. Charlotte says, "I, a bondsman, just released from the yoke, freed for one week from twenty-one years of constraint, must, of necessity, resume the fetters of dependency." It was twenty-one years since Mrs. Brontë died. "Hardly had I tasted the delight of being without a master, when duty issued her stern mandate, 'Go forth and seek another service.'"

Charlotte Brontë was very happy during her first year's residence at Brussels. Emily pined for home, but kept up her determination to finish the year at the pensionnat. It speaks well for the two sisters that at the end of six months they were both offered the position of governess pupil; Charlotte was to teach English, and Emily was to be assistant music mistress, for during those few months she had made rapid progress in French, German, drawing, and music, as Charlotte tells us, and she adds with a degree of satisfaction, "Monsieur and Madame Heger begin to recognise the valuable parts of her character, under her singularities."

One of the members of the family of Dr. Wheelwright, who was at the school with the Brontës in 1842, testifies that Charlotte and Emily kept themselves aloof from the other

pupils, always walking together during play hours. They spoke with a marked accent, partly Irish and partly Yorkshire, which to the Wheelwrights, who had always lived in London, sounded strange and unfamiliar. During this first year at school, Charlotte was most polite and kindly disposed to any of the girls who spoke to her, and she created a favourable impression, though there were difficulties to overcome, partly owing to differences in religion. Emily appears to have produced a much less satisfactory feeling in the minds of the other pupils. Miss Wheelwright said she was reserved and made no effort to know her fellow-pupils. One consequence was that the Wheelwrights never invited Charlotte or Emily Brontë to their home in the Rue Royale, which was not ten minutes walk from the school, during this year. Miss Wheelwright did not like Emily. She said that Emily was the direct opposite to Charlotte, who was always neat and ladylike in appearance, whilst Emily, tall and ungainly, always looked untidy, though dressed much like her sister. She would persist in wearing large bell sleeves, or, as they were called in those days, leg of mutton sleeves, wide at the wrists. When the pupils teased her about her appearance, she replied with much warmth, "I wish to be as God made me." Of the five daughters of Dr. Wheelwright, the three youngest were taught music by Emily Brontë, and a sad time they had, for she would only take them for lessons during their play-hours, so that it would not interfere with her own time for private study. The elder Miss Wheelwright, when in the playground, could hear Emily Brontë giving instruction to her sisters in music, and she was very indignant, for, if the teacher did not mind missing the playtime, the little Wheelwrights, Frances, Sarah Ann and Julia, aged ten, eight and six respectively, had no such desire, and more than once they came from their music lesson in tears. Miss Wheelwright never really liked Emily Brontë [from the first time of meeting her. The Wheelwrights used to say that she never tried to be friendly with them or with Maria Miller, another English girl whom the Wheelwrights were very fond of. Miss Lætitia Wheelwright

wore a gold ring set with garnets which Maria Miller gave to her in 1843. Afterwards Miss Fanny Wheelwright treasured it until her death. One of the souvenirs of the Brussels schooldays, treasured by Miss Wheelwright, was the parting lines given to her by Charlotte Brontë, written in Dutch and French: "Think of me as I always shall of you. Your friend, Charlotte."

All the time that Emily was at school with Charlotte, Miss Wheelwright was struck with Charlotte's devotion to her sister, though she thought with M. Heger that Emily tyrannised over her sister, and Miss Wheelwright confessed to being pleased when Emily did not return with Charlotte for a second year at the pensionnat.

It is pleasant to have the opinion of another pupil, who was at school with the Brontës. Mdlle L. de Bassompierre, who is still living in Brussels, told me that she was sixteen when the Brontës went to Brussels, and, as the two English women were put in her class, she had an excellent opportunity of observing them, especially as they were quite friendly with her, although she was a Belgian. Charlotte Brontë has used Mdlle de Bassompierre's name in *Villette*, but the original of Paulina de Bassompierre is not taken from the Belgian friend.

In marked contrast to Miss Wheelwright and her sisters, Mdlle de Bassompierre had most praise for Emily Brontë, and she said she considered her the more sympathetic of the two, and the kinder and more approachable; indeed she much preferred Emily to Charlotte, and so did some of the other pupils; she was much better looking, though pale and thin.

The Belgian girl and Emily became friends and, before Emily left, she gave to Mdlle de Bassompierre a drawing in pencil of a tree, signed Emily Brontë. This Mdlle de Bassompierre has treasured for over seventy years, and, like everything that Emily did, it bears the stamp of good, careful work, and is remarkable for the amount of detail which she has put into the simple trunk of a tree with its branches. It is evidently done on a page of a drawing book of the usual size, for drawings of Charlotte's on similar paper and of the same size are still in existence.

Mdlle de Bassompierre well remembers hearing M. Heger read out the *devoirs* written by Emily and Charlotte, and Emily's were the better. She also had a recollection of Charlotte hotly defending Wellington, in a discussion on the French and English. Mdlle de Bassompierre became very fond of Emily, and considered her superior to Charlotte in every way, and certainly more sympathetic.

Judging by the results of the instruction given to the younger sisters, the Wheelwrights did not think that Emily was either a good musician or a good teacher, but they were much too young to judge, and, whilst they were devoted to Charlotte Brontë, they never cherished any love for Emily. Julia Wheelwright died of typhoid fever whilst a day pupil at the school during the first year of the Brontë residence. Afterwards Dr. and Mrs. Wheelwright allowed their four daughters to spend a month at the pensionnat whilst they had a holiday on the Rhine. Miss Lætitia Wheelwright cherished for years a letter which she received from Madame Heger after the death of Julia Wheelwright, who was buried in the Protestant part of the Brussels cemetery. This burial ground has been demolished and the remains transferred to a new cemetery near by. Mrs. Wheelwright treasured a plan of the cemetery, which is still in the possession of her granddaughter (Mrs. J. J. Green, of Hastings), on which is marked, with a cross, the place where Julia Wheelwright was buried.

Madame Heger's letter (translated) is as follows—

“ My dear Lætitia,

“ I proposed to call upon your mamma yesterday morning, but I have been unwell, and obliged to keep to my room; To-day I am better, but unable to go out. I wish none the less to have tidings of you. How is your mamma? I much fear that the watching, the fatigue and sorrow have injured her health. Happily all the children are so good, such good pupils that she will find the care of them some compensation for the grievous loss she has sustained.

“ When I see your parents, I shall tell them how much I appreciate your papa's obliging letter. I am very grateful





MISS FRANCES WHEELWRIGHT  
1850



MDLE. DE BASSOMPIERRE

The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagon with vertices labeled 1 through 6. The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with some vertices highlighted in black and others in white, illustrating a specific configuration of interest.

to him for his thought of us in so sad a time, which will leave here, as at your house, long traces. The little angel whom we mourn deserves all our regrets. Nevertheless, we ought to acknowledge that she is sheltered from the misfortunes and sorrows which we still have to endure.

“Adieu! My dear Lætitia! Embrace your little sisters for me, and present to your dear parents, whom I esteem more each day, my respectful affection.

“Your devoted

“Z. Hege

“Monday, 21st September (1842).”

Miss Frances Wheelwright told me that Charlotte Brontë admitted that she was attracted to Miss Wheelwright by the look on her face, when she saw her standing on a stool in the schoolroom, looking at the Belgian girls—who were misbehaving themselves—with so much contempt and disdain. “It was so English,” said Charlotte Brontë; but Mdlle de Bassompierre does not think that Charlotte and Emily showed any dislike of the Belgian girls.

Madame Heger was surprised in later years to find that the Brontë sisters complained of their school days with her, for they were not without English friends. There were the two old school friends from Gomersal—Mary and Martha Taylor—living at a school just outside Brussels, where the Brontës were always welcome. They also visited the Dixons—friends and relatives of the Taylors—and Mrs. Jenkins, the wife of the chaplain; but the isolation in which the Brontë sisters dwelt was of their own making.

Prof. Dimnet, the only Frenchman who has written a book on the Brontës, says in *Les Sœurs Brontë*, “Her (Charlotte Brontë) greatest luck was meeting with Monsieur Heger,” and he compares what M. Heger did for Charlotte Brontë with what George Henry Lewes did for George Eliot. Both were married men when they met the future famous novelists, and, whatever may be said to the contrary, there was as great an affinity between Charlotte Brontë and M. Heger as between

George Eliot and George Henry Lewes, though Charlotte Brontë fled when she discovered it, rather than live in the same house as M. Heger. In *Villette*, Paul Emanuel says to Lucy Snowe—

“ ‘It has happened to me to experience impressions—’

“ ‘Since you came here?’

“ ‘Yes; not many months ago.’

“ ‘Here?—in this house?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“Bon! I am glad of it. I knew it, somehow, before you told me. I was conscious of rapport between you and myself. You are patient, and I am choleric; you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit; but we are alike—there is affinity between us. Do you see it, Mademoiselle, when you look in the glass? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine—that your eyes are cut like mine? Do you hear that you have some of my tones of voice? Do you know that you have many of my looks? I perceive all this, and believe that you were born under my star. Yes, you were born under my star! Tremble! for where that is the case with mortals, the threads of their destinies are difficult to disentangle; knottings and catchings occur—sudden breaks leave damage in the web. But these ‘impressions’ as you say, with English caution. I, too, have had my ‘impressions’.”

Recently, a former pupil, Mrs. Clarke, in an interview she granted to the *Daily Mail*, states that M. Heger in her day could tell the girls’ characters from their faces.

The first year of Charlotte and Emily Brontë’s stay in Brussels was a very busy one. Charlotte Brontë tells us in one of her letters that she had been at the pensionnat three months before M. Heger spoke to her; he merely wrote his criticisms on the margin of her *devoir* and he was puzzled to know why her composition was always better than her translation.

“The fact is, some weeks ago, in a high-flown humour, he forbade me to use either dictionary or grammar in translating the most difficult English compositions into French. This makes the task rather arduous, and compels me every now

and then to introduce an English word, which nearly plucks the eyes out of his head when he sees it. When he is very ferocious with me I cry ; that sets all things straight. Emily and he don't draw well together at all. Emily works like a horse, and she has had great difficulties to contend with—far greater than I have had."

M. Heger knew that the two women had come to Brussels to prepare themselves for taking charge of a school afterwards, and that they were keenly anxious to improve their education and especially to become proficient in French and German. He was a model teacher, and was proud to have such intellectual women as pupils. Miss Wheelwright told me that he made no secret of his admiration of the intellectual ability of the Brontës. Knowing how hard they would have to work, he never spared either himself or them, and he rendered them most willing assistance.

In *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë gives in a poem a very clear account of her life as a pupil at the Heger Pensionnat. It is noticeable that the heroine of the poem is named " Jane " ; it was written shortly after leaving Brussels, although not published until some ten years afterwards.

This poem of thirty-three verses tells of Charlotte's life at this foreign school, and when she decided to leave Brussels M. Heger gave her a kind of diploma, dated and sealed with the seal of the Athénée Royal de Bruxelles, certifying that she was perfectly capable of teaching the French language, having well studied the grammar and composition thereof. This certificate is dated 29th December, 1843 ; and on 2nd January, 1844, she arrived at Haworth, in the depths of despair, because she had left her master. In the light of the Brontë letters of *The Times*, this poem is interesting. Beginning at the twenty-fourth verse, which tells of Charlotte's departure from Brussels, it reads as follows—

" At last our school ranks took their ground,  
The hard-fought field I won ;  
The prize, a laurel-wreath, was bound  
My throbbing forehead on.

Low at my master's knee I bent,  
 The offered crown to meet ;  
 Its green leaves through my temples sent  
 A thrill as wild as sweet.

The strong pulse of Ambition struck  
 In every vein I owned ;  
 At the same instant, bleeding broke  
 A secret, inward wound.

The hour of triumph was to me  
 The hour of sorrow sore ;  
 A day hence I must cross the sea,  
 Ne'er to recross it more.

An hour hence, in my master's room,  
 I with him sat alone,  
 And told him what a dreary gloom  
 O'er joy had parting thrown.

He little said ; the time was brief,  
 The ship was soon to sail,  
 And, while I sobbed in bitter grief,  
 My master but looked pale.

They called in haste ; he bade me go,  
 Then snatched me back again ;  
 He held me fast and murmured low,  
 ' Why will they part us, Jane ?

' Were you not happy in my care ?  
 Did I not faithful prove ?  
 Will others to my darling bear  
 As true, as deep a love ?

' O God, watch o'er my foster child !  
 O guard her gentle head !  
 When winds are high and tempests wild,  
 Protection round her spread !

' They call again ; leave then my breast ;  
 Quit thy true shelter, Jane ;  
 But when deceived, repulsed, opprest,  
 Come home to me again ! ' "

During the absence of Charlotte and Emily Brontë in Brussels, Miss Branwell and her brother-in-law would have had a peaceful time at the parsonage but that Branwell was

still at home without any hope of a situation. Anne was at Thorpe Green. It was at this time that Branwell was writing miserable letters to his friends; his aunt, who had long been disappointed in her nephew, had her last days clouded by the sad conduct of her favourite. On 29th October, 1842, Miss Branwell died, after a fortnight's illness. A letter was despatched to Charlotte and Emily, and one also to Anne, who reached Haworth just too late. Her father and brother met her in the little hall of the parsonage, and in response to her anxious enquiry told her that Miss Branwell was dead. Both Branwell and Anne grieved much for the loss of the aunt, who had made them her special favourites, and to whom she had been partial and indulgent. Charlotte and Emily got the sad news in Brussels that their aunt was ill on 2nd November, and, before they could get ready to start for home, they received another letter to say that she was dead. They sailed on Sunday, 6th November, from Antwerp, travelling day and night, and reaching Haworth on Tuesday—ten days after Miss Branwell's death—only to find that the funeral was over, and Mr. Brontë and Anne were sitting in quiet grief for the loss of one who had been of such service in their home for nearly twenty years.

A previous writer has remarked on the haste with which Miss Branwell was buried, but allowance had to be made for the time it took to get the news to Brussels.

Branwell, anxious to give expression to his feelings of sorrow, wrote to his friend of the Luddenden Foot days, Mr. Francis Grundy, saying he was at the time attending the death-bed of his aunt, who had been as a mother to him for twenty years; and on the next day, when his aunt died, he wrote, "I am incoherent, I fear, but I have been watching two nights, witnessing such agonising suffering as I would not wish my worst enemy to endure; and I have now lost the pride and director of all the happy days connected with my childhood."

There is no doubt that Branwell felt the loss deeply. Miss Branwell had made her will nine years previously, when Branwell was her pride, and she had made Mr. Brontë her first executor. Her money was to be shared among her

English people, and the fact that the father of the two pupils was an English clergyman commended them to her. Charlotte Brontë's letter had won her esteem, and she claimed to have taken an interest in the two pupils from the first; her one attitude towards the shy English girls was that of pity; she knew they were motherless, and in after years one who knew Madame Heger well said she never spoke of Charlotte but with compassion, always referring to her as "poor Charlotte." Madame Heger's mother was named Charlotte.

After having paid their respects to Madame Heger, they had the pleasure of spending a few hours looking round Brussels before the father said "Good-bye" after spending a night at the residence of Mr. Jenkins, whom Charlotte Brontë afterwards referred to as "that little Welsh pony Jenkins."

All the arrangements with the Brontës were made with Madame Heger. M. Heger did not even put in an appearance, and Mr. Brontë never saw the man who was so greatly to influence his clever daughters. Hence both he and Miss Branwell gave the girls into the hands of Madame Heger without any thought of her husband, and it is very questionable if Mr. Brontë ever heard much of him. Paul Emanuel was merely a character so far as Mr. Brontë was concerned; hence his anxiety that all should end well between Paul Emanuel and Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. But Charlotte Brontë, with an eye to the original Paul Emanuel, determined that no marriage should take place. The conclusion of the last chapter in *Villette* is one of the choicest pieces of word painting in the English language; it was Charlotte Brontë at her best, and even M. Heger, whatever he thought of the story, must have been proud of his former pupil, and as "her master of literature" must have recognised the beauty of her diction and her ability to portray character.

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One of the members of the family of Dr. Wheelwright, who was at the school with the Brontës in 1842, testifies that Charlotte and Emily kept themselves aloof from the other

peu à faire avec de pareilles élèves ; leur avancement est votre œuvre bien plus que la nôtre ; nous n'avons pas eu à leur apprendre le prix du temps et de l'instruction, elles avaient appris tout cela dans la maison paternelle, et nous n'avons eu, pour notre part, que le faible mérite de diriger leurs efforts et de fournir un aliment convenable à la louable activité que vos filles ont puisée dans votre exemple et dans vos leçons. Puissent les éloges mérités que nous donnons à vos enfants vous être de quelque consolation dans le malheur qui vous afflige ; c'est là notre espoir en vous écrivant, et ce sera, pour Mesdemoiselles Charlotte et Emily, une douce et belle récompense de leurs travaux.

“ En perdant nos deux chères élèves nous ne devons pas vous cacher que nous éprouvons à la fois et du chagrin et de l'inquiétude ; nous sommes affligés parceque cette brusque séparation vient briser l'affection presque paternelle que nous leur avons vouée, et notre peine s'augmente à la vue de tant de travaux interrompues, de tant de choses bien commencées, et qui ne demandent que quelque temps encore pour être menées à bonne fin. Dans un an, chacune de vos demoiselles eût été entièrement prémunie contre les éventualités de l'avenir ; chacune d'elles acquerrait à la fois et l'instruction et la science d'enseignement ; Mlle Emily allait apprendre le piano ; recevoir les leçons du meilleur professeur que nous ayons en Belgique, et déjà elle avait elle-même de petites élèves ; elle perdait donc à la fois un reste d'ignorance, et un reste plus gênant encore de timidité ; Mlle Charlotte commençait à donner des leçons en français, et d'acquérir cette assurance, cet aplomb si nécessaire dans l'enseignement ; encore un an tout au plus, et l'œuvre était achevée et bien achevée. Alors nous aurions pu, si cela vous eût convenu, offrir à mesdemoiselles vos filles ou du moins à l'une des deux une position qui eût été dans ses goûts, et qui lui eût donné cette douce indépendance si difficile à trouver pour une jeune personne. Ce n'est pas, croyez-le bien, monsieur, ce n'est pas ici pour nous une question d'intérêt personnel, c'est une question d'affection ; vous me pardonnerez si nous vous parlons de vos enfants, si nous nous occupons de leur avenir, comme

" Au Révérend Monsieur Brontë,  
Pasteur Évangélique No. 72

" Monsieur. Un événement bien triste  
désolera mesdemoiselles vos filles à re-  
tourner brusquement en Angleterre, ce  
départ qui nous afflige beaucoup a  
Cependant ma complète approbation ;  
il est bien naturelle qu'elles cherchent  
à vous consoler de ce que le ciel vient  
de vous ôter, en se voyant autour de  
vous, pour mieux vous faire apprécier  
ce que ciel vous a donné et ce qu'il  
vous laisse encore. J'espère que vous  
me pardonnerez, Monsieur, de profiter  
de cette circonstance pour vous faire  
parvenir l'expression de mon respect ;  
Je n'ai pas l'honneur de vous connaître  
personnellement, et cependant j'éprouve  
pour votre personne un sentiment de  
sincère vénération ; car en jugeant un  
père de famille par ses enfans ou  
sa risqué pas de se tromper, et sous  
ce rapport l'éducation et les sentimens  
que nous avons trouvés dans mes demois-  
elles vos filles n'ont pu que vous donner  
un très-haute idée de votre mérite, et  
de votre caractère. Vous apprendrez sans



si elles faisaient partie de notre famille ; leurs qualités personnelles, leur bon vouloir, leur zèle extrême sont les seules causes qui nous poussent à nous hasarder de la sorte. Nous savons, Monsieur, que vous peserez plus mûrement et plus sagement que nous la conséquence qu'aurait pour l'avenir une interruption complète dans les études de vos deux filles ; vous déciderez ce qu'il faut faire, et vous nous pardonnerez notre franchise, si vous daignez considérer que le motif qui nous fait agir est une affection bien désintéressée et qui s'affligerait beaucoup de devoir déjà se résigner à n'être plus utile à vos chers enfants.

“ Agréez, je vous prie, Monsieur, l'expression respectueuse de mes sentiments de haute considération.

“ C. HEGER.”

When it is remembered that this letter was sent by a man who was only seven years older than Charlotte Brontë, and, although *we* is used throughout the letter, there is no direct mention of Madame Heger, it is very certain that M. Heger had a real interest in the Brontë sisters, and his mention of “almost paternal affection” and of “a very disinterested affection” shows that his feelings were more than those of an ordinary teacher. Several reasons have been given to account for Charlotte Brontë's return to Brussels, but no previous writer has drawn attention to this letter, which proves that Charlotte was the one to whom the appointment was to be offered at the end of another year. Although M. Heger, in conversation with Mrs. Gaskell, spoke more highly of Emily's abilities and talents than of Charlotte's, he, evidently, like Miss Wheelwright, preferred that Charlotte should return, though it showed his insight and ability to read character when he told Mrs. Gaskell that he rated Emily's genius as something even higher than Charlotte's.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S SECOND YEAR AT BRUSSELS

CHARLOTTE BRONTË decides to return to Brussels—Her journey as described by Mrs. Gaskell—Reference in *Villette*—Her second year at the Pensionnat—She decides to return to Haworth—Various explanations—Charlotte Brontë's experience used in her novels—The testimony of other pupils at the Pensionnat.

AFTER the death of Miss Branwell, when Anne had returned to Thorpe Green, Charlotte determined to go back to Brussels, although she had an appointment in England offered to her at fifty pounds a year. In Brussels she was only to receive sixteen pounds, and from this amount she would have to deduct the cost of the journey, and also the charges for the lessons in German, which she wished to take. The three to four hundred pounds left to each of the sisters gave them for the first time in their lives a small income, and possibly this influenced Charlotte Brontë in accepting a small salary, as there would be no need for her to help her sisters.

The few friends that Charlotte Brontë had were surprised that she should have returned to Brussels, for at the first visit she and Emily had meant to stay only six months, but owing to their rapid progress they succeeded in being retained as governess pupils, and for that reason they lengthened their stay, which would have extended to Christmas, if Miss Branwell had not died; by this time they hoped to be sufficiently proficient in French and German to teach the subjects in an English school of their own. Then, again, Charlotte had written to her friends disparaging the Belgians, which would seem to be a further reason for not returning to Brussels.

Miss Branwell's legacy enabled the sisters to defer for a time the attempt to start a school of their own, and it became also necessary to attend to the needs of the old vicar. There has long been much speculation as to the reasons which induced Charlotte in January, 1843, to decide to return to Brussels. It is argued that she was extremely anxious to obtain further lessons in German, and to gain experience in teaching English.

It is true that at this period there was not the same pressing need to earn money. The lessons in German cost her seven pounds ten shillings a year, and she had her clothing to purchase and other incidental expenses to meet, so that she was poorer when she left Brussels than when she arrived there. From a monetary standpoint, her visit to Brussels was a failure. Some of her friends have thought there must have been some powerful influence attracting her to Brussels, but, in a letter to Ellen Nussey the following April, she repudiated the idea that "the future *époux* of Mademoiselle Brontë" was on the Continent, and she sarcastically scouted the idea that she had any more powerful motive in crossing the sea merely to return as teacher than respect for her master and mistress—M. and Mme Heger—and gratitude for their kindness.

Mrs. Gaskell gives an interesting account of Charlotte Brontë's second visit to Brussels.

In *Villette* this second journey from London to Brussels is described very minutely. That Charlotte Brontë, who heartily despised the Roman Catholic Belgians, and "hated and abhorred" teaching in any form, should voluntarily cross the North Sea in January—bad sailor as she was—merely because she felt grateful to M. and Madame Heger for their kindness to her, is a solution to a problem which many Brontë enthusiasts decline to accept. The kind letter which M. Heger sent to the Rev. Patrick Brontë urging him to allow his daughters to return to Brussels had doubtless something to do with Charlotte Brontë's decision, especially as she was the one to whom an appointment in the school was to be offered, but seeing that she could have obtained a position as governess in England at a salary of fifty pounds a year, and that like Emily she could have studied German privately, it was strange that she should have deliberately chosen to go to Brussels. It is quite evident that she *wished* to go, though Mrs. Gaskell spoke of the two sisters when at Brussels as exiles.

Of Charlotte's journey to London in January, 1843, Mrs. Gaskell has given a good account. Charlotte, arriving late in London, took a cab and drove straight to the landing-stage at London Bridge, instead of going to the Chapter Coffee House,

as she intended, for fear that it would be considered unseemly for a woman to ask for bed and breakfast at so late an hour.

In *Villette* Charlotte gives a most graphic account, and also of the voyage when she meets Ginevra Fanshawe on board. Arriving at Brussels, Charlotte admits she was received most kindly, and in one of her letters to a friend she speaks of Madame Heger as "a most kind lady."

Emily was greatly missed and, after the excitement of the arrival, Charlotte seems to have experienced loneliness, though she had the Taylors, the Dixons, and the Wheelwrights as kind friends, whom she was invited to meet, but as she was now a teacher, rather than a pupil, she found time to worry, and become depressed. The absence of Emily made all the difference. Until the summer vacation, Charlotte managed to keep up, but, during that lonely time, she succumbed to melancholy. There was a reason for this other than Emily's absence.

Writing to Emily a month before her return from Brussels she says, "Low spirits have afflicted me lately, but I hope all will be well, when I get home—above all, if I find papa and you and Branwell and Anne well. I am not ill in body; it is only the mind that is a trifle shaken for want of comfort." This letter proves that the father had nothing to do with Charlotte Brontë's return. Whatever prompted her to return was something connected with herself, and Mr. Brontë had no more to do with it than any other member of the family. Mr. Shorter affirms, on the authority of Mr. Nicholls and Ellen Nussey, that Charlotte Brontë returned from Brussels because her father had given way to drink, and they give, as a reason for her second stay at Brussels, her desire for further instruction in German, or as one writer put it "self-development." Miss May Sinclair in *The Three Brontës* writes, "With her aunt dead, and her brother Branwell drowning his grief for his relative in drink, and her father going blind, and beginning in his misery to drink a little too, Charlotte felt that her home did require her. Equally she felt that either Emily or she had got to turn out and make a living, and since it could not be Emily, it must be she." This is not at all true to fact.



After Miss Branwell's death, Branwell Brontë was at home, sober and sensible, and during the whole of 1843 whilst Charlotte Brontë was at Brussels he was at Thorpe Green, where Charlotte tells us he was "*wondrously valued*." Branwell kept his appointment for two and a half years, from January, 1843, until July, 1845, going to Scarborough with the Robinsons in the summer holidays. Again, if it was a question of earning a living, why did Charlotte Brontë refuse the position in England at fifty pounds a year and go to Brussels where she actually lost money? Further, although Mrs. Gaskell says that Charlotte Brontë gave to M. and Madame Heger as excuse for leaving "her father's increasing blindness," yet in her letter to Emily on 1st December, 1843, she writes, "Tell me whether papa really wants me very much to come home, and whether you do likewise. I have an idea that I should be of no use there—a sort of aged person upon the parish." The letter concludes, "Safety, happiness and prosperity to you, papa and Tabby." There is thus no reference whatever to her father's blindness. This letter was only written eighteen days before she writes, on 19th December, to say that she has taken her determination, and means to be home on the second day in the New Year. She could not have felt that she would have been a sort of aged person on the parish if she was convinced that her father needed her. There is nothing in Charlotte Brontë's letters of 1844 to indicate great anxiety about her father's eyesight, but there is no enthusiasm for anything. "I begin to perceive that I have too little life in me nowadays, to be fit company for any except very quiet people. Is it age, or what else that changes me so?"

Although she said in her last letter from Brussels that she was not ill in body, she never seemed to be well during the first year after leaving Brussels. There were constant complaints of depression and ill-health. If she had felt that she was doing her duty by remaining at Haworth, there would have been no reason for her dissatisfaction.

"I suffered much before I left Brussels. I think, however long I live, I shall not forget what the parting with M. Heger cost me; it grieved me so much to grieve him, who had been

so true, kind and disinterested a friend." It is noticeable that Madame Heger is not mentioned.

Madame Heger had a very busy life with her school and her home, and Charlotte Brontë says in the first letter after her return to Brussels in January, 1843, that Madame Heger received her very kindly, and told her to use their sitting-room as her own, but that she declined, as she did not wish to presume on their kindness. Evidently Madame Heger had no feelings of jealousy at the beginning of the year, but it may have developed later; and when in October, 1843, Charlotte Brontë gave her resignation to her, she agreed to accept it, but M. Heger stormed and would not let her go, and she consented to remain, ultimately leaving at the beginning of the following year. It is certain that at this time she was suffering from acute melancholia. She thanked Mary Taylor for the advice she gave to leave Brussels, and some time afterwards she sent her ten pounds for the service she had rendered.

Assuming that Madame Heger was not anxious for Charlotte Brontë to remain, why was she so very miserable at leaving M. Heger, and why did she continue to be so depressed and ill when at home, after having left Brussels? She had gained what she sought—a good knowledge of French and German, and she was free to lead her own life at Haworth. Mrs. Gaskell was absolutely wrong in attributing "her (Charlotte's) now habitual sleeplessness at night" to "Branwell's mysterious and distressing conduct," for, as previously mentioned, Branwell was giving no cause for anxiety for a year and a half after Charlotte returned; and the sleepless nights and bitter tears must be traced to some other source. Mrs. Gaskell tells us that these tears, and the close application to minute drawing and writing in her younger days, "were telling on her poor eyes." At this time Charlotte Brontë wrote several letters to M. Heger, from which Mrs. Gaskell quoted extracts.

In one dated 24th July, 1844, she says—

"Now my sight is too weak to write. Were I to write

much I should become blind. This weakness of sight is a terrible hindrance to me. Otherwise, do you know what I should do, sir? I should write a book, and I should dedicate it to my literature master—to the only master I ever had—to you, Sir. I have often told you in French how much I respect you—how much I am indebted to your goodness, to your advice; I should like to say it once in English. But that cannot be—it is not to be thought of. The career of letters is closed to me—only that of teaching is open. It does not offer the same attractions; never mind, I shall enter it, and if I do not go far it will not be from want of industry . . . ”

There are several letters to other friends at this period, but there is not a word about her approaching blindness, which is certainly very strange. If there was any danger to Charlotte Brontë's eyesight, it was caused by “the tears and sleepless nights,” the result of fretting her heart out for letters from M. Heger.

A letter written in March says, “Papa and Emily are well,” and a letter from Branwell also states that he and Anne “are pretty well,” so that nobody in the home circle was causing Charlotte's misery. Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor—her only correspondents in England—were trying to cheer her during this time of depression. The only other person to whom she was writing was M. Heger, and her letters to him showed a craving for pity and sympathy. Mrs. Gaskell seems to have tried to shield Charlotte Brontë, whilst not hesitating to blame Branwell, but, as he was *not* the cause of the trouble, it is not possible to arrive at any other conclusion than that Charlotte Brontë left Brussels, when she realised she had unconsciously found her affinity, and yet she could not break off all connection with the Hegers. Although much has been said about Madame Heger being the cause of Charlotte Brontë's leaving Brussels, yet in letters to M. Heger Madame Heger is referred to in the kindest terms.

Judging by the extracts given by Mrs. Gaskell, the somewhat childish letters which Charlotte Brontë sent to M. Heger

hardly correspond with what one would expect a woman of nearly thirty to write to a married man a few years older than herself, especially if she considered his wife was jealous of her, or if the wife had given her cause to think so. From the letters which Mrs. Gaskell probably saw, connected with Charlotte Brontë's experience in Brussels, it is tantalising to get only two short extracts. It is evident she knew more than she was willing to write, and was merciful to her friend, and tactfully avoided offending the Hegers. Since the above was written, four letters (two of which contain the extracts mentioned) were published in *The Times* on 29th July, 1913.

During this period, Mrs. Gaskell used the Branwell Brontë story for all and much more than it was worth. Though there is evidence that Mrs. Gaskell had seen the four letters now published, it is clear that Charlotte Brontë did not give the real reason for deciding to return to Haworth, and, although she gave Ellen Nussey to understand that she despised Madame Heger, she conveys quite a different impression in her letter to M. Heger. Moreover, there is not a line or a word to support the strange theory that the curate, Mr. Smith, was addicted to the drink habit and had influenced the Rev. Patrick Brontë to such an extent that it was necessary for Charlotte Brontë to return home. When Mr. Smith left Haworth, he immediately got an appointment at Keighley, which is only four miles away, and in constant communication with Haworth.

Ellen Nussey wondered why the Rev. Patrick Brontë should have been so anxious that Charlotte should write to her, after her visit to Haworth in January, 1844, and immediately after Charlotte's return from Brussels, to explain that the curate, Mr. Smith, meant nothing by his flirtation with her (Ellen Nussey). Charlotte Brontë says she cannot understand her father being so particular, as he was usually sarcastic about such matters, but he constantly insisted that she must write to her friend. This rather suggests that he had discovered the reason for Charlotte Brontë's return to Haworth, and he probably blamed her for believing that the Hegers' kindness meant anything more than sympathy

for her, and the old vicar wished to save Ellen Nussey from making the same mistake with regard to Mr. Smith.

It is certainly remarkable that Charlotte Brontë should go to Brussels, and lose her heart to the master of the house, and that Branwell Brontë should go to Thorpe Green at the same time and get madly in love with the wife of his employer, thus leading to his summary dismissal, with a threat from the master to shoot him if he came near the place again; and, though Charlotte was not actually dismissed, it is a fact that Madame Heger gave her to understand that she would not need her after the close of 1843. It is evident that both Charlotte and Branwell were much alike in temperament, and they suffered in health in much the same way. Emily and Anne had more stability of character, and knew how to keep their own counsel. Both Charlotte and Branwell were excitable, and at times showed a great want of balance.

Although Branwell never wrote a novel which could explain his passion for Mrs. Robinson, everyone knew the whole story, though Mrs. Gaskell made too much of it. Brussels was the turning-point in Charlotte's career, and, had it not been for her residence with the Hegers, there is no reason to suppose we should have heard anything of the Brontë novels. Whilst at Brussels, Charlotte Brontë found sufficient material for all the heroes of her stories, and during the long sleepless nights, which Mrs. Gaskell mentions, she was wrestling with that experience which had caused her to leave Brussels. The tears she shed at parting, and her weeping during those long nights after Brussels had some meaning. Mrs. Gaskell tells us, "Both M. and Madame Heger agreed that it would be for the best, when they learnt only that part of the case which she could reveal to them—namely, Mr. Brontë's increasing blindness. But as the inevitable moment of separation from people and places, among which she had spent so many happy hours, drew near, her spirits gave way; she had the natural presentiment that she saw them all for the last time, and she received but a dead kind of comfort from being reminded by her friends that Brussels and Haworth were not so far apart;

Rebellious now to blank inertia,  
 My unused strength demands a task ;  
 Travel, and toil, and full exertion  
 Are the last, only boon I ask.

The very wildness of my sorrow  
 Tells me I yet have innate force ;  
 My track of life has been too narrow,  
 Effort shall trace a broader course.

He, when he left me, went a-roving  
 To sunny climes beyond the sea ,  
 And I, the weight of woe removing,  
 Am free and fetterless as he.

New scenes, new language, skies less clouded,  
 May once more wake the wish to live ;  
 Strange foreign towns, astir and crowded,  
 New pictures to the mind may give.

New forms and faces, passing ever,  
 May hide the one I still retain,  
 Defined and fixed, and fading never,  
 Stamped deep on vision, heart and brain."

In a poem written in 1844 and recently published in *The Globe* appears an earlier version of the above.

One verse reads—

" Devoid of charm how could I dream  
 My unasked love would e'er return ;  
 What fate, what influence lit the flame  
 I still feel inly, deeply burn ? "

And the last verse gives the true reason why Charlotte Brontë left Brussels—

" Have I not fled that I may conquer ?  
 Crost the dark sea in firmest faith ;  
 That I at last might plant my anchor  
 Where love cannot prevail to death ? "

Frances in *The Professor* is loved by her teacher, William Crimsworth, as Charlotte Brontë took the place of the teacher. Years afterwards, in conversation with an English lady,

Who can for ever crush the heart,  
    Restrain its throbbing, curb its life ?  
Dissemble truth with ceaseless art,  
    With outward calm mask inward strife ?

. . . . .

For me the universe is dumb,  
    Stone-deaf, and blank, and wholly blind ;  
Life I must bound, existence sum  
    In the strait limits of one mind ;

. . . . .

And when it falls, and when I die,  
    What follows ? Vacant nothingness ?  
The blank of lost identity ?  
    Erasure both of pain and bliss ?

. . . . .

And when thy opening eyes shall see  
    Mementos on the chamber wall,  
Of one who has forgotten thee,  
    Shed not one tear of acrid gall.

The tear which, welling from the heart,  
    Burns where its drop corrosive falls,  
And makes each nerve in torture start,  
    At feelings it too well recalls :

. . . . .

These I have drunk, and they for ever  
    Have poisoned life and love for me ;  
A draught from Sodom's lake could never  
    More fiery, salt, and bitter be.

Oh ! Love was all a thin illusion ;  
    Joy but the desert's flying stream ;  
And glancing back on long delusion,  
    My memory grasps a hollow dream.

. . . . .

Vain as the passing gale, my crying ;  
    Though lightning struck, I must live on ;  
I know at heart there is no dying  
    Of love, and ruined hope, alone.

Still strong and young, and warm with vigour.  
    Though scathed, I long shall greenly grow ;  
And many a storm of wildest rigour  
    Shall yet break o'er my shivered bough.

Rebellious now to blank inertia,  
 My unused strength demands a task ;  
 Travel, and toil, and full exertion  
 Are the last, only boon I ask.

The very wildness of my sorrow  
 Tells me I yet have innate force ;  
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Frances in *The Professor* is loved by her teacher, William Crimsworth, as Charlotte Brontë took the place of the teacher. Years afterwards, in conversation with an English lady,



M. Heger stated that he liked his little English pupil (Charlotte Brontë) but she had a warmer feeling for him.

Mrs. Gaskell was evidently puzzled, and if she had discovered that Branwell's conduct, and Mr. Brontë's increasing blindness had nothing whatever to do with Charlotte's sudden return from Brussels, she would have been more mystified. Evidently Ellen Nussey could not help her to solve the mystery, and knowing that Mary Taylor corresponded frequently with Charlotte Brontë Mrs. Gaskell wrote to her in New Zealand. The reply did not help to solve the question. If she had only compared the dates of Ellen Nussey's letters, she would have seen how impossible it was to blame Branwell. It is probable that no character in literature has been made to suffer more for supposed misdeeds than Branwell Brontë. Whatever was wrong in the Brontë household or the Brontë novels has generally been attributed to him, but he was more sinned against than sinning. Charlotte was not free from blame, for she could have kept his name out of her letters to Mr. Williams, and to Ellen Nussey. Emily would have scorned to write of him in such an unsisterly way, and, if she did tell Charlotte he was "a hopeless being," it was Charlotte who wrote of him as such. Moreover, the interpretation that Emily put upon the word "hopeless" possibly meant that he himself had no hope.

This leaving Brussels for her home proved the greatest trial of her life, and there is abundant evidence in her works of the moral force which she had to command in order to carry out her intention. In *The Professor*, which it is well to remember was written under some restraint, and before *Jane Eyre*, the account given by William Crimsworth of his leaving a school kept by Mdlle Zoraide Reuter is portrayed in language which does not easily or suitably fit in with the story; and yet Charlotte Brontë seems compelled to write it, as the remembrance of leaving Brussels was evidently still rankling in her mind. William Crimsworth was undoubtedly Charlotte Brontë writing under a man's name, which puzzled Mr. Williams when he was reading the MS., so Mr. Watts-Dunton tells us. *The Professor* is so different from *Jane Eyre*, that

the only solution seems to be that the first draft of it was written before she discovered her feelings towards M. Heger. This is clearly seen when "her" is changed to "his."

"Her present demeanour towards me was deficient neither in dignity nor propriety ; but I knew her former feeling was unchanged. Decorum now repressed, and Policy masked it, but Opportunity would be too strong for either of these—Temptation would shiver their restraints.

"I was no pope—I could not boast infallibility ; in short, if I stayed, the probability was that, in three months' time, a practical modern French novel would be in full process of concoction under the roof of the unsuspecting Pelet. Now, modern French novels are not to my taste, either practically or theoretically. Limited as had yet been my experience of life, I had once had the opportunity of contemplating, near at hand, an example of the results produced by a course of interesting and romantic domestic treachery. No golden tale of fiction was about this example ; I saw it bare and real ; and it was very loathsome. I saw a mind degraded by the practice of mean subterfuge, by the habit of perfidious deception, and a body depraved by the infectious influence of the vice-polluted soul. I had suffered much from the forced and prolonged view of this spectacle ; those sufferings I did not now regret, for their simple recollection acted as a most wholesome antidote to temptation. They had inscribed on my reason the conviction that unlawful pleasure, trenching on another's rights, is delusive and envenomed pleasure—its hollowness disappoints at the time, its poison cruelly tortures afterwards, its effects deprave for ever.

"From all this resulted the conclusion that I must leave Pelet's, and that instantly ; 'but,' said Prudence, 'you know not where to go, nor how to live.'". . . .

"My hopes to win and possess, my resolutions to work and rise, rose in array against me ; and here I was about to plunge into the gulf of absolute destitution ; 'and all this,' suggested an inward voice, 'because you fear an evil which may never happen !' 'It will happen ; you *know* it will,' answered that stubborn monitor, conscience. 'Do what you feel is right ;

obey me, and even in the sloughs of want I will plant for you firm footing.’ ”

This is another version of Jane Eyre leaving Thornfield, but it has been added to *The Professor*, and it is not in keeping.

The reference to a course of “interesting, romantic treachery,” which Charlotte Brontë says she saw “near at hand,” has been attributed by previous writers to a Branwell Brontë’s escapade at Thorpe Green. Even Francis Leyland, who wrote such a warm defence of this ill-fated brother of the Brontës, came to the same conclusion. Trying to excuse Charlotte Brontë he says, “It is probable that Charlotte would not have wished this passage to be applied literally to her brother, but unfortunately this and similar unguarded declarations have largely biassed almost all who have written on the lives and literature of the Brontë sisters.” The reference, however, is *not* to Branwell, for when Charlotte left Brussels Branwell was doing well at Thorpe Green, but to a sad case of domestic treachery in Haworth, which Mrs Gaskell gives in the first and second editions of her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and which was deleted in the third edition because it gave great pain to the members of the family concerned. The account tells of a Yorkshire manufacturer betraying his young sister-in-law, during his wife’s illness, and of the sad suffering of the poor girl. Mrs. Gaskell stated that “The family was accursed ; they failed in business or they failed in health.”

Between the time when Charlotte Brontë gave in her resignation in October, 1843, to Madame Heger, and her leaving Brussels at the end of the year, Madame Heger’s fifth child was born, on 5th November, 1843. In giving the account of leaving Brussels in *Jane Eyre*, the heroine says, “May you never appeal to heaven in prayer so hopeless and so agonised as in that hour left my lips, for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love.” Charlotte’s grief and weak health affected her reasoning powers at this time, and M. Heger’s pity was misconstrued.

Having discussed Madame Heger’s methods with some of her former pupils, I heard nothing but praise concerning her ; all testified to her goodness of heart, and think of her with

reverence. Now that they are sufficiently old to look with matronly eyes on her cautious ways, they understand and appreciate her careful scrutiny, for as one of her old pupils—an Englishwoman and a Protestant, like Charlotte Brontë—said to me, “In a large school like Madame Heger’s, one bad girl might work a great deal of mischief; however good their credentials, they might undermine the characters of the others. More than once before the Brontës went to this school, Madame Heger had been deceived by girls, and her one anxiety was for the excellent reputation of her school.”

Another former pupil, a Belgian, who had been at school in the time of the Brontës, said, “Never was a kinder or more motherly woman than Madame Heger. All her old pupils loved her and, if she did correct us, it was always done kindly; she was never a spy, nor did she wish to pry into our affairs.”

If two Belgian women of twenty-six and twenty-four years of age had come over to an English boarding school in the early Forties, they would probably have been treated with a certain amount of suspicion, and might not have fared any better than the Brontës did in Brussels. At Haworth, even twenty-five years ago, new residents from another county were stigmatised as *foreigners*. The Brontës were so much older than the other pupils, and consequently were more difficult to deal with; at their age they ought not to have been pupils in any school. If Madame Heger took all means possible to find out what she could about her two English boarders, it was not necessarily to satisfy her own curiosity, but to assure herself that they were not likely to be a source of trouble in her management of the school; she was only following out what she had been accustomed to in her own school life. She was an experienced and successful schoolmistress, and she had sufficient knowledge of human nature to know that all girls are not above suspicion. She had had too many girls in her school to be willing to trust the Brontës implicitly before she had some definite grounds to build upon, and it was her boast that girls found it difficult to deceive her. To some extent, she had a preference for English girls, for she chose an English nurse for her children, and she admitted to



MADAME HEGER

*On her golden wedding day, September 3, 1886*

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Charlotte Brontë that Belgian girls could not be treated with the same amount of confidence as was reposed in pupils in an English boarding school.

In the portrait of Madame Heger which I am allowed to publish, taken on the day of her golden wedding, there is no indication of the craftiness which Charlotte Brontë ascribed to her. Her children loved her passionately, and to this day they reverence her memory as something very precious, and feel extremely hurt that their mother should have been portrayed in a novel with their native city as a setting. Belgians generally resent Charlotte Brontë's criticism, not only of the Heger family, but of the Belgian people. "Base ingratitude," "cruel" and "wicked" are some of the words which are hurled at the writer of *Villette*, even to-day. Mademoiselle Louise Heger, the third daughter of the family, who figures in *Villette* as Georgette, was a general favourite with the pupils at the pensionnat, and was nursed by *Lucy Snowe*, of whom she had pleasant thoughts, but she was only four and a half when Charlotte left Brussels. Another sister, still living, is Mademoiselle Claire the third daughter; she was a child of three and a half when Charlotte left.

Middle Claire appears in *Villette* as Fifini Beck. "It was an honest, gleeful little soul," and a favourite with Lucy Snowe. Mademoiselle Marie, the eldest daughter, who died 2nd March, 1886, aged forty-nine, was immortalised by Charlotte Brontë as Désirée; she was six years old when Charlotte left Brussels. "This was a vicious child. Quelle peste que cette Désirée! Quel poison que cet enfant-la!" were the expressions used to describe her, both in the kitchen and the schoolroom. One can only be sorry that Charlotte wrote this. She certainly did not love all children.

It is difficult to say whether Madame Heger was influenced by the publication of *Villette*; she gave up the school some years afterwards to her daughters, and merely acted as the house-mother, treating the girls with much consideration. One of her old pupils told the writer that while at the school she wrote some poetry, which she proudly showed to Madame Heger, thinking she would be pleased, but when she read it,

she was very grieved, because she despised what was in any way sentimental, having no love for poetry. Almost with tears in her eyes, and putting her hands on the girl's shoulders, she said, "Don't dear! don't write poetry; that is not a girl's work, and will not add to her usefulness as a woman."

It would probably not be an advantage to the Brontës in the eyes of the practical Madame Heger if she discovered that they were interested in poetry and actually wrote poems. Emily wrote a poem whilst in Brussels, judging by the date given. This former pupil also remarked that there was some reason for the *allée défendue*; it was a part of the grounds forbidden to the pupils because there was a boys' playground just beyond the clump of trees at the end of the alley, and naturally Madame Heger could not allow communications to pass between the girls of her school and the boys of the Athénée Royal. Referring to Madame Heger as a spy, this pupil said she was never that, she wore soft slippers, and sometimes would examine the girls' drawers and boxes, but where was the harm among a lot of school girls?

It is always said in excuse for Charlotte Brontë, that she particularly wished *Villette* to be published under a *nom de guerre*, probably a new one, for it was well known in the literary world before *Villette* was issued that Currer Bell and Charlotte Brontë were one and the same; but Mr. George Smith, the publisher of all Charlotte Brontë's novels, had an eye to business, and he explained to her that the tale would have a much greater sale if it were issued as by the author of *Jane Eyre*, which had made such a name for the writer. Charlotte Brontë yielded, though reluctantly, but she only gave way on one condition, that on the title page should be printed, "The right of translation is reserved"; she thought that if the novel was not translated into French the Hegers would not get it, thereby proving that she had written something which she did not wish them to know. She knew little of the world, however, to think that such a shallow precaution would prevent the novel crossing the North Sea, to the scene of its originals. If Madame Heger was not very proficient in English, her husband was a fairly good English scholar, some of the



ability in this being due to Charlotte Brontë herself. Madame Heger also employed an English nurse, and English girls were received at the school. The children of Madame Heger also became good English scholars, and in later days *Villette* came into their hands. It was not long before the persons, on whom the characters in *Villette* were based, were recognised. Quite recently a former Belgian pupil, who was at the pensionnat with the Brontës, showed me a copy of *Villette* which she had purchased in 1853. She did not know at the time that it referred to her old school, but she was both amused and indignant when she discovered that it had been written by a former class-mate and pupil of the school. Having heard both Emily's and Charlotte's *devoirs* read out in class, she said she was hardly surprised to know they had written books, but very surprised at the tone of *Villette*. It has been said that on the publication of *Villette* Madame Heger refused to admit further English pupils, but that is not true. The number of English pupils, however, did diminish for a time, and few English parents were willing to send their daughters to the school, though there were only six English girls there besides the Brontës in 1843.

Some years later, one girl whilst at the pensionnat, unknown to the teachers, obtained a copy of *Villette* to read, and became so terrified about the ghost story of the nun (for unfortunately she did not finish the novel) that she ran away from school, and could not be persuaded to return. Whatever precautions were taken, it was inevitable that the secret could not long be maintained, and both Madame Heger's reputation and her school suffered to some extent in consequence.

The late Abbé Richardson, with whom I had an interview in July, 1910, and again on 27th July, 1913, kindly permitted me to quote from an unpublished lecture which he delivered on "The Brontës in Brussels" on 26th February, 1901, in the old Ravenstein Hall overlooking the Rue d'Isabelle. Mr. Richardson, though an Englishman and a great admirer of Charlotte Brontë, felt it necessary to defend the Hegers.

"And now let us turn to M. Heger. We may at once dismiss the idea that the objectionable M. Pelet (in *The*

*Professor*) was in any way inspired or suggested by the person of her beloved Professor, about whom she always wrote and spoke with affectionate respect. But with regard to the character of M. Paul Emanuel in *Villette*, the case is quite different. Anyone who reads attentively this remarkable novel cannot fail to have a sort of intuitive certainty that this carefully drawn character, without of course being a portrait, was nevertheless inspired by some person well known to the author; by a person who had made a very strong and very profound impression on the author, and even by a person who had excited in the author a deep and very real love. The word is not too strong. Whoever the prototype of Paul Emanuel was, Charlotte Brontë had loved him with all the passionate energy of her warm, if suppressed affections. Supposing this prototype to have been, as I have little doubt it was, M. Heger, there is nothing in the least discreditable to Charlotte Brontë's memory. We are none of us masters of our heart's sympathies, and no one who has studied our authoress, who was purity itself, can imagine that her enthusiastic and even passionate attachment to her master in literature was tainted or disfigured by the shadow of any attempt or desire to draw to herself affections which were pledged elsewhere. It comes simply to this: her love and affection had been excited by intercourse with a singularly beautiful and sympathetic nature, and she thought her genius had the right to idealize these qualities, and to create from them a hero, who gained the heart of an ideal heroine singularly like herself. I do not think we can deny her this right, although we may think that in this particular case she did not use sufficient tact in exercising it. However this may be, it is impossible for anyone who knew M. Heger not to recognise many traits of his amiable character in the person, '*les faits et gistes*' of M. Paul Emanuel. Both Swinburne and Wemyss Reid declare that Charlotte Brontë's sojourn at Brussels was the turning-point in her career, and that her affection for M. Heger was, as it were, a match which set fire to the mine represented by the hidden and latent talents of this half educated country girl of genius."

That Charlotte Brontë thoroughly enjoyed her lessons with M. Heger is easy to understand, because she could enter into the spirit of his enthusiasm and she did not mind hard work, though all his pupils were not of the same opinion. I once asked a former English pupil her opinion of M. Heger, and she gave it quite spontaneously. "I did not like him; he was an irritable, stern man, very unjust, and not at all the man to have the care of girls; he was very proud of any clever pupils, who could understand and enter into his views and appreciations of an author; he was an excellent lecturer, but very angry if his pupils could not follow him." "Once," said my informant, "when I failed to grasp the meaning of a passage from Racine, he became very angry and I turned on him and said, 'If I were reading a passage in English from Shakespeare, and you failed to grasp the beauty of it, I should not turn on you and get into a temper.' Feeling the justice of this he said no more."

In discussing Charlotte Brontë's opinion of Belgian girls with this former pupil she attributed it to the fact that M. Heger was so hard on the ordinary Belgian girl. He was more suited to boys, she thought, than girls, and to clever pupils rather than to those of average ability. In his defence, she was willing to admit that M. Heger was a man of genius, and often most kind to his pupils. She remembered seeing him standing before a class of girls—who were terribly afraid of him—shaking with rage because he could not make them comprehend his meaning, or enter into his enthusiastic appreciation of the book under discussion. Finally, he burst into tears, and left the room abruptly, much to the surprise, but also to the relief of his pupils.

"Never was a better little man, in some points, than M. Paul; never in others a more waspish little despot," said Charlotte Brontë, and her first impression of him as given in *Villette* compares very well with that of his other pupils.

The late Abbé Richardson, whilst agreeing to a certain extent with Charlotte Brontë's picture of M. Heger in *Villette*, did not think that Madame Heger had much resemblance to Madame Beck in *Villette* and Mademoiselle Reuter in *The Professor*.

“Madame Heger, the directress of the boarding-school known to the Brontës, was utterly unlike either Mademoiselle Reuter [in *The Professor*] or Madame Beck. If we except some superficial resemblances of personal prettiness and neatness, noiselessness of movement, and unvarying placidity of temper, this lady was utterly unlike in every particular the crafty and unprincipled woman described by Charlotte Brontë, nor is it possible to imagine that our authoress ever intended any such resemblance. . . . My intimate conviction is that in *Middlemarch* Reuter and Madame Beck, Charlotte Brontë had not the slightest intention of representing Madame Heger’s character, but it is quite possible that the slight superficial personal traits of resemblance to this good lady which she has reproduced in her very objectionable characters were put in *de propos délibéré*. Charlotte, with all her genius, was not above a certain spitefulness. She never forgot any real, or supposed injury, and both in *Shirley* and in *Jane Eyre* she gives several *coups de pattes*, as the French say, some very well deserved, to persons who had offended her or her sister.”

M. Heger was very much offended if any one asked him about *Villette*; he characterised it as *bien vilain* for Miss Brontë to have written of her Brussels friends in that way, though he was quite prepared to acknowledge the genius of the novel.

In trying to show his appreciation of Charlotte Brontë’s genius, he said to an English friend, who sympathised with the Hegers because of the account in *Villette*, “Mais, c’est le meilleur vin qui fait le vinaigre le plus acide.”

“M. Heger was very fond of summing up his opinions in a choice phrase, often of his own making,” said one who knew him well.

## CHAPTER XX

### WHY CHARLOTTE BRONTË LEFT BRUSSELS SO ABRUPTLY

CHARLOTTE BRONTË's life and *Jane Eyre*—Her picture of M. Heger as portrayed in *Villette*—Mary Taylor's advice—Charlotte Brontë's regard for M. Heger—View of love in *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*—Charlotte Brontë's conception of love—Her "irresistible impulse" to return to Brussels and its punishment—Her novels as human documents—Miss Winkworth and Paul Emanuel—The Rev. A. B. Nicholls—Publication of Charlotte Brontë's letters to M. Heger in *The Times*—Reason for the long delay—M. Heger's loyalty to Charlotte Brontë.

WRITING to Ellen Nussey soon after leaving Brussels for the second time, Charlotte says, "Something in me, which used to be enthusiasm, is tamed down and broken. I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion—a stake in life. Haworth seems such a lonely, quiet spot, buried away from the world." Evidently the year at home was neither happy nor peaceful, and yet Anne and Branwell were doing well at Thorpe Green, and Emily was content at home. The father, also, who was sixty-seven years of age, was in good health. It has been said that her father's increasing blindness caused Charlotte to give up her work at Brussels. Mary Taylor says, "When I last saw Charlotte (a year after her return from Brussels) she told me she had quite decided to stay at home. She owned she did not like it. Her health was weak. . . . I told her very warmly, that she ought not to stay at home; that to spend the next five years at home in solitude and weak health would ruin her; that she would never recover it. Such a dark shadow came over her face when I said, 'Think of what you'll be five years hence!' that I stopped and said, 'Don't cry, Charlotte!' She did not cry, but went on walking up and down the room, and said in a little while, 'But I intend to stay, Polly.'"

Again Charlotte Brontë writes: "There was a time when Haworth was a very pleasant place to me; it is not so now. I feel as if we were all buried here. I long to travel; to work; to live a life of action."

All this proves that the lack of "happiness and peace" after her return from Brussels was in herself, and not in her home. If her reason for leaving Brussels had been anxiety for her father, she would have found happiness and peace in attending to his wants, and the company of Emily ought to have prevented her from complaining of solitude. Moreover, if she found that she was doing what her conscience approved, she would surely have had a measure of contentment, and not have experienced "total withdrawal of happiness and peace of mind."

Mrs. Gaskell seems to have been, on more than one occasion, on the verge of tracking Charlotte Brontë's love story, but, whatever conclusions were formed personally, she left the matter for speculation by her readers, seeing that *Jane Eyre* was first published as an autobiography, edited by Currer Bell. A close acquaintance with Charlotte Brontë's life shows that the story was largely her own experience, though fictitious names are introduced. The sequence of events runs parallel with Charlotte Brontë's life, and the more that life is examined the closer it agrees with the life portrayed in *Jane Eyre*: the death of her mother, which left her in charge of her aunt, whom she did not love: the decision to send her to school at Lowood: her appointment as teacher, though at another school: her visit to Brussels, which, for obvious reasons is "Thornfield," where Jane Eyre was a governess, though instead of having a class she had charge of one pupil: her friendship with "the master," the title by which M. Heger became known to her: the dangerous position which this friendship soon assumed: Charlotte Brontë's departure from Brussels, because of her aunt's death, just as Jane Eyre left Thornfield: her return to the impatient master: his kindly welcome and her delight in returning: the danger period when she finds a reason for her joy on returning to Thornfield: the flight from Thornfield, which is the most dramatic part of the story, and which Charlotte Brontë told Mrs. Gaskell was the part that appealed to her most when writing the novel. "When she came to 'Thornfield' she could not stop . . . . on she went writing incessantly for three weeks; by which time she had carried

her heroine away from 'Thornfield' and was herself in a fever which compelled her to pause." After Thornfield comes Morton and Charlotte Brontë's visit to Hathersage and her return to her blind father at Haworth. It is on the strength of the passionate love story in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* that Charlotte Brontë's fame stands.

Miss Sinclair does not believe that Charlotte Brontë's life is revealed in her novels, and she remarks that, if *Jane Eyre* and *Lucy Snowe* are to stand for Charlotte Brontë, then Mrs. Humphry Ward may be said to be the prototype of her heroine, "Eleanor," and by that mischievous arrangement no novelist is safe; but in opposition to this view, it must be remembered that Charlotte Brontë and Mrs. Humphry Ward are two very different novelists, standing on two different planes. No one has ever assumed that Mrs. Humphry Ward's characters are in any way a reflection of her own life. Charlotte Brontë wrote of what she had experienced, whilst Mrs. Humphry Ward draws mainly upon her imagination and observation. If Charlotte Brontë's heroines are creations, they follow closely real personages.

Mrs. Gaskell was so much baffled by Charlotte Brontë's stories, that she once asked her if she ever took opium, as depicted in *Villette*; Mrs. Gaskell evidently wondered if this would give the clue.

It has been argued that the incident of *Jane Eyre* hearing Rochester's voice was copied from *Moll Flanders*, but there is no evidence that Charlotte Brontë had read Defoe's novel.

It has been repeatedly said that Charlotte Brontë never expressed anything more than friendship for M. Heger: if that had been so, she would never have given the soul-stirring love scenes in her novels. When Harriet Martineau, at Charlotte Brontë's request, candidly criticised *Villette*, she was so much hurt that she quietly severed the friendship, which once seemed to her well worth keeping. Harriet Martineau's review in the *Daily News* of 3rd February, 1853, is long and intensely critical, and its aim seems to be that of literary adviser. Seeing that Charlotte Brontë had published three novels, and that Miss Martineau had only published

*Deerbrook* and had submitted another novel to Messrs. Smith Elder, which they refused, the rôle she adopted was, to say the least, anything but kind, especially as she professed to be a friend of Currer Bell.

Miss Martineau begins by saying, "Everything written by Currer Bell is remarkable, she can touch nothing without leaving on it the stamp of originality."

Thus with regard to the characters she writes—

"All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought—love. It begins with the child of six years old, at the opening—a charming picture—and it closes with it at the last page: and, so dominant is this idea—so incessant is the writer's tendency to describe the need of being loved, that the heroine, who tells her own story, leaves the reader at last under the uncomfortable impression of her either having entertained a double love, or allowed one to supersede another without notification of the transition. It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and under ordinary circumstances, quite apart from love; there is an absence of introspection, an unconsciousness, a repose in women's lives—unless under peculiarly unfortunate circumstances—of which we find no admission in this book: and to the absence of it may be attributed some of the criticism which the book will meet with from readers who are no prudes, but whose reason and taste will reject the assumption that events and characters are to be regarded through the medium of one passion only."

In the reply, Charlotte Brontë says: "I know what *love* is as I understand it; and if man or woman should be ashamed of feeling such love, then is there nothing right, noble, faithful, truthful, unselfish in this earth, as I comprehend rectitude, nobleness, fidelity, truth and disinterestedness." If we take this standard in connection with the love of a woman for another woman's husband, it sounds far too bold, but it must be remembered that Charlotte Brontë found her heart's secret when it was too late, and, though she fled, she had her battle



to fight, for her conception of love was not merely the love of a woman for a man, but of the knitting of one soul to another. In answer to Shirley's question about love, Caroline, who is more Charlotte Brontë than matter-of-fact Ellen Nussey, replies, "Love, a crime! No, Shirley:—love is a divine virtue . . . obtrusiveness is a crime; forwardness is a crime; and both disgust: but love!—no purest angel need blush to love! And when I see either man or woman couple shame with love, I know their minds are coarse, their associations debased."

All her novels are human documents, and they contain the very life-blood of the writer, and that is why they have made the name of Brontë immortal. Harriet Martineau, writing in the *Daily News* on 6th April, 1856, after Charlotte Brontë's death, said: "Charlotte Brontë had every inducement that could have availed with one less high-minded to publish two or three novels a year. Fame waited upon all she did, and she might have enriched herself by very slight exertion, but her steady conviction was, that the publication of a book is a solemn act of conscience, in the case of a novel as much as any other book. She was not fond of speaking of herself and her conscience, but she now and then uttered to her very few friends things which may, alas! be told now, without fear of hurting her sensitive nature; things which ought to be told in her honour. Among these sayings was one which explains the long interval between her works. She said that she thought every delineation of life ought to be the product of *personal experience* and observation; *experience naturally occurring*, and observation of a normal and not of a forced or special kind. 'I have not accumulated since I published *Shirley*,' she said, 'what makes it needful for me to speak again, and till I do, may God give me Grace to be dumb.'"

With regard to Charlotte Brontë's statement that she had not accumulated since *Shirley*, it may be asked, "What about *Shirley*'s successor, *Villette*?" It must be remembered that she had written a novel, *The Professor*, dealing with the Brussels life of Emily and herself, before she wrote *Jane Eyre*, and, after she had made her name as a writer, she had hoped that

Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. would publish it. It was at a later period that she wrote *Villette*—a much greater novel than *The Professor*, and dealing more fully with her own life in Belgium. Some of her experience, however, had been gained before she wrote *Shirley*, and there is certain evidence that suggests that Charlotte visited Brussels a third time. If the *Professor* had been accepted in Charlotte Brontë's lifetime, *Villette* might never have been written, and thus a great novel would have been lost to the world, for her three novels deal with all the places in which she lived, and, as *The Professor* was rejected, there was thus room for a distinctly Brussels story.

Mr. Shorter, and more recently Miss May Sinclair, have laboured hard to dismiss the idea that Charlotte Brontë's love scenes are founded on actual experience, but Mr. Shorter stumbles twice in quoting the words written to Ellen Nussey in 1846, which have been brought forward more than once to prove that something happened in Charlotte Brontë's last year at Brussels that caused her to write: "I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what then seemed an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a *total withdrawal* for more than two years of happiness and peace of mind." In the Haworth Edition of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Mr. Shorter, in a foot-note on page 319, quotes this passage, but he substitutes the words *total hindrance* for *total withdrawal*; and in *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, page 255, Vol. I, he again quotes the passage, but leaves out the word *total*. His reason for quoting in the last instance is to explain that Miss Nussey and Mr. Nicholls interpreted the passage to mean that Charlotte Brontë had left "her father to over-conviviality," and "her brother took some further steps towards the precipice over which he was destined to fall." That Branwell had nothing to do with Charlotte's return I have, I hope, proved.

With regard to her novels being *human documents*, Charlotte Brontë settles the matter herself in a letter she wrote to Mr. W. S. Williams in 1848, in which she discussed the characters in her novels: "Details, situations which I do not understand and cannot personally inspect, I would not for the world

meddle with, lest I should make even a more ridiculous mess of the matter than Mrs. Trollope did in her *Factory Boy*. Besides, *not one feeling on any subject, public or private, will I ever affect that I do not really experience.*"

Charlotte Brontë returned to Brussels in 1843 against her conscience and against the wishes of her family and friends. She lost rather than gained money by her decision, and both she and Emily had borrowed money from Aunt Branwell to enable them to study French and German in order to be capable of starting a private school in England. Charlotte was determined, impulsive, and to a certain extent wilful, but she turned to good account her experience in Brussels; she went to Brussels to be trained for the profession of teaching, but she was unconsciously trained for her rôle as novelist. All her heroes are akin; all have something of the foreigner about them and have travelled and known more of the world than the ordinary men—mostly curates—that Charlotte Brontë met. She had only one model, and that was M. Heger. She told her life story in her novels, and she was too genuine to hide the tragic love passion that, unsought, entered into her life. Such was her temperament that she could not help herself; she revered literary people who had great intellectual ability and large-heartedness, and these qualities she found in M. Heger.

In the chapter in *Shirley* entitled "The first blue-stocking," where Miss Keeldar refuses to marry for money, her uncle assures her that she has a preference for "any literary scrub or shabby, whining artist," and she replies: "For the scrubby, shabby, whining I have no taste; for literature and arts I have."

#### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LETTERS TO M. HEGER

The four letters from Charlotte Brontë to M. Heger, published in *The Times* on 29th July, 1913, though announced as "the lost letters of Charlotte Brontë," have, in fact, never been lost. They were seen by Mrs. Gaskell in 1856, and M. Heger remarked that she had made a very discreet use of them, and he suggested that she should ask Mr. Nicholls or Mr. Brontë for the letters he had sent to Charlotte Brontë, which

he was sure she had retained on account of the advice which they contained. I have known where *The Times'* letters were for many years, and have corresponded with the family as to the advisability of publishing them.

Mrs. Gaskell seems never to have had an opportunity of seeing the letters which M. Heger sent to Charlotte Brontë, but, as previously stated, she knew more of Charlotte's heart secret regarding M. Heger than she disclosed. If Mr. Nicholls obtained possession of the letters from M. Heger, it is very certain he would not wish to have them published; indeed, his policy throughout had been to ignore the Heger correspondence, and hence his wish to give a reason for Charlotte Brontë's return from Brussels in 1844, which has been proved to be untrue.

The old Vicar was not in his daughter's confidence, and he would not be likely to know anything of her correspondence; it is quite possible that she destroyed the letters herself. In Chapter XXIII of *Villette*, Lucy Snowe tells of five letters "traced by the same firm pen, sealed with the same clear seal, full of the same vital comfort. Vital comfort it seemed to me then: I read them in after years; they were kind letters enough—pleasing letters, because composed by one well-pleased; in the two last there were three or four closing lines half-gay, half-tender, 'by *feeling* touched, but not subdued.' Time, dear reader, mellowed them to a beverage of this mild quality; but when I first tasted their elixir, fresh from the fount so honoured, it seemed juice of a divine vintage: a draught which Hebe might fill, and the very gods approve.

"Does the reader, remembering what was said some pages back, care to ask how I answered these letters: whether under the dry, stinting check of Reason, or according to the full, liberal impulse of Feeling?

"To speak truth, I compromised matters; I served two masters; I bowed down in the house of Rimmon, and lifted the heart at another shrine. I wrote to these letters two answers—one for my own relief, the other for Graham's perusal." M. Heger was the original for certain phases of Graham's or Dr. John's life.

est bien bégayée! Poutch je ne me  
flâne, et je t'en ai même récompensé par  
un peu d'argent si tu es très méchant  
car on lui dit de la donner à ce malin  
on a en vain que par le malin par fait.

Pour la suite, je ne suis la lettre, j'en ai  
attiré fait - m'assey par conséquent de me dire  
mieux que tous les jours. Mieux et tout  
est la méthode de la lettre.

Non je ne suis pas par conséquent  
les respect - l'inspiration de mon père augmenté  
je n'ai pas - répondant il n'est pas encore  
tout - fait simple. L'inspiration est par conséquent bien  
mais non je ne suis pas par conséquent malade.

Mon père, je compte beaucoup avec la  
providence - elle me soutient tout le  
monde de son côté et s'efforce jamais de  
me punir et tout ce que je salue, l'enfer  
le déteste, il n'a pas de pitié pour moi.

Je t'en prie, la divine  
Charlotte

Je t'en prie, la divine  
mon père, je ne suis pas par conséquent  
je n'ai pas de pitié pour moi. Mieux et tout  
est la méthode de la lettre.

Oct. 22 1822

Photo by

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LETTER TO M. HEGER  
From the original in the British Museum

D. Machath



In Chapter XXIV, headed "M. de Bassompierre," Charlotte Brontë lays bare her thoughts at the time Lucy Snowe was hungering for letters. She tells of studying hard at German and reading "the driest and thickest books in the library" in order to appease her anxiety for letters. She says "the result was as if I had gnawed a file to satisfy hunger, or drank brine to quench thirst."

"My hour of torment was the post hour. Unfortunately, I knew it too well, and tried as vainly as assiduously to cheat myself of that knowledge: dreading the rack of expectation, and the sick collapse of disappointment which daily preceded and followed upon that well-recognised ring. . . . The letter—the well-beloved letter—would not come; and it was all of sweetness in life I had to look for."

Later in the chapter Lucy Snowe receives a letter from "La Terrasse," which, for the time being is Brussels, and, instead of coming from Dr. John, as she hoped, it was from his mother. The disappointment is very graphically described, and even in reading the chapter it is difficult to understand why the writer should betray such agony at not receiving a letter from Dr. John. After moralizing on her long starvation from the want of letters she concludes, "In all the land of Israel there was but one Saul—certainly but one David to soothe or comprehend him."

M. Heger's name was Romain Constantin Georges Heger. In *Villette* it is Paul Carl David Emanuel.

It is easy to see in the light of *The Times* letters that Charlotte Brontë was suffering mentally, and she likens herself to Saul and M. Heger to David, who was the only one with power to soothe her.

Charlotte Brontë lived her life over again in her books. She wrote *Villette* for the professor and told her innermost thoughts, but she says in *Villette*, "I disclaim with the utmost scorn every sneaking suspicion of what are called 'warmer feelings'; women do not entertain these 'warmer feelings' where, from the commencement, through the whole progress of an acquaintance, they have never once been cheated of the conviction that to do so would be to commit a mortal absurdity."

The name that she gives to her passion is "a closely clinging and deeply honouring attachment—an attachment that wanted to attach to itself and take to its own lot all that was painful in the destiny of its object."

Regarding the letters that were sent she writes, "The doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield. Reason would leap in vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page." This accounts for the difference between the letters and her books. All her life she had been in love with an ideal, and to a greater extent, perhaps, Emily had had a similar experience; their early manuscripts prove this.

For the time being, M. Heger was Charlotte's ideal, and, although she calls her feelings by the name "friendship," she was in love with M. Heger, and she knew it, but she never had any wish to draw his affection from his wife and children. She had returned to Brussels a second time because she could not help herself; she lived for her master and she could not bear her life without him, and if possible she would have returned a third year.

Mr. Shorter thinks those letters with their heart-throbs are very similar to Charlotte's letters to Mr. Williams. On the one hand she was dying for letters from M. Heger, whilst she closed her correspondence with Mr. Williams voluntarily.

It is well to remember that Charlotte Brontë was twenty-eight, and M. Heger was thirty-five, when this correspondence was going on, so that it could not be the ordinary schoolgirl worship pictured by several writers. It was the passionate attachment of a woman for a man a few years older than herself. Well might Madame Heger object to this intellectual woman of nearly thirty writing to her husband, who was five years younger than herself, since she was at this time forty years of age. It is affirmed that the writing in pencil on one of Charlotte's letters, now in the British Museum, proves that M. Heger had no interest in Charlotte, but the writing is *not* that of M. Heger.

Judging from *Villette* (which, as more and more of Charlotte's



life is revealed, proves to be autobiographical) it seems safe to assume that M. Heger had told Charlotte something of his love for his first wife, whose name was Marie Josephine Noyer ; she died on 26th September, 1833, after three years of happy married life.

The death of his young wife in 1833 was a terrible blow, and almost overwhelmed him, and such was the depth of his despair that it was feared he would lose his reason or his life. In speaking to Lucy Snowe, Paul Emanuel says : " Don't suppose that I wish you to have a passion for me, Mademoiselle ; Dieu vous en garde ! What do you start for ? Because I said passion ? Well, I say it again. There is such a word, and there is such a thing—though not within these walls, thank Heaven ! You are no child that one should not speak of what exists ; but I only uttered the word—the thing, I assure you, is alien to my whole life and views. It died in the past—in the present it lies buried—its grave is deep dug, well heaped, and many winters old : in the future there will be a resurrection, as I believe to my soul's consolation ; but all will then be changed—form and feeling : the mortal will have put on immortality—it will rise, not for earth, but heaven."

This speech could hardly have been invented by Charlotte ; it reads too closely to a real conversation ; and it is to this romance that *Wuthering Heights* owes much. In the chapter on Malevola, Lucy Snowe hears of Paul Emanuel's goodness and charity to his lost love's relatives, and Père Silas says of his former pupil, Paul Emanuel, " He was and *is* the lover, true, constant and eternal, of that saint in heaven—Marie Justine"—the first Madame Heger's name was Marie Josephine, and towards the end of the chapter, Madame Beck tells Lucy Snowe that Paul Emanuel " harbours a romantic idea about some pale-faced Marie Justine—personnage assez niaise à ce que je pense " (such was Madame's irreverent remark) " who has been an angel in heaven, or elsewhere, this score of years, and to whom he means to go, free from all earthly ties, pure comme un lis, à ce qu'il dit."

Again, " They, Père Silas and Modeste Maria Beck, opened up the adytum of his (Paul Emanuel's) heart—showed me one

grand love, the child of this southern nature's youth, born so strong and perfect, that it had laughed at Death himself, despised his mean rape of matter, clung to immortal spirit, and, in victory and faith, had watched beside a tomb twenty years."

In the third chapter of *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy wails, "Let me in—let me in !

" . . . . It's twenty years, mourned the voice : twenty years. I've been a waif for twenty years."

In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe says : "How often has this man, this M. Emanuel, seemed to me to lack magnanimity in trifles, yet how great he is in great things !

"I own I did not reckon amongst the proofs of his greatness either the act of confession, or the saint-worship."

"How long is it since that lady died ?" I inquired, looking at Justine Marie.

"Twenty years. She was somewhat older than M. Emanuel ; he was then very young, for he is not much beyond forty."

"Does he yet weep her ?"

"His heart will weep her always : the essence of Emanuel's nature is—constancy."

This story of the early love of Paul Emanuel had some connection with facts in M. Heger's life and it was the knowledge of his constancy to a lost love, that inspired both Charlotte and Emily Brontë to write so passionately of him.

It was this early romance of Paul Emanuel, that was the germ of the passionate love story in *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Villette* ; but in the writing of the story neither Emily nor Charlotte had been able to keep herself from representing the heroine, or from expressing her fierce passionate nature.

It is unfortunate that only part of the correspondence between M. Heger and Charlotte Brontë has been kept, for it is quite certain there were other letters preceding the one dated 24th July, 1844, in which Charlotte begins, "I am well aware it is not my turn to write to you, but as Mrs. Wheelwright is going to Brussels . . . . it appears to me I ought not to neglect so favourable an opportunity of writing to you."



HAND-BAG WORKED BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË  
*Presented to Mrs. Wheelwright 1842*

Figure 6

(a)  $\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega}$  vs.  $\theta$  at  $E = 0.078$  MeV. The solid curve shows the calculated results from the present calculation, and the open circles show the experimental data of Kato et al. [19]. The dashed curve shows the calculated results from the DWBA calculation.

(b)  $\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega}$  vs.  $\theta$  at  $E = 0.078$  MeV. The solid curve shows the calculated results from the present calculation, and the open circles show the experimental data of Kato et al. [19]. The dashed curve shows the calculated results from the DWBA calculation.

Evidently letters had passed to and fro between M. Heger and Charlotte, during the six months that she had been in England, for she mentions having written "a letter that was less than reasonable, because sorrow was at my heart"; and again she writes, "Meanwhile I may well send you a little letter from time to time—you have authorised me to do so."

That Charlotte was perfectly open in her correspondence with M. Heger is easily proved, for she does not hesitate to let the Wheelwrights know that she is corresponding with him, and her reason for sending the letter by Mrs. Wheelwright was probably to save the postage of one and sixpence, and to ensure its safe delivery, for she seems to have been suspicious that the letters were not received by M. Heger.

Dr. Heger told me that Charlotte Brontë's letters to his father had been too frequent, and they betrayed a growing attachment which his parents thought it kind and wise to check. She was told that her letters gave evidence of too much excitement and exaltation, and she was advised to tone down her letters and write merely of her health and occupation, only giving particulars of her own health and that of her home circle.

It is a mistake to say that this rebuff caused Charlotte Brontë to give up writing to M. Heger; that is not so; she mentions more than once the six months' interval, and it is certain she tried to keep to the instructions imposed upon her by M. and Madame Heger. Her last letter to M. Heger, dated 18th November, which Dr. Heger (the son of M. Heger) thinks belongs to 1844, certainly belonged to 1845, for in that letter she says, "I have never heard French spoken but once since I left Brussels—and then it sounded like music in my ears—every word was most precious to me because it reminded me of you." This is a reference to Charlotte Brontë's journey from Hathersage to Haworth in July, 1845, when she tells of accosting a stranger in the railway carriage, and asking him in French if he were not a Frenchman, and on hearing him speak, she further asked if he had not lived in Germany. On his replying in the affirmative, she said she knew it by his way of pronouncing the words. M. Heger was of German

descent, and that may account for Charlotte saying, "Every word was most precious to me because it reminded me of you, I love French for your sake with all my heart and soul."

In the first letter published by *The Times* there is a reference to a situation offered to Charlotte Brontë in a large school in Manchester at a salary of one hundred pounds. This is the first that has been heard of it, and it is very remarkable that Ellen Nussey is not told of it, seeing that she was asked to help to get pupils for Charlotte. Evidently old Mr. Brontë objected to Charlotte leaving home again, for Anne mentions Charlotte's wish to go to Paris, and she queries it. In *The Professor* there is a reference to William Crimsworth obtaining a situation at 3,000 francs a year, after leaving M. Pelet, which may have some reference to the Manchester offer, but Mrs. Gaskell did not seem to know of it, or she would have surely mentioned it.

The letters betray Charlotte's anxiety to know if M. Heger has received her letters, and she sends the second letter (published in *The Times*) by Mr. Joe Taylor and his sister Mary; she evidently charged them to deliver it safely to M. Heger, and to ask for an answer to bring back to England.

This second letter is short, and eager, and poor Charlotte waits feverishly for the answer.

"I am not going to write a long letter; in the first place, I have not the time—it must leave at once; and then, I am afraid of worrying you. I would only ask of you if you have heard from me at the beginning of May and again in the month of August? For six months I have been awaiting a letter from Monsieur—six months waiting is very long, you know! However, I do not complain, and I shall be richly rewarded for a little sorrow if you will now write a letter and give it to this gentleman—or to his sister—who will hand it to me without fail. . . .

"Farewell, Monsieur; I am depending on soon having your news. The idea delights me, for the remembrance of your kindnesses will never fade from my memory, and as long as

that remembrance endures the respect with which it has inspired me will endure likewise."

Mr. Taylor returns and brings no news. "Patience," says Charlotte in her desperation, and she awaits Mary Taylor's return. "I have nothing for you," she says, "neither letter nor message."

It is impossible not to sympathize with this eager, passionate little woman, in her hero worship, but no one can blame Madame Heger for checking the correspondence; it could only lead to disappointment in the end. Certain it is that Charlotte called it by the name of friendship, but the name was not strong enough. For an independent woman like Charlotte Brontë to write at least three letters to M. Heger, then to send a letter by hand, and still to get no answer, and then to write again "Forgive me then, Monsieur, if I adopt the course of writing to you again. How can I endure life if I make no effort to ease its sufferings? . . . All I know is, that I cannot, that I will not, resign myself to lose wholly the friendship of my master. I would rather suffer the greatest physical pain than always have my heart lacerated by smarting regrets. If my master withdraws his friendship from me entirely, I shall be altogether without hope: if he gives me a little—just a little—I shall be satisfied—happy; I shall have reason for living on, for working. . . . Nor do I, either, need much affection from those I love. I should not know what to do with a friendship entire and complete—I am not used to it." And when she speaks of the "little interest" the professor had in her of yore, she says: "I hold on to it as I would hold on to life," and her piteous appeal is that of the desperate lover begging for a word of hope, rather than that of an unmarried woman of nearly thirty to a man of thirty-five, who had a family of five children.

The fourth and last letter printed by *The Times* is dated 15th November, and for the reason just stated, it must have been written in 1845.

Then, again, she mentions having suffered great anxiety for a year or two, which plainly covered the period since she

left Brussels on 29th December, 1843. This fourth letter points to the fact that Charlotte had received a letter after her piteous appeal, on finding that Joe and Mary Taylor had nothing for her. The third letter is dated 8th January, 1845, and yet Charlotte says on 18th November that her last letter was dated 18th May, and it implies that a letter had been sent from M. Heger between January and May, for she says: "Your last letter was stay and prop to me—nourishment to me for half a year. Now I need another, and you will give it me." . . . "To forbid me to write to you, to refuse to answer me would be to tear from me my only joy on earth, to deprive me of my last privilege—a privilege I shall never consent willingly to surrender. Believe me, *mon maître*, in writing to me it is a good deed that you will do. So long as I believe you are pleased with me, so long as I have hope of receiving news from you, I can be at rest and not too sad. But when a prolonged and gloomy silence seems to threaten me with the estrangement of my master—when day by day I await a letter, and when day by day disappointment comes to fling me back into overwhelming sorrow, and the sweet delight of seeing your handwriting and reading your counsel escapes me as a vision that is vain, then fever claims me—I lose appetite and sleep—I pine away." In conclusion, she asks, "May I write to you again next May?" proving that she was trying to keep her promise of only writing once in six months.

These four letters only give a glimpse of the eager, passionate correspondence sent by Charlotte Brontë to her master.

On the authority of the Heger family, the last letter was addressed by Charlotte Brontë to the Athénée Royal of Brussels, but it was not at the request of M. Heger, but because Charlotte herself was eager to obtain an answer from him, and she evidently was suspecting Madame Heger as the cause of the delay in getting answers, for it is noticeable that in this last letter Madame Heger is not mentioned at all, although the governesses and the children are referred to by name. This is inexcusable, and as far as is known no further letters were sent.

M. Heger did not write his own letters, but dictated them,



and his wife wrote them ; whilst later still, since his daughter Louise was his amanuensis, M. Heger merely signed the letters after altering certain phrases, and then a fair copy was made ; but Charlotte Brontë in her last letter writes of the sweet delight of seeing his (M. Heger's) handwriting, and as he corrected her *devoirs* in his own characteristic caligraphy it is certain she would be able to recognise it as distinct from Madame Heger's, which was larger and firmer.

In *Villette* M. Paul Emanuel says, "I could not write that down. . . . I hate mechanical labour ; I hate to stoop and sit still. I could dictate it, though, with pleasure to an amanuensis who suited me."

The two years in Brussels, and the two succeeding years were the ones which counted most in the writing of Charlotte's novels, for in those four years she fought her hardest battle, as her novels testify.

There are some who blame M. Heger for keeping the letters of Charlotte Brontë, thinking they ought to have been destroyed, so that they could never have been published, but it is well to know M. Heger himself strongly objected to the letters ever being published. He kept them for the same reason that he kept Emily's and Charlotte's *devoirs*, "because he had known the little geniuses," but he never had any intention of publishing Charlotte's letters, as a letter to Ellen Nussey proves.

Ellen Nussey was not satisfied with Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* ; she thought it too sad, and she evidently wished to adopt the rôle of biographer herself, and, if she could have secured the help of M. Heger, a new phase of Charlotte's life would be revealed, for Ellen Nussey did not understand the Brussels period ; had she done so she would never have asked M. Heger to publish Charlotte's letters.

A letter from M. Heger, written just fifty years ago, redounds to his credit and his loyalty to Charlotte Brontë, and it explains why Dr. Heger and his sisters have delayed so long in allowing the letters to be published. Had it not been that a dishonourable attachment had been hinted at by certain writers, they would never have allowed the letters to be

made public, knowing all these fifty years what their father's wishes were. Here is the letter from M. Heger to Ellen Nussey, published for the first time by kind permission of Dr. Heger and his sisters.

“BRUXELLES, 16 *Octobre*, 1863.

“Mademoiselle,

“Deux mots expliqueront et me feront pardonner le retard que j'ai mis à vous répondre : votre lettre ne m'a pas trouvé à Spa ; je n'en ai pris connaissance qu'à mon retour des vacances.

“Vous daignez me consulter sur trois points : 1<sup>o</sup> la publication de près de 500 lettres de Charlotte Brontë, votre amie 2<sup>o</sup> la traduction en français de cette correspondance 3<sup>o</sup> ma participation éventuelle à cette traduction.

“M'expliquer sincèrement sur ces trois points est à mes yeux un devoir. Je crois comme vous, Mademoiselle, que votre amie sera plus fidèlement peinte par elle-même que par autrui ; je crois que ses lettres, où l'on voit le mouvement intime de sa pensée, où l'on sent les battements de ce pauvre cœur malade, peuvent offrir encore un vif intérêt, même après la biographie développée de Madame Gaskell. Je suis convaincu de cela,—et cependant il s'élève du fond de ma conscience certaines objections que je soumets humblement à la vôtre.

“La question que je vais traiter est délicate ; j'hésite à l'aborder, mais cette hésitation, que j'avoue, je la regarde comme une faiblesse et je passe outre ; quelque chose me dit, Mademoiselle, que ma sincérité ne saurait vous blesser : elle n'est, en réalité, qu'un hommage rendu à votre loyauté et à votre cœur.

“Je me suis donc posé cette question : pourrais-je, sans l'assentiment de mon ami, publier ses lettres intimes, c'est à dire les confidences qu'il m'a faites ? Ne m'a-t-il pas laissé voir, de lui-même, plus qu'il ne voulait montrer à autrui ? ce qu'on m'aurait dit à voix basse pourrais-je le redire à haute voix après le départ de l'imprudent ami qui s'est confié à ma discrétion ? ces impressions fugitives, ces appréciations irréfléchies, jetées, à cœur ouvert dans une causerie intime,

puis-je les livrer en pâture à la curiosité maligne des lecteurs ?

“ Je n'ai pas, Mademoiselle, la prétention de résoudre pour vous cette question : je vous crois trop de délicatesse pour supposer qu'en pareille matière votre raison et votre cœur aient besoin d'aide—Mais appelons-en à notre expérience personnelle : il doit vous être arrivé comme à moi, comme à tout le monde, de retrouver après plusieurs années, le brouillon de quelqu'une des lettres que nous avons écrites, et certes je crois pouvoir affirmer que ni vous ni moi nous ne les eussions livrées à la publicité sans modification aucune : tant l'expérience, la maturité que le temps donne à l'esprit, avaient, en bien des points, modifié nos sentiments et nos idées.

“ Votre pieuse affection veut, par la publication de la correspondance de Charlotte, ajouter à la gloire, à la considération de votre amie ; je le comprends ; mais permettez-moi de vous mettre en garde contre vous même : en triant sa correspondance, supposez toujours votre amie présente à côté de vous, et consultez-la.

Voilà, Mademoiselle, sans réticence, ce que je pense de la publication des lettres originales en anglais.

“ Quant à la traduction en français, quel que soit le mérite du traducteur, il me paraît que de toutes les œuvres littéraires les lettres sont celles qui perdent le plus à être traduites : dans la correspondance intime l'à propos, la liberté de l'allure, la grâce et jusqu'aux charmantes négligences d'une forme toute spontanée, donnent du prix, de l'agrément, aux moindres choses ; dans la traduction tout cela disparaît.

“ Je ne sache pas qu'on ait songé à traduire les lettres de Madame de Sévigné—pas plus qu'on n'a tenté de peindre le vol ou de noter le chant de l'oiseau.

“ Certaines lettres résistent à la traduction, je le sais, parce qu'elles traitent de politique, de voyages, de critique littéraire, etc. Elles ont un fonds solide d'une valeur réelle, en quelque sorte indépendante de la forme. Peut-être les lettres de votre amie sont-elles dans ce cas ; je l'ignore, vous seule pouvez en juger.

“ Après avoir exprimé mon opinion sur la traduction et

confessé implicitement ainsi mon impuissance à faire ce que vous paraîsez désirer de moi, je crois inutile d'ajouter qu'il me serait impossible dans tous les cas, *faute de loisir*, de coopérer à la publication dont vous avez pieusement rassemblé les matériaux. Veuillez peser avec une indulgente bienveillance les motifs de mon abstention et agréer, Mademoiselle, l'hommage de mes meilleurs sentiments.

“ (Signé) C. HEGER.”

It is interesting to note that when the rough draft of this letter, which had been dictated by M. Heger to his daughter Louise, was examined, it was seen that the word *malade* in the phrase “de ce pauvre cœur malade” had been altered twice into *blessé*, and then finally M. Heger had determined to leave it as it now stands. Evidently he considered the word *blessé* was more appropriate as applied to his former pupil's poor wounded heart than *malade*, which word, however, was perhaps more suited to a letter to be sent to Charlotte Brontë's old friend Ellen Nussey.

The letter explains itself; Ellen Nussey did not receive one penny from Mrs. Gaskell for the loan of her 500 Brontë letters, and she wished to get M. Heger to help her to write a new biography of Charlotte Brontë, but his letter proves that he was too honourable to publish this private correspondence.

If M. Heger's correspondence could have been kept and published, it would have shown that his letters contained nothing that was dishonourable, or he would not have advised Mrs. Gaskell to ask to see them.

Readers of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* will remember that she quotes one long letter from Charlotte Brontë to M. Heger and also a shorter passage. When the four letters were published in *The Times* it was seen that the impression of the correspondence between Charlotte Brontë and M. Heger intended by Mrs. Gaskell was quite erroneous. As Mr. Spielmann, who conducted the correspondence between the Hegers and the Principal Librarian of the British Museum, pointed out. “Passages of quite minor interest have been printed in that work; but readers will be amazed to find

that not only have they been corrected and furbished up as to spelling and punctuation, and unimportant words omitted, but that they have—inevitably no doubt, at that time, for the biographer's peculiar purpose—been garbled in a manner rare in a frankly and candidly-conceived narrative.”

What appears to be one letter in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* is seen to consist of more or less unimportant extracts carefully selected from the first two letters recently published, and the second quotation is taken from an earlier portion of the first of the four letters. Not only are there important omissions, but the second letter especially consists of a mere patchwork, which appears to preclude any explanation on the ground of carelessness. Mrs. Gaskell must have seen these letters, for in addition to the French quotations there are statements which prove her knowledge of them. Moreover, the manuscripts now in the British Museum must have been seen by her, when in the keeping of the Hegers, for Mr. Nicholls does not appear to have had them, but whoever compiled the letters in Mrs. Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë must have been actuated by a desire to conceal the real drift of the correspondence. The letters which were dated 24th July, 1844, and 24th October, 1844, appear in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* as having been sent to M. Heger subsequent to March, 1845, and after Charlotte Brontë's visit to Hathersage, which would be impossible.

Her passionate longing to hear from M. Heger, and especially to see him, cannot be dismissed—especially when the relative ages are considered—as typical of a pupil's relations with her former teacher. The feeling which she betrays is too intense to be explained in that way, and only M. Heger's recognition of his duty to his wife and family, and the necessity of checking Charlotte Brontë's ardour, brought the correspondence to a close.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE ATTEMPT TO EARN A LIVELIHOOD 1844-1845

FAILURE of the East Riding scheme for a school—The Brontë sisters determine to open a school at the Vicarage—The prospectus—Causes of the failure of the project—They turn to literature as a means of livelihood—The Vicarage family—Charlotte Brontë's invitation to Hathersage—Emily and Anne visit York—The *Gondal Chronicles*—Hathersage and *Jane Eyre*—Marriage of the Rev. Henry Nussey—Hathersage Village—Charlotte Brontë's return to Haworth.

IN one of Charlotte Brontë's recently published letters in *The Times*, 29th July, 1913, she mentions that, in the summer of 1844, she had been offered a situation as first governess in a large school in Manchester, with a salary of £100 per annum, but that she could not accept it, as it would have necessitated leaving her father. This is the first time that anything has been known of such an offer, and curiosity is aroused as to the school in Manchester in which Charlotte had the chance of becoming a governess. The Manchester High School for Girls was not started until 1874; evidently the school referred to must have been a boarding school in the neighbourhood of Manchester, but it is somewhat strange that, in later years, when Charlotte visited the Gaskells at Manchester, she does not seem to have mentioned the offer, nor does the father seem to have remembered it, when giving Mrs. Gaskell particulars of his daughter's career.

Emily was at home at this time, and there were two servants, so that it is curious that the father would not allow Charlotte to go to Manchester, seeing there was the tempting offer of £100 per annum, for some months later, according to Anne Brontë's diary, Charlotte was trying to get to Paris as a governess. In the light of the recently published letters, Charlotte's health and despondency seem to be the real reason why her father would not let her go; probably he did not wish his daughter to go away alone again, after the miserable state in which she returned from Brussels.

Miss Branwell's death in 1842 made it impossible for the three sisters to leave their father and start a school in the East Riding of Yorkshire, as they had hoped to do, and the only way in which they could collectively use their hard-earned knowledge was by starting a school at Haworth. After much consideration and planning, a school circular was drawn up and widely circulated in 1844—

## The Misses Brontë's Establishment

FOR

### THE BOARD AND EDUCATION

OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF

## YOUNG LADIES, THE PARSONAGE, HAWORTH, NEAR BRADFORD.

### Terms.

	£.	s.	d.
BOARD AND EDUCATION, including Writing, Arithmetic, History, Grammar, Geography, and Needle Work, per Annum, .. .. .	35	0	0
French, .. } .. .. each per Quarter, .. .. .	1	1	0
German, .. }			
Latin .. }			
Music, .. } .. .. each per Quarter, .. .. .	1	1	0
Drawing, .. }			
Use of Piano Forte, per Quarter, .. .. .	0	5	0
Washing, per Quarter, .. .. .	0	15	0

Each Young Lady to be provided with One Pair of Sheets, Pillow Cases, Four Towels, a Dessert and Tea-spoon.

A Quarter's Notice, or a Quarter's Board, is required previous to the Removal of a Pupil.

These single-sheet prospectuses were sent to friends and anyone likely to have any influence with parents of girls. Ellen Nussey rendered what help she could, and Charlotte Brontë not only distributed the prospectuses, but also visited people and canvassed for pupils. Not a single one was obtained by these united efforts. This failure could not be attributed to any feeling against the Brontë sisters; they were respected far and wide as the parson's daughters, but as teachers their reputation was not good. If Charlotte Brontë had much to complain of in Mrs. Sidgwick of Stonegappe, it is very certain that Mrs. Sidgwick had something to say about Charlotte Brontë, and Lothersdale was only a few miles from Haworth. At Roe Head and Dewsbury Moor, Charlotte was known as a strict disciplinarian, and her shyness with strangers did not help her with the parents. In addition, the Brontës had always "kept themselves very close," as the villagers in Haworth expressed it, and to this day they are remembered at Haworth as a mysterious family. The father was peculiar in his habits, an instance of which Tabitha Brown related to me. She had taken the tea things from Mr. Brontë's study, and knowing that he put salt as well as sugar in his tea she tasted what remained in his tea cup, and making a very long face exclaimed that it was more like physic. When her sister, Martha Brown, mentioned the matter to Mr. Brontë, he said it *was* physic. He always believed in plenty of salt, as it kept away worms, which were apt to breed in the body. Then there was his peculiar habit of continuing to wear a high "stock" round his neck made up of yards and yards of white silk, which gave him an uncanny appearance. The peculiarities of the Brontë household were the talk of the whole country side.

Then there was the eccentric Branwell; although the villagers admired him in a way, they considered him to be "a bit queer." In their younger days their little plays, acted in the absence of their father, in which the servants were sometimes asked to join, were considered to be wild and meaningless. If the Brontës failed to appreciate the simple rustic folk of the place, they in return were looked upon as a queer Irish family,



and it was the air of mystery which surrounded the Brontë home that scared the people from sending their daughters as pupils. The reams of note-paper, bought from John Greenwood, the local stationer, and covered with the Brontë children's small hand-printing, meant very little to the simple-minded people in the district, and it was only when their books were known to be actually published that some of their neighbours gave them credit for being clever and industrious. To this day the Brontë home is spoken of in the Haworth district as a mystery, and consequently strange tales are told of the inmates.

If the school project had succeeded, it was the intention of the sisters to get the parsonage enlarged by adding a school-room and extra bedrooms, making the house as large as it is at the present time. Charlotte, in her letter to M. Heger, gives the impression that the house was large, and that with a few alterations it would be possible to house five or six boarders. She blamed Haworth for the failure of her scheme, but it was the peculiar circumstances associated with the home, rather than the locality, which prevented the idea of a school ever becoming an established fact.

Haworth has been described by people who have visited the village as a most desolate place—"surely the last place that God made," as one writer pictures it, whereas it is a typical North Country village—clean, bracing and healthy. This Yorkshire moorland village looks its best when the purple heather is in bloom, but at no time is it so desolate as it has been described. The people were not by any means so illiterate as Mrs. Gaskell described them, when she stated that there was nobody for the Brontës to associate with. Charlotte Brontë may have conveyed that impression to Mrs. Gaskell, who would have found, had she lived there for any length of time, that the people were as simple and lovable as in Cranford. The parsonage servants were born and bred in the neighbourhood, and they proved to be faithful and true, if somewhat brusque and blunt. It was the failure of their school plan that drove the Brontë girls to attempt to publish their poems, for they always had the fear of poverty

before them. Their father's health was never robust, and in the event of his death the prospect was by no means alluring.

Although Ellen Nussey was so true a friend to Charlotte Brontë, it was Mary Taylor, with her superior education and greater intellectual ability, to whom she related her doubts and fears, and confided her literary secrets. Ellen Nussey was only told of the authorship of *Jane Eyre* when *Shirley* was actually published, and the information could no longer be withheld. Charlotte's letter to Ellen Nussey disowning any novels ascribed to her was written to throw dust in the eyes of her friend, and it was written to deceive. Mrs. Gaskell excuses Charlotte by saying she had promised her sisters never to divulge the secret.

Mary Taylor relates a pitiful story of Charlotte Brontë's fears of poverty when at Brussels—

"The first part of her time at Brussels was not uninteresting. She spoke of new people and characters, and foreign ways of the pupils and teachers. She knew the hopes and prospect of the teachers, and mentioned one who was very anxious to marry, 'she was getting so old.' She used to get her father or brother (I forget which) to be the bearer of letters to different single men, who she thought might be persuaded to do her the favour, saying that her only resource was to become a sister of charity if her present employment failed, and that she hated the idea. Charlotte naturally looked with curiosity to people of her own condition. This woman almost frightened her. 'She declares there is nothing she can turn to, and laughs at the idea of delicacy—and she is only ten years older than I am!' I did not see the connection till she said, 'Well, Polly, I should hate being a sister of charity; I suppose that would shock some people, but I should.' I thought she would have as much feeling as a nurse as most people, and more than some. She said she did not know how people could bear the constant pressure of misery, and never to change except to a new form of it. It would be impossible to keep one's natural feelings. I promised her a better destiny than to go begging anyone to marry her, or to lose her natural feelings as a sister of charity. She said, 'My youth is leaving me; I can never do better

than I have done, and I have done nothing yet.' At such times she seemed to think that most human beings were destined by the pressure of worldly interests to lose one faculty and feeling after another 'till they went dead altogether. I hope I shall be put in my grave as soon as I'm dead ; I don't want to walk about so.' Here we always differed. I thought the degradation of nature she feared was a consequence of poverty, and that she should give her attention to earning money. Sometimes she admitted this, but could find no means of earning money. At others she seemed afraid of letting her thoughts dwell on the subject, saying it brought on the worst palsy of all. Indeed, in her position, nothing less than entire constant absorption in petty money matters could have scraped together a provision.

"Of course, artists and authors stood high with Charlotte, and the best thing after their works would have been their company. She used very inconsistently to rail at money and money-getting, and then wish she was able to visit all the large towns in Europe, see all the sights, and know all the celebrities. This was her notion of literary fame—a passport to the society of clever people. . . . When she had become acquainted with the people and ways at Brussels her life became monotonous, and she fell into the same hopeless state as at Miss Wooler's, though in a less degree. I wrote to her, urging her to go home or elsewhere ; she had got what she wanted (French), and there was at least novelty in a new place, if no improvement. That if she sank into deeper gloom she would soon not have energy to go, and she was too far from home for her friends to hear of her condition and order her home as they had done from Miss Wooler's. She wrote that I had done her a great service, that she would certainly follow my advice, and was much obliged to me. I have often wondered at this letter. Though she patiently tolerated advice she could always put it aside, and do as she thought fit. More than once afterwards she mentioned the 'service' I had done her. She sent me £10 to New Zealand, on hearing some exaggerated accounts of my circumstances, and told me she hoped it would come in seasonably ; it was a debt she owed me 'for the service I had done

her.' I should think £10 was a quarter of her income. The 'service' was mentioned as an apology, but kindness was the real motive."

Later Charlotte Brontë writes: "I speculate much on the existence of unmarried and never-to-be-married woman nowadays." The Brontë sisters had more independence than to think of marriage as a way out of the difficulty. Anne might, if fate had been kind, have married a curate, as was the case with "Agnes Grey," but Charlotte and Emily were quite reconciled to their idea that they would never marry. Charlotte says: "I have made up my mind since I was a girl of twelve that I should never marry," but fate was too much for her, and in marriage she ventured her all, and died for it.

After the disappointment associated with the failure to establish a school, the three sisters determined to turn to literature, as a means of earning money. Emily and Anne had been writing the mysterious *Gondal Chronicles* for more than three years, and Charlotte had been busy with other work of a literary character. Anne confessed that she had been busy with *Agnes Grey* or, as she guardedly calls it, *Some Passages in the Life of an Individual*. There is no distinct record to tell us what Charlotte was writing at this time, but her poems on Gilbert, Apostacy, Frances, referring to her life at Brussels, must have been written in 1844-1845. Very probably she wrote her first version of *Jane Eyre* under some other title, when alone in Brussels, for in a letter to George Henry Lewes she tells how *Jane Eyre* was objected to at first on the same ground as *The Professor* was refused as being deficient in "startling incident" and "thrilling excitement," and that could not be so with the *Jane Eyre* that was accepted in 1847.

Mr. Brontë was ill and very despondent about his increasing blindness, and yet he arranged for all his daughters to have a short holiday during the Midsummer of 1845. Anne gave up teaching, and left Thorpe Green of her own accord on 17th June, and at the same time Branwell came home for a week's holiday and then returned to Thorpe Green alone. He stayed at the Robinsons for a month after Anne left. It

has been stated that he and Anne left together, which is not correct. No serious trouble appears to have occurred whilst Anne was at Thorpe Green, and she left for no reason whatever connected with Branwell's conduct; she had been teaching continuously for six years, and had saved a large portion of her salary; her health was poor and it was decided that she should stay at home. The fact that Branwell returned to the Robinsons after Anne had left proves that nothing serious could be urged against him at the time. It was rumoured in the district that the new governess, who took Anne's place at Thorpe Green, was the cause of his dismissal; possibly, if Anne had not left, Branwell's conduct might not have furnished grounds for complaint, for his sister had a good influence over him. The only reference Anne makes concerning him at this time is that he has been ill, and has had much tribulation. Although he naturally occupies much space in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, so far as his residence at the Robinsons goes, two and a half years' satisfactory employment has to be set against the one month he remained after Anne left. If he could retain his appointment and evidently give satisfaction for so long a period, he was not the drunken wretch that Mrs. Gaskell and others have tried to prove he was. He may have received more attention from Mrs. Robinson than was due to him as a tutor to her son, but Anne's presence would probably have saved him from a fall. He suffered from an unfortunate want of balance, and a strong emotional temperament, which Charlotte Brontë confesses was like her own, and in any case he was more sinned against than sinning, if Charlotte Brontë was correct. "Of their mother I have hardly patience to speak. A worse woman, I believe, hardly exists; the more I hear of her the more deeply she revolts me," wrote Charlotte of Mrs. Robinson.

Anne had been at Thorpe Green more than four years, and weary years they were, though she struggled on. In her first little memorandum she tells how unhappy she would have been had she known that she would have to stay there for four years. The Robinson girls were genuinely fond of her, and used to visit her at Haworth after she had left their home.

It was in June, 1845, that Charlotte received an invitation to visit Ellen Nussey at Hathersage, which she felt compelled to refuse. However, when Anne returned home, Charlotte could be spared, and she joyfully prepared for the journey into Derbyshire. Whilst she was away, Emily and Anne had a little excursion to York, remaining there only one night, then passing on to Keighley for a second night, and on the third day journeying to Bradford for a few hours and then walking home from Keighley to Haworth. They made this short trip a sort of rehearsal of their play about the Gondals, and Emily thought it worth putting on record in her memorandum, where she says: "During our excursion we were Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Angusteena, Rosabella Esmaldan, Ella and Julian Egremont, Catharine Navarre and Cordelia Fitzaphnold, escaping from the palaces of instruction to join the Royalists, who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans." Emily at this time was a woman of twenty-seven; Anne was two years younger, and she wrote a similar memorandum. These simple documents, which Mr. Nicholls found nearly fifty years after they were written, resemble the childish compositions of schoolgirls. The assumption of the different characters in their plays was in keeping with their vivid imagination. In the midst of their anxiety about their father, and the prospect of being unable to earn their own living, they still retained their lively imagination, which saved them from despair. This power of transporting themselves to other worlds reminds one of Coleridge, who once apologised to a staid citizen in the street, whom he had knocked against, by explaining that for the nonce he had been Leander swimming the Hellespont. He was really preparing himself for the *Ancient Mariner*, and much else the world would not willingly let perish, though the man thought he meant to rob him, as Coleridge's hand was almost in the man's pocket.

Charlotte Brontë committed a grievous wrong when she destroyed the *Gondal Chronicles* and the fairy tales composed by her sisters. They would have helped us to obtain a more accurate view of some members of the Brontë family, and at the present time would have been worth their weight in gold.

In the document by Emily, previously referred to, she quickly steps from the imaginative to the practical, by saying she must "hurry off to her turning and ironing." The "turning" refers to the turning of the mangle, as the clothes after being folded had to be mangled before they were ironed. Emily Brontë, by many considered the greatest woman writer of the nineteenth century, was in the habit of thinking out her poems and plays whilst carrying out her ordinary domestic duties. No wonder she has been called "the sphinx of literature," for, whilst a mystic and a dreamer, she was also a practical and capable housekeeper.

This cult of the imagination was kept up by the Brontës all through their brief life, and not dropped as in most cases when childhood was over. The quiet and solitude of the moors fostered it, and the books they read—French and German as well as English—nourished it. It expressed itself in their works, not so much by the facts which they assimilated, as by the spirit of the stories.

This strong, imaginative power had its dangers for them ; it tended to make them over-sensitive and morbid, and to give way to rhapsodies. It was to a great extent responsible for Branwell's fall, and for Charlotte's trying experience when at Brussels, and yet what a mighty lever this vivid imagination proved. Without it, their great novels would have been impossible. It was this intense imagination which clothed the characters in their novels with such power and force, and made them differ so much from other novels, and it was the means of opening out for these timid and solitary girls a greater life, which helped them to believe in the life beyond.

For more than forty years, Hathersage failed to obtain the honour of being associated with the Brontë literature, for the simple reason that Ellen Nussey would not allow Mrs. Gaskell to give the names of places and persons mentioned in Charlotte Brontë's letters. This was unfortunate in some respects, but Mrs. Gaskell was compelled to humour Ellen Nussey, and be content with initials instead of full names, as she would have preferred. Hathersage is now known to be the "Morton" (*i.e.*, Moor Town) of *Jane Eyre*, and is concerned with those

chapters in the novel which range from XXVII to XXXVI, that is, from Jane Eyre's leaving Rochester at Thornfield to their meeting again at Ferndean Manor. Readers of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* were curious to know the place indicated by the letter H, and it was not until about 1888 that a Mr. Hall suggested, in the *Sheffield Independent*, that H—— might refer to Hathersage. Shortly afterwards the *Palatine Note Book* copied the reference.

There were several points which helped to fix Hathersage as the Morton of *Jane Eyre*: the needle factory, and the actual dwelling known as Moorseats, which Charlotte Brontë mentions in *Jane Eyre*: her description of the village and surrounding country fitted very closely with Hathersage and the neighbourhood, as anyone would recognise who has visited that charming part of Derbyshire, which includes Castleton and the village of Hope.

The Moor House of *Jane Eyre* was suggested by Moorseats, a house near Hathersage Vicarage, which Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey probably visited. The pebbly bridle path still remains. There is also a reference in *Jane Eyre* to a ball in the neighbouring town of S—— at which the officers of the garrison "put all their young knife-grinders and scissors-merchants to shame." The allusion points so plainly to Sheffield that the name might well have been given in full.

Just as Mrs. Gaskell's description of Monkshaven in *Sylvia's Lovers* led Mr. Keene, the artist, to conclude that his Whitby scenes would be suitable as guides to Du Maurier, who was preparing illustrations to the novel—although Mr. Keene did not know at the time that Monkshaven and Whitby were the same—so Charlotte Brontë's description of "Morton village" led Mr. Hall to conclude that the Morton of the story must be the village of Hathersage, although he had no definite proof that she had ever been there.

It was not until Mr. Shorter published *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, in 1896, that it was found that the statement in the *Sheffield Independent* was correct, for, in Mr. Shorter's volume, the names and places mentioned in Charlotte Brontë's letters were printed in full for the first time.



Charlotte Brontë received an invitation to Hathersage in June, 1845, from Ellen Nussey, but it was not until after Anne Brontë returned home from Thorpe Green that she felt free to accept the invitation, which at first she had been compelled to decline, owing to the expense of the journey, and the fact that her father needed her, for about this time Charlotte says in her letter to M. Heger : " My father allows me now to read to him, and write for him ; he shows me, too, more confidence than he has ever shown before, and this is a great consolation." Jane Eyre, it will be remembered, was short of money after she left Thornfield, just as Charlotte Brontë appears to have been at this time, for, on her decision to leave Brussels, she had to borrow money from Emily. Mrs. Gaskell quotes the letter from Ellen Nussey to Charlotte Brontë as referring to Birstall and not to Hathersage, and she remarks that Charlotte Brontë refused an invitation to the only house to which she was ever invited, so that it seems evident that Mrs. Gaskell did not know that it was to Hathersage that Charlotte Brontë went at this time. Ellen Nussey blocked out the names of places and persons, which detracts from the interest of the letters.

Ellen Nussey was at Hathersage to prepare a home for her brother, Henry Nussey, who had been appointed Vicar of Hathersage, and had married immediately after his appointment. His sister stayed at the Vicarage whilst he was on his honeymoon ; she even had to select some of the furniture, and engage the servants, and have everything in readiness for the return of the bride and bridegroom. So anxious was she to persuade Charlotte Brontë to be with her at this time that she got her brother to write to Charlotte whilst he was on his honeymoon, " for which you deserve smothering," wrote Charlotte to Ellen Nussey in reply.

When Charlotte Brontë had obtained permission from her father, she prepared for the short holiday, informing Ellen Nussey that during her stay she wished to visit Chatsworth and The Peak. There is no evidence that her wish in this respect was realised, for, if she had visited the Hall at Chatsworth and The Peak, she would probably have found some place for them in her story. Travelling from Keighley,

she left the train at Sheffield and continued her journey to Hathersage by coach—a distance of about ten miles.

In *Jane Eyre* Whitcross is mentioned with its white posts.

When Jane Eyre heard Rochester's voice calling, she tells us she left Moor House at three o'clock and reached Whitcross soon after four o'clock. A native of that part of Derbyshire writes: "Whitcross, therefore, must be the cross roads by the Fox House, up above Longshawe and Grindleford Bridge."

It was at the end of June or the beginning of July that Charlotte Brontë went to Hathersage, and the visit was fixed well in her mind, for two years later she published Jane Eyre's description of her doings in the village of Morton, which may well be true to fact, for at that time she was quite undecided as to her destiny; she wanted to visit Paris, and to revisit Brussels, and yet something kept her back, and chained her to the old house, from which in two years she was to startle the literary world with her great novel.

The church and parsonage are on the steep hill, which must be climbed from the village.

In comparing the account of Jane Eyre's visit to Morton, so accurate is the descriptive part, that Charlotte Brontë would seem to have taken notes on the spot. The actual road by which she went can be traced, as the place has changed very little.

In the field referred to in the novel there is a brook with some stepping-stones, which Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey must have used. One of these stones is dated, and it is curious that Charlotte Brontë did not mention it. The way by the stepping-stones is the nearest by which to reach Moorseats, the original of Moor House. There is also a mound or ancient Roman Camp near the entrance to the church from the field path. To get to Moorseats by the field a small wood must be traversed.

The steps at Moorseats, leading to the kitchen door, are well worn, and green with mould; it was on these steps that Jane Eyre fainted and was found by St. John Rivers. A low window allows a view of the interior. The kitchen is larger than the

corresponding room at the Haworth parsonage, and the same may be said of the other rooms of the house. Behind is a thickly-wooded copse.

It is unfortunate that Charlotte Brontë's letters to her sisters at home have not been preserved, as it is probable that they supplied descriptive accounts of the places which she visited.

Although there is plenty of moorland around Hathersage, the scenery is quite different from that in the neighbourhood of Haworth. This part of Derbyshire is more thickly wooded than the Haworth moors, which are almost devoid of trees, and the white limestone roads are a marked contrast to the roads of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Hathersage is a typical Derbyshire village, with its clean stone houses dotted here and there, a few shops, the village inn and post office, and the church on the hillside, with its tall spire. Needles, metal buttons and shackle pins are no longer manufactured at Hathersage as in Charlotte Brontë's days. It is still a small village, built on the steep slope of a hill and surrounded by mountainous tracts, whose barren summits and dark declivities agreeably contrast with the verdure of the smiling vale they envelop. Great masses of rock, of all shapes and sizes, lie scattered about the moorland, some grey with clinging moss and lichen, others furrowed and weather-beaten. The view of Hathersage from the main road is very fine, standing out on the hill slope with the church above the green knoll in front, and the vicarage sheltered by the trees. Moor-seats is on the opposite hill, and further up the valley is the house called North Lees, the ancestral home of the Eyres, which has been thought to be the original of Moor House, but it is too large, and neither in appearance nor interior arrangement does it accord with Charlotte Brontë's description. The people at the parsonage were on visiting terms with the family at Moorseats, according to Ellen Nussey's account, and Charlotte Brontë got her impressions of the place from visiting with Ellen Nussey.

Charlotte Brontë visited Hathersage only once, though in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle* she is said to have been at

Hathersage on two occasions, but the H in another of Charlotte Brontë's letters refers to Hunsworth and not to Hathersage. Her one visit, however, to Hathersage was sufficient to give it a place in her great novel. She gives us just her own impressions; there is no indication that she read any history of the place, but in the three weeks' visit she made good use of her opportunities, and with her love of landscape she revelled in the scenery.

The calling at Moor House, on her way from Thornfield, is quite in keeping with her flight from Brussels, for the family at Moor House compares favourably with the people at the Haworth parsonage. Hannah, the North Country servant, is undoubtedly "Old Tabby," who speaks broad Yorkshire with the Haworth dialect. There is nothing in her speech to remind us of the softer tones of Derbyshire. Diana and Mary, who are found reading German books in the kitchen, are easily identified as Emily and Anne Brontë, and it is St. John Rivers, who has been on his pastoral visits when he finds Jane Eyre on the steps of his house. St. John as a character owes something to Patrick Brontë, Henry Nussey and Mr. Weightman.

The church is situated at the upper end of the village. Like the church at Haworth and Ste. Gudule's, in Brussels, it is dedicated to St. Michael. There is also a high, octagonal spire. The church has been renovated since Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey worshipped in it, and several stained-glass windows have been added by some of the old Hathersage residents.

The Rev. Henry Nussey does not seem to have kept the fabric of the church in very good condition, for his successor spent nearly £2,000 in renovating it, so that when Charlotte Brontë was there it must have been in a somewhat dilapidated condition.

The most conspicuous monument in the church is the tomb of Robert Eyre. On the top of the tomb is a full-length brass plate in which is depicted the figure of a knight in armour, and by his side is his wife clothed in the costume of the reign of Edward IV.

There are several other monuments in the Hathersage church to the memory of the Eyre family, but there is little known of this once powerful family in the Peak District in Derbyshire.

Joanna Eyre, of the Eyre monument, in the Hathersage church, has for long been credited with being the origin of the title of Charlotte Brontë's great novel, *Jane Eyre*. Whether this is so or no is uncertain, but there is no doubt that Charlotte Brontë would be greatly attracted by the Eyre tomb, with its long brass plate, effigies and inscription, but Hathersage only occupies nine chapters of the novel, and Jane, the heroine, dominates the whole book.

It is probable that the name "Jane" in *Jane Eyre* was suggested by the Christian name of her favourite sister, Emily Jane Brontë—"Mine bonnie love," as Charlotte calls her. The name "Jane" was also a commonplace name, which Charlotte thought would be most suitable for the character of her heroine, who was to be plain, and by no means beautiful. Harriet Martineau tells us that Charlotte Brontë once remarked to her sisters that they were wrong—even morally wrong—in making their heroines beautiful as a matter of course. They replied that it was impossible to make a heroine interesting on any other terms, to which she said: "I will prove to you that you are wrong: I will show you a heroine as plain and small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours." "Hence: *Jane Eyre*," said Harriet Martineau, in relating the incident.

In *The Professor*, which was written before *Jane Eyre*, the long poem which Frances repeated in Chapter XXIII has "Jane" for the heroine, and it is quite evident in reading the poem that Charlotte Brontë was the original of "Jane," just as she is in *Jane Eyre*.

Most writers contend that the title of the novel originated in Charlotte Brontë's visit to Hathersage. Here she saw the old tombstone, with its inscription, *Joanna Eyre*, and forthwith she gave her novel, which was written two years afterwards, the title of *Jane Eyre*. This is the generally accepted explanation. But the word *Eyre* is a legal term, dating from the

time of Henry II, and simply means "itinerant." Judges on circuit are still described as "His Majesty's Justices in Eyre." Whether Charlotte Brontë knew this is not certain.

The novel is largely autobiographical, as is now well known, and is based on facts in Charlotte Brontë's life, from going to school at Cowan Bridge, Lowood, to her return from Hathersage (Morton) to Wycoller Hall near Haworth (Ferndean Manor) in 1848. Shortly after she returned from Hathersage, her father became blind, but after an operation his sight was restored. The novelist was with her father during the operation for cataract at Manchester, and during the period when he began to distinguish colours and recover his eyesight, which she utilised in her description of Rochester's recovery of his sight. This may also have been suggested by the fact that M. Heger, who contributed something to the character of Rochester, suffered in early manhood from defective eyesight, but he regained his normal sight in later days. This fact explains why Charlotte tells M. Heger of her weak eyesight in her letters to him. In her correspondence with M. Heger there is an evident craving for sympathy.

*Jane Eyre* is an account of the itinerary or wandering of the plain little heroine, who is none other than Charlotte Brontë herself, and, therefore, it is possible that Joanna Eyre may not be responsible for the title of Charlotte Brontë's novel.

The Hathersage parsonage, where Charlotte Brontë stayed, has been enlarged since 1845. Its situation is just as the novelist described it: "Near the churchyard, and in the middle of a garden stood a well-built though small house, which I had no doubt was the parsonage." In many respects it resembles the Haworth parsonage, though the garden is longer, and the churchyard is not so near the house. It is approached by a narrow lane, as is the case with the Haworth vicarage, so that Charlotte Brontë would not feel that she was in totally different surroundings. In her time, there were four rather small rooms on the ground floor, and four on the first floor, and a narrow passage ran through the house from front to rear.

In the churchyard, visitors are shown the burial place of



*Photo by*

HATHERSAGE VICARAGE

*Miss Cutler*





John Nailor, Robin Hood's giant henchman, better known as "Little John."

In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë mentions Robin Hood's grave, which she saw when a pupil at Roe Head, near Huddersfield, and she would be interested that his faithful henchman was reputed to be buried at Hathersage.

The novelist probably wandered to the surrounding villages during her stay at Hathersage. The beautiful district, which includes the Vale of Hope, Castleton, Hassop, Tissington, and Ashbourne, is now much more frequented than it was in Charlotte Brontë's days, partly owing to the opening of the Dore and Chinley railway, whereas formerly it was reached from one direction by driving or walking from Sheffield.

Charlotte Brontë left Hathersage on 23rd July, 1845. On her journey home from Sheffield to Leeds, she travelled with a gentleman, whose features and bearing betrayed him to be a Frenchman. Putting aside her natural shyness, she inquired in French if he were not a Frenchman, and on his replying in the affirmative, she further asked if he had not spent some time in Germany, as she detected the thick, guttural pronunciation. She evidently enjoyed the journey, pleasantly beguiled by conversation in the language in which she had become proficient. It is now known by the light of her recently published letters in *The Times*, sent to M. Heger in 1844-45, that the real reason for her conversation with the Frenchman was that he reminded her of M. Heger: "Every word was most precious to me, because it reminded me of you. I love French for your sake with all my heart and soul," she writes.

It was on the return from this visit to Derbyshire in July, 1845, that she found Branwell at home, after his dismissal from Thorpe Green; when she ascertained the true reason, she was extremely angry with her brother. Possibly she would not have said so much against him to Ellen Nussey, but that she had to give a reason for not inviting her friend to Haworth during the autumn, as she had wished.

It was in the November after Charlotte returned from Hathersage that she sent what appears to be her last letter to M. Heger, which is dated November, 1845.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PUBLISHING VENTURE, 1845-1846

#### POEMS

SIMILARITY of Emily and Anne Brontë's literary taste—Emily Brontë the moving spirit in literary work—Charlotte Brontë's introduction to *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*—Emily Brontë's surpassing genius—Collection of the Brontë poems for publication—Assumed names of authors—Attempts to find a publisher—Cost of publication—Publishing venture a financial failure—Reviews of the volume of poems—*Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*.

ALTHOUGH Charlotte Brontë has always been credited with taking the initiative in the three sisters becoming authors, it is much more probable that Emily was the moving spirit. Whilst Anne was away from home, Emily had great sympathy with her, and spoke of her as "exiled and harassed," and this was even before Anne's hard four years at Thorpe Green. When she returned in June, 1845, no reason was given why she should stay at home permanently, but it was evidently Emily who determined to try to direct their talents into other channels than teaching, in order to avoid their separation from the old home.

Emily and Anne, though differing in ability, were very similar in their tastes and habits : both were devoted to animals, and each had her own pets. Their poetry was by no means similar, and yet they both directed their thoughts into the same channels—the *Gondal Chronicles*, their respective poems on "The Old Home," and their "Last Lines." Emily was evidently a source of great strength to Anne, for when Mr. Clement Shorter published the *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë* he included with them four of Anne's, which it is suggested were in Emily's handwriting, though it was ascertained that they had been published sixty years before by Charlotte Brontë herself as Anne's work.

For years these two devoted sisters had been sharing each other's confidence with regard to their literary work, and it was probably Emily who saw a means of earning money by their pens, before Charlotte mentioned it. The two little

memoranda, written at intervals of four years, 1841 and 1845, were to be opened on Emily's birthday. It was Emily who started the mysterious *Gondal Chronicles*, in which she and Anne collaborated. It seems likely that one sister took the side of the Royalists, whilst the other favoured the Republicans. It is a pity that Charlotte, carrying out what she said were her sister's wishes, destroyed those strange chronicles. Charlotte had stated, years before, that their best plays were written secretly, and it was not until forty years afterwards, when Mr. Nicholls was looking over the Brontë relics, subsequent to Mr. Shorter's visit in 1895, that four little journals were brought to light, being discovered folded up in the smallest possible space in a tiny pin box. These four short memoranda were much more important than the discoverers recognised, and, although Mr. Nicholls referred to them as "sad reading," they were extremely interesting, for they contain the only information available concerning the *Gondal Chronicles*, which have been a mystery for so many years, and which Emily tells us had engaged the attention of the two sisters for three and a half years.

Mr. Shorter, in his *Life and Letters of the Brontës*, says, "There is wonderfully little difference in the tone or spirit of the journals." It is scarcely possible, however, to agree with this view, as there appears to be a marked difference even in the view which the Brontë sisters take of the Gondals.

In her 1845 memorandum, Anne says, "Emily is writing the Emperor Julius' Life, and also some poetry," but she did not know what the subject was, and then she goes on to say :

"I have begun the third volume of *Passages in the Life of an Individual*. Emily and I have a lot of work to do. When shall we sensibly diminish it? I want to get a habit of early rising. Shall I succeed? We have not yet finished our *Gondal Chronicles* that we begun three and a half years ago. When will they be done? The Gondals are at present in a sad state. The Republicans are uppermost, but the Royalists are not quite overcome. The young sovereigns with their brothers and sisters are still at the Palace of Instruction. The Unique Society about half a year ago were wrecked on a

desert island, as they were returning from Gaul. They are still there, but we have not played at them much yet. The Gondals in general are not in a first-rate playing condition. Will they improve?"<sup>1</sup>

This habit of making a statement and then questioning it is Anne's peculiar style. Emily tells us that she is writing a work on the First War, and that Anne is writing some articles on this and a book by Henry Sophona.

"The Gondals still flourish bright as ever. We intend sticking firm by the rascals as long as they delight us, which I am glad to say that they do at present." The sisters evidently regard the Gondals in different lights. Whilst to Emily they remain bright as ever, to Anne they are considered to be in a sad state. Again, Emily mentions that she wishes "Everybody should be as comfortable and undesponding as herself, and then we should have a very tolerable world of it." Whilst poor Anne says, "I, for my part, cannot well be flatter or older in mind than I am now." Anne mentions that Charlotte wishes to go to Paris as governess. Emily's view of the whole situation is the more hopeful, for she says: "I am quite content for myself . . . having learnt to make the most of the present, and long for the future with the fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish."<sup>1</sup>

It was Emily who dreamed dreams, and saw visions of herself and Anne coming before the world as authors, though it is very certain they meant to stick to their anonymity. She concludes her little document as follows: "I have plenty of work on hands, and writing, and am altogether full of business." This was written on 30th July, just after Charlotte Brontë returned from Hathersage, and before she had discovered that Emily and Anne had written a number of poems which she considered were worthy of being published.

Both Emily and Anne mention that Branwell was ill, and had gone to Liverpool. There is a little reference to Tabby in Emily's journal, which has puzzled many. "Tabby has just been teasing me to turn as formerly to 'Pilloputate.'" This, according to the Yorkshire verdict, refers to the peeling

<sup>1</sup> *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, by Clement K. Shorter.

of the potatoes. Yorkshire people speak of "pilling potates," and they refer to potato peelings as "potati pillings." Emily had evidently taken upon herself to peel the potatoes for the household when Charlotte and Anne were away, but on their return, she relinquished some of her domestic duties, including the preparation of the potatoes. In later days, Charlotte Brontë told Mrs. Gaskell that she found that Tabby did not take the eyes out of the potatoes when she peeled them, and therefore Charlotte was accustomed to go to the kitchen and finish the peeling of the potatoes without letting Tabby know. Emily was not only the genius of the family, but she was also thoroughly domesticated.

If Charlotte had gone to Paris as she had wished, her two sisters would have worked on at home at their writing, for Emily states that they had enough money for their present needs, with the prospect of accumulation. Earlier in the document she says that they tried to start a school and had failed, but that at this time "None of them had any great longing for it."

The only private money that they had was the small dividends obtained from the legacy left by their aunt, and "the prospect of accumulated funds" could only have referred to money earned by writing. Anne had decided to stay at home permanently, and she and Emily both leave it on record that they had more than enough to do, and were very busy writing.

Five years later, probably owing to the confusion of the names of the three Brontë sisters as three separate authors, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. asked Charlotte to explain exactly how they started their literary work. Emily and Anne had been dead two years when Charlotte wrote by way of preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*—

"One day in the autumn of 1845, I accidentally lighted on a MS. volume of verse in my sister Emily's handwriting. Of course, I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse : I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me—a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write.

I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear they had also a peculiar music, wild, melancholy, and elevating. My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one, on the recesses of whose mind and feelings, even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed ; it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. . . . Meantime, my younger sister quietly produced some of her own compositions, intimating that since Emily's had given me pleasure, I might like to look at hers. I could not but be a partial judge, yet I thought that these verses too had a sweet sincere pathos of their own. We had very early cherished the dream of one day becoming authors. . . . We agreed to arrange a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, to get them printed."

This explanation proves that Emily did not mean Charlotte to know of the MS. volume of verse, and it hints at the fact that Emily and Anne were working with the intention of publishing. Possibly if Charlotte had gone to Paris, as they seem to have expected, they hoped to have a surprise in store for her by presenting her with a published book of their poems. The result, however, was that Charlotte, as the oldest, took charge of all correspondence relating to publishing. It is probable that Emily might have been more successful, but as Charlotte says in the preface previously mentioned : "She (Emily) had no worldly wisdom ; her powers were unadapted to the practical business of life ; she would fail to defend her most manifest rights, to consult her most legitimate advantage" ; and yet M. Heger considered her much cleverer than Charlotte.

Mrs. Gaskell tells us—

"He seems to have rated Emily's genius as something even higher than Charlotte's" ; and her estimation of their relative powers was the same. Emily had a head for logic, and a capability of argument, unusual in a man, and rare indeed in a woman, according to M. Heger. Impairing the force of this gift was her stubborn tenacity of will, which rendered her

obtuse to all reasoning where her own wishes, or her own sense of right, was concerned. "She should have been a man—a great navigator," said M. Heger in speaking of her. "Her powerful reason would have deduced new spheres of discovery from the knowledge of the old; and her strong, imperious will would never have been daunted by opposition or difficulty; never have given way but with life. And yet, moreover, her faculty of imagination was such that, if she had written a history, her view of scenes and characters would have been so vivid, and so powerfully expressed, and supported by such a show of argument, that it would have dominated over the reader, whatever might have been his previous opinions, or his cooler perceptions of its truth." Dr. Paul Heger, the son of M. Heger, tells me that his father could not read English sufficiently well to understand *Wuthering Heights*, and as it was not translated into French until 1892, under the title of *L'Amant*, he could hardly have digested it in 1855, but it is certainly remarkable that in the few months Emily was at Brussels he should have grasped her character so accurately.

Also old Mr. Brontë told Mrs. Gaskell that he considered Emily the cleverest of the sisters, and in this the sexton's family agreed. Critics have failed to give Emily her due, but now, nearly seventy years later, the whole literary world is prepared to put Emily before Charlotte, both as a poet and as a novelist. The old servants at the parsonage, as well as several who knew the Brontës, had nothing but good to say of Emily Brontë, and Emily Jane was the name given to more than one child in Haworth in honour of the author of *Wuthering Heights*.

Seniority in age counted for much in the early Victorian days; Charlotte had more enthusiasm than Emily, was more impulsive, and when she was roused she was anxious to act at once. Evidently against the will of Emily, she persuaded her to join with Anne and herself in compiling a book of their own poems. The information gained from the minute journals, only discovered half-a-century later, shows how determined Emily and Anne were that Charlotte should not know what

they were doing. If in later days Charlotte had found these precious little documents, the probability is she would have destroyed them with the other manuscripts, for which it is hard to forgive her.

Charlotte tells us that the issuing of their little book of poems was a difficult task, which seems to imply that they had some trouble in deciding what to include and what to reject, in addition to the difficulty of finding a publisher.

Charlotte undertook the post of editor, and she arranged twenty-three poems of her own, twenty-two of Emily's and twenty-one of Anne's. How significant these numbers are when the respective ages of the sisters are considered! Then came the question of assigning the author's name, and so to facilitate matters they decided to adopt names that were neither decidedly masculine nor feminine. In Yorkshire it is still a common custom to use a surname for the first name, and the Brontë sisters, in order to be impartial, retained their own initials. Charlotte adopted the name "Currer," Emily became "Ellis" and Anne was "Acton"—all taking the surname of "Bell." It has not been difficult to trace the origin of Charlotte's assumed name, for not far from Haworth lived Miss Frances Mary Richardson Currer, of Eshton Hall, near Skipton, who finds a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The three groups of poems are all very different in spirit, and they range over a number of years from their early youth to the time of publication. In the opinion of the Brontë sisters, it was the correct thing to publish poetry first, for had not Charlotte already written to Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, and had not the sisters also read most of the English poets?

After many failures, a firm of booksellers in Paternoster Row, Messrs. Aylott and Jones, agreed to publish the book for thirty guineas, which the sisters, poor as they were, consented to advance. When the book was printed, they had to pay another £2, and later still another £10, to defray the cost of advertising the book in magazines which they selected. Added to this was a further expense of £5, due to an error in the



estimate. From this was deducted 11s. 9d., so that altogether they advanced nearly £48. This was a large sum of money for the Brontë sisters to find, but they sacrificed it hopefully. They had the satisfaction of seeing the poems actually printed, and their pseudonyms on the title page.

The result is an old story ; only two copies were sold, but one of the purchasers, a Mr. F. Enoch—a song-writer—was so struck by the genius which the poems displayed that he wrote through the publishers asking for the signatures of the three poets. This request was graciously granted, but the real names were not disclosed. The original slip of paper is now in the Brontë Museum at Haworth.

In the biographical notice of her sisters, Charlotte writes—

“The book was printed ; it is scarcely known, and all of it that merits to be known are the poems of Ellis Bell. The fixed conviction I held, and hold, of the worth of these poems, has not, indeed, received the confirmation of much favourable criticism, but I must retain it notwithstanding.” Charlotte knew good poetry when she saw it, and she was right in giving the highest praise to Emily, as everyone recognises now.

Charlotte, ever the ambitious member of the family, sent copies of the book of poems to Wordsworth, De Quincey, Tennyson and Lockhart, and, if the letters of acknowledgment are not forthcoming, the account of this gift finds a place in each of the biographies of the recipients—

“TO THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

“SIR,—My relatives, Ellis and Acton Bell, and myself, heedless of the warning of various respectable publishers, have committed the rash act of printing a volume of poems.

“The consequences predicted have, of course, overtaken us : our book is found to be a drug ; no man needs it or heeds it. In the space of a year our publisher has disposed but of two copies, and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of these two, himself only knows.

“Before transferring the edition to the trunkmakers, we have decided on distributing as presents a few copies of what

we cannot sell ; and we beg to offer you one in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.

“ I am, sir, yours very respectfully,

“ CURRER BELL. ”<sup>1</sup>

The three sisters were naturally eager to see the reviews of their book. They had asked their publishers to forward copies of the principal literary magazines of the day, including *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*, *Bentley's*, *Hood's*, *Jerrold's*, *Blackwood's*, and *Fraser's Magazine*, as well as the *Edinburgh Review*, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, *The Dublin University Magazine*, *The Daily News*, *The Globe*, *The Examiner*, and the *Britannia* newspaper. The only magazines that reviewed the poems apparently were *The Dublin University Magazine*, *The Critic*, and *The Athenaeum*. The review in *The Critic* pleased Charlotte very much. The following extract will explain the reason : “ They, in whose hearts are chords strung by nature to sympathise with the beautiful and the true, will recognise in these compositions the presence of more genius than it was supposed this utilitarian age had devoted to the loftier exercises of the intellect.” *The Athenaeum* reviewer singled out Ellis Bell's poems as the best : “ Ellis possesses a fine, quaint spirit and an evident power of wing that may reach heights not here attempted ” ; and again : “ The poems of Ellis convey an impression of originality beyond what his contributions to these volumes embody.”

The book of poems had been published about the end of May, 1846. Having found a publisher in the previous February, the three sisters were encouraged, and each set to work to write a novel. To feel that they were now embarked on the sea of literature inspired and sustained them.

Mrs. Gaskell pictures them as having forgotten their sense of authorship owing to their anxiety concerning their brother Branwell, which is scarcely correct, as they worked incessantly at literature, feeling that it afforded them some relief from their

<sup>1</sup> *De Quincey Memorials*, by Alexander H. Japp.

domestic troubles. Charlotte refused all invitations to Ellen Nussey at Brookroyd, Birstall, and from the end of July, 1845, when she left Ellen Nussey in Hathersage to the end of January, 1846, the two friends did not meet. This was not altogether Branwell's fault, though, without positively saying so, Charlotte gave Ellen Nussey the impression that he was the obstacle. Referring to this busy time, truthful Anne Brontë wrote : " We have done nothing *to speak of*, though we have combined to be busy."

The three sisters kept the secret of their literary efforts even from their father, and worked conscientiously from August until the following February. Although this book of poems proved such a dismal financial failure, not being wanted, as Charlotte tells us, it is now of great value. One of the original first editions, with the Aylott and Jones imprint, was priced at £34 in a recently issued catalogue.

Charlotte Brontë proved to be right ; Emily Brontë's poems rank highest. The poems by Emily Brontë, which Charlotte selected, have been issued in a separate volume in 1906 and 1908. A complete set of all Emily Brontë's poems which could be gathered together were edited in 1910 by Mr. Clement Shorter and Sir William Robertson Nicoll.

The hymns sung in Guiseley Church on Sunday, 29th December, 1912, in memory of the marriage at that church of Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell on 29th December, 1812, contained three by Anne Brontë, and one (not exactly a hymn) consisting of five verses from the poem, " Winter Stories," by Charlotte Brontë. Unfortunately, two of the hymns by Anne Brontë were wrongly attributed to Emily—

" A Prayer," beginning—

" My God ! O, let me call Thee mine !  
Weak, wretched sinner though I be." .

And " Confidence "—

" Oppressed with sin and woe,  
A burdened heart I bear."

The mistake probably arose owing to an error in the *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, published by Messrs. Hodder

and Stoughton in 1910. Here are to be found the two hymns by Anne Brontë, under the head of "Unpublished Poems," by Emily Brontë. Two other poems in the same collection are also inaccurately attributed to Emily Brontë—"Despondency" and "In Memory of the Happy Day in February." All these poems had been published as far back as 1850 by Charlotte Brontë in her selection of poems by her sister Anne, and they may be found in the Haworth Edition of *The Professor*, issued by Smith, Elder & Co., as well as in previous editions of *The Professor*, published by the same firm.

Charlotte and Anne Brontë's poems have not been re-issued separately in England, though Anne has several included in well-known hymn books, and in 1882 Charlotte's were published in New York by Messrs. White and Stokes. Only Emily's poems are destined to live, as Charlotte predicted, the complete edition recently issued being highly valued by all Emily Brontë's devotees.

Anne Brontë's ability has not so far been fully recognised. Whilst Charlotte quickly made her mark, and Emily has now attained the place which was rightly hers sixty-six years ago, Anne has been neglected. She certainly is inferior to her more gifted sisters, and has suffered by comparison. The inclusion of some of her poems in several collections of hymns, and the selection of three of her hymns for the commemoration service of her parents' wedding at Guiseley Church, would have cheered this pious member of the Brontë family.

Answering a correspondent who wished to know the meaning of I Cor. xv, 22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," the Rev. Professor Smith, D.D., of the Theological College, Londonderry, in *The British Weekly* for 14th Nov., 1912, says: "You should read Anne Brontë's little poem, 'A Word to the "Elect,"' and her 'Wildfell Hall,' Chapter XX."

Two verses read—

"And, oh! there lives within my heart  
A hope, long nursed by me;  
And should its cheering ray depart,  
How dark my soul would be!

“That as in Adam all have died,  
In Christ shall all men live ;  
And ever round His throne abide,  
Eternal praise to give.”

There is little that is didactic about Emily's poems, but there is power and force like a gale of wind ; there is an aloneness, which is not loneliness but liberty—

“Leave the heart that now I bear,  
And give me liberty.”

It was in the October of 1845, whilst the poems were being revised and selected, that Emily Brontë wrote *The Philosopher*, one of her best-known poems. It has the same refrain which Emily re-echoes over and over again—a wish for death. In *The Philosopher*, she writes—

“Oh, let me die, that power and will  
Their cruel strife may close ;  
And conquering good and conquering ill  
Be lost in one repose !”

Much has been written to prove that Emily was not more partial to her brother in his disgrace and weakness than the other sisters, but the stanzas written by her after his death prove only too well what Emily felt—

STANZAS TO ——— (Branwell).

“Well, some may hate, and some may scorn,  
And some may quite forget thy name ;  
But my sad heart must ever mourn  
Thy ruined hopes, thy blighted fame !  
'Twas thus I thought, an hour ago,  
Even weeping o'er that wretch's woe ;  
One word turned back my gushing tears,  
And lit my altered eye with sneers.  
Then, ' Bless the friendly dust,' I said,  
' That hides thy unlamented head !  
Vain as thou wert, and weak as vain,  
The slave of Falsehood, Pride, and Pain—  
My heart has nought akin to thine ;  
Thy soul is powerless over mine.'  
But these were thoughts that vanished too ;  
Unwise, unholy, and untrue :  
Do I despise the timid deer,  
Because his limbs are fleet with fear ?

Or, would I mock the wolf's death-howl,  
 Because his form is gaunt and foul?  
 Or, hear with joy the leveret's cry,  
 Because it cannot bravely die?  
 No! Then above his memory  
 Let Pity's heart as tender be;  
 Say, 'Earth, lie lightly on that breast,  
 And, kind Heaven, grant that spirit rest!'"

The *Gondal Chronicles* will probably never be satisfactorily traced, but from Emily Brontë's complete poems it is possible to select some which will tell of the mysterious Gondals; and, if further proof is needed that *Wuthering Heights* was Emily's work, it can be found foreshadowed in several of her recently published poems.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FIRST BRONTË NOVELS

1845-1847

SECRECY observed in writing the novels—The village postman nearly discovers the secret—*Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey* and *The Professor*—Publishers' repeated refusal of *The Professor*—Why *The Professor* was refused—*Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* accepted—Origin of many of Charlotte Brontë's characters in her novels—Contrast between *The Professor* and *Jane Eyre*.

NOT a word was written to anyone concerning the work which kept the three sisters busy during the winter of 1845-46. The old father, now almost blind, was in the habit of retiring at an early hour each evening; the servants, too, old and faithful Tabby, and Martha Brown—the sexton's daughter—were accustomed to go to bed soon after nine o'clock. After that hour the sisters were alone, and it was then that they paced the little sitting-room, and compared notes, deciding what they might attempt to publish and what they should reject.

Whilst they were going about their domestic duties, their novels were simmering, and they kept odd bits of paper on which to chronicle their thoughts. Emily's favourite spot for writing was in the little front garden, sitting on a small stool in the shade of the currant bushes, or out on the moors, far away from any habitation, and in company with the birds and the few sheep that wandered about the moor. Both her poems and her one great novel are redolent of the breezy heights.

Both the father and the servants had a shrewd suspicion, as they admitted in after years, that something was brewing. The difficulty must have been to keep Branwell out of the little sitting-room, and, although Charlotte tells us that he never knew what his sisters had published, he *did* know that they were writing with a view to publication, if they could get their work accepted. She admits that, when she failed to get

a reply from the publishers concerning her manuscript, she consulted Branwell, who told her that it was because she had not prepaid the return postage. Moreover, the landlord of the Black Bull, who was a man to be trusted, said that Branwell was eager to gather any local traditions in order to pass them on to Charlotte for her book, so that he must have been in the secret. It is difficult to realise how the sisters managed to keep the information from him, when their efforts had met with success. Not only were they in league against admitting him to a knowledge of their success, but even the servants helped. It was old Tabby's special duty to secure the letters addressed to Currer Bell, Esq., care of the Rev. P. Brontë. At a later date, on account of a mistake which almost revealed the secret, the envelopes bore the inscription, Miss Brontë, by Charlotte's request to the publishers. The village postman, who lived close by the church steps and within a stone's throw of the vicarage, was greatly troubled to know who Currer Bell, Esq., was, for the natives of Haworth were extremely inquisitive, which partly accounts for the fact that the Brontë sisters were not altogether popular, since "they kept themselves too much to themselves," as one who knew them said. There was too much mystery associated with the parsonage, which led to exaggerated stories concerning the family. Some of these stories misled Mrs. Gaskell and prejudiced her against the father and the son.

Old James Feather, the grandfather of the present postmaster, and the carrier of the precious manuscripts which were tied up in thick, coarse paper, was determined to find out who Currer Bell was, and, accosting Mr. Brontë one day, he said: "You have a gentleman staying at the parsonage, called Mr. Currer Bell." "You are mistaken," said the Vicar, "there is nobody in the whole of my parish of that name." The postman kept his counsel and continued to deliver the letters addressed to Currer Bell, Esq. Probably the postman's inquisitiveness led Charlotte afterwards to have her letters addressed to her in her own name.

The poems had been despatched in manuscript, and the hopes of the sisters were high, for now they felt they were on



the right road to success. They fixed the price of the little book of poems at five shillings, and then altered it to four shillings. Charlotte tells how each sister decided to write a novel after they had compiled their poems.

The plan of the book of poems had been to publish three sets of poems in one book, and, although it was quite unusual, the three sisters decided to compile a book of fiction consisting of three distinct stories. They, however, wrote to Messrs. Aylott and Jones stating that the stories could either be published together in one volume, or separately. The possibility of the three books in one volume not being accepted together did not at first strike them, seeing that the poems had not been separated. Both Charlotte and Emily Brontë adopted a castaway as their hero or heroine.

Mary Taylor, in a letter to Mrs. Gaskell, says—

“Cowper’s poem, *The Castaway*, was known to them all, and they all at times appreciated, or almost appropriated it. Charlotte told me once that Branwell had done so; and though his depression was the result of his faults, it was in no other respect different from hers.”

Mrs. Gaskell’s biography of Charlotte Brontë gives the impression of a very depressed, despondent group of women in Haworth parsonage in the year 1846, but with all their domestic trials, Branwell’s dissipation, and the old father’s growing blindness, they kept up their courage wonderfully. They had made up their minds to succeed as writers, for there was no other way in which they could earn a livelihood. To quote Charlotte in 1850—

“Ill-success failed to crush us; the mere effort to succeed had given a wonderful zest to existence; it must be pursued. We each set to work on a prose tale: Ellis Bell produced *Wuthering Heights*; Acton Bell, *Agnes Grey*; and Currer Bell also wrote a narrative in one volume. These MSS. were perseveringly obtruded upon various publishers for the space of a year and a half; usually, their fate was an ignominious and abrupt dismissal.”

Around *Agnes Grey* no mystery hangs; it is a simple story

of "Some Passages in the Life of an Individual" which she quaintly mentions in her little journal of July, 1845, and it gives an unvarnished account of the hard time that Anne had when a governess with Mrs. Ingham at Blake Hall, Mirfield, and at the Rev. Edmund Robinson's, Thorpe Green, Little Ouseburn, near York. In a letter to Mr. W. S. Williams, Charlotte says: "*Agnes Grey* is true and unexaggerated enough." In consequence, no discussion has ever been aroused except that Mrs. Gaskell tells us that she once asked if Anne had had the trying experience of killing the nest of birds, which her pupil at Blake Hall had meant to kill by inches, and Charlotte replied that only those who have been governesses have any idea of what it means.

*The Professor* was the novel that Charlotte Brontë first sent round to the publishers in company with *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights*, and then afterwards it travelled round alone. *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights*, strange to say, were accepted by the same publisher, though they were totally different in character, and it is hardly possible to conceive of the same publisher having an equal liking for each. No research has ever been successful in tracing a letter to any publisher written by Emily, and in one of Charlotte's letters, referring to the two books, she only mentions one sister as having had any communication with the publishers, which seems to imply that Anne took charge of Emily's correspondence.

In a letter to G. H. Lewes, Charlotte Brontë, referring to her first novel, *The Professor*, says—

"I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides, and to follow in their very footprints; I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement; over-bright colouring, too, I avoided, and sought to produce something which should be soft, grave, and true."

She also mentions that six publishers refused it, and all agreed that it was deficient in "startling incident" and "thrilling excitement," and that it would never be acceptable to the circulating libraries.

Mrs. Gaskell wished to see this nine-times refused novel, when she was collecting the material for the biography, and Mr. Nicholls said that she was anxious to edit it, and that his refusal caused her to be prejudiced against him. There is no doubt that Mrs. Gaskell was anxious to see the manuscript of *The Professor* in order to find the reason for its repeated refusal. Moreover, she was puzzled at Charlotte Brontë's experience in Brussels, and she probably hoped to find from the novel some key to her life during her first year at the Heger pensionnat.

Though Charlotte Brontë probably felt that Madame Heger had judged her harshly, she could not restrain the feeling of gratitude towards M. Heger, and in *The Professor* she did exactly what Anne had done when writing "Some Passages in the Life of an Individual," the individual being herself. So Charlotte followed the same plan, using the pseudonym of William Crimsworth. Mr. Watts-Dunton says in his introduction to *The Professor and the Brontë Poems in The World's Classics*, that the fact that the hero of the story was a man, and that the story read quite in the manner of an autobiographical document, although the manuscript was in a woman's handwriting, puzzled Mr. Williams, the reader for Smith, Elder & Co.; he could not make out whether Currer Bell was a man or a woman.

William Crimsworth, like Jane Eyre and Heathcliff, was an outcast, and it pleased Charlotte Brontë to look upon herself in the same category, when she wrote her first Brussels novel. The opening chapter is disappointing, although, according to one of her letters, she had re-written it. William Crimsworth, the counting-house clerk in a Yorkshire manufactory, was not the type of character Charlotte Brontë could well understand. None of her relatives had any experience of Yorkshire factory life, though she may have known something of the Haworth operatives; her only direct knowledge of the woollen mills was gained from the Taylors of Gomersal, who were manufacturers.

They would probably talk of the doings of their employees when Charlotte Brontë stayed with them, and the character

may have been suggested by Mr. Taylor and his sons, for Yorke-Hunsden is said to have been founded on Mary Taylor's father, who was somewhat of a "queer tyke." Whilst he was a typical Yorkshireman, he had acquired a certain amount of "polish" by his travels on the continent. He could speak broad Yorkshire, or Parisian French equally well; and it was his knowledge of Brussels, Paris, Rome and other European capitals, that made Charlotte Brontë anxious to see those places. Had she never known the Taylors, it is possible that she would never have visited Brussels. Since Mary and Martha Taylor went to school at Brussels, Charlotte Brontë was extremely anxious to go too. In her novel, she adopts with much skill the character of an English professor in the Belgian school. Scenes are represented which actually occurred in the course of her own life in the Pensionnat, but from the first the reader has an aversion for Mdlle Zoraide Reuter, and in the story in which Charlotte Brontë is restrained, stiff, and in some places awkward, she never hesitates to draw the Belgian schoolmistress with a poisoned pen.

Some parts of the story are as good as, if not better than, anything Charlotte Brontë wrote. Frances Evans-Henri, the little lace-mender, is a beautifully drawn character, and it, no doubt, owes much to Emily Brontë, who was the quiet, clever, industrious pupil at the pensionnat, when Charlotte was also there.

Charlotte and Emily Brontë had meant to have a school, and just as Anne's story of *Agnes Grey* drifts into school-keeping, which had been the dream of the sisters so long, so William Crimsworth and the little lace-mender drift into a school; Lucy Snowe also concludes with a little private school, and even the second Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* adopts the rôle of teacher and instructs Hareton Earnshaw.

Charlotte Brontë might well say that something like despair seized her when she found that *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights* were accepted, whilst her own ambitious novel could not find a home anywhere. Miss Sinclair says that the critics forget that *The Professor* was the first novel written by Charlotte Brontë after her hurried flight from Brussels, and if

she had been "sorely wounded" in her affections she would surely have shown it in her first novel. It must be remembered that Charlotte Brontë was not only "sorely wounded," but she was ill for the two years after leaving Brussels, and her writing was mostly sentimental poetry. The poem entitled "Frances" tells her heart secret. It was not until she had had a holiday at Hathersage that she regained her health.

It is foolish to say that *The Professor* was written with a special motive, for as Charlotte Brontë had decided to write a novel, her thoughts naturally turned to Brussels, and as Madame Heger could not be left out, the suppression of the correspondence between her husband and his former pupil made it well nigh impossible for Charlotte to write of her kindly. That Madame Heger was treated still worse in *Villette* is another story, which will be discussed later.

*The Professor* has always been considered Charlotte Brontë's first novel, because it was first submitted to the publishers, but she was very emphatic in her preface to state that "a first attempt it was not." The original title was *The Master*, which could only refer to her "master in literature," M. Heger, but M. Pelet is a very poor character compared with Paul Emanuel.

Though there is much depicted in *The Professor* of the actual intercourse between M. Heger and Charlotte Brontë, and undoubtedly of M. Heger and Emily Brontë, yet it is difficult to think of the untamed Emily Brontë, according to Mrs. Gaskell's account, as the quiet Frances of *The Professor*, and there is more of Charlotte Brontë in William Crimsworth than in any other character.

The principal male characters to be found in Charlotte Brontë's great novels were those drawn from M. Heger—M. Pelet, Rochester, Robert Moore, Louis Moore and Paul Emanuel; whilst the women were either drawn from her own life as Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone and Lucy Snowe, or from that of Emily as Shirley Keeldar and Frances. Why *Jane Eyre* should have been such a contrast to the mildness of *The Professor*, which reads like a French *devoir*, is given in Charlotte Brontë's own explanation—

"A first attempt it certainly was not, as the pen which

wrote it had been previously worn a good deal in a practice of some years. I had not indeed published anything before I commenced *The Professor*, but in many a crude effort, destroyed almost as soon as composed, I had got over any such taste as I might once have had for ornamented and redundant compositions, and come to prefer what was plain and homely. At the same time I had adopted a set of principles on the subject of incident, &c., such as would be generally approved in theory, but the result of which, when carried out into practice, often procures for an author more surprise than pleasure.

“I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs—that he should never get a shilling he had not earned—that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station; that whatever small competency he might gain should be won by the sweat of his brow; that, before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in, he should master at least half the ascent of ‘the Hill of Difficulty’; that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of rank. As Adam’s son, he should share Adam’s doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment.”

The novel was planned on stated lines, and it is not to be wondered at that it is so unlike the great masterpieces, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, which were written at white heat. *The Professor* and *Shirley* were made, whilst *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* were born. The novelist’s determination to keep within certain rules in the writing of *The Professor* shows her desire to make a story, and to avoid revealing her heart’s secret.

The absorbing work of preparing the book found occupation for Charlotte at a time when, to use her own words, “she needed a stake in life,” and the publishing venture directed her thoughts away from M. Heger who had haunted her night and day for nearly two years.

*The Professor* has always been taken as the forerunner of *Villette*, but in direct opposition to *Villette* Charlotte tried to write from without rather than within, just as later she tried the same plan in *Shirley*.

William Crimsworth is Charlotte Brontë masquerading as M. Heger, and Frances Evans-Henri, the little lace-mender, is Emily Jane Brontë, who was a pupil, and also a teacher of music.

During the first year at Brussels, Emily attracted more attention from M. and Madame Heger than Charlotte, and she showed more aptitude for a literary career than her sister. If "Frances Evans Henri" is studied she answers to Emily Brontë.

Evidently Madame Heger concluded that Emily meant to earn her living by literature, and that Charlotte was keen to become a teacher. In Chapter XVIII of *The Professor*, Charlotte gives Mdlle Reuter's views on literature as a career for a woman. "It appears to me that ambition, *literary* ambition especially, is not a feeling to be cherished in the mind of a woman." When we remember that *The Professor* was written just after Charlotte's disappointment in not receiving an answer from her letters to M. Heger, and that she had the impression that Madame Heger was responsible, it is easy to see that she could not write kindly of Madame Heger; and yet in *The Professor* she had the curb on the rein, and was very careful how she wrote of M. Pelet, who does not fit M. Heger as Charlotte knew him, but she evidently tried to picture his life before she went to Brussels, and before he married the schoolmistress, except that she reverses the situation and makes M. Pelet the head of the school and Mdlle Zoraide Reuter one of his teachers.

Charlotte has tried to hide her own identity all the way through the novel, but she fails, when she writes: "God knows I am not by nature vindictive," and again, "Not that I nursed vengeance—no; but the sense of insult and treachery lived in me like a kindling, though as yet smothered coal" which explains her feeling at the time. It is this trying to write from without, and throw the actual scenes back, that proved Charlotte's undoing in *The Professor*; it is not real enough, and she never excelled except in writing autobiographically. It is Emily she tries to describe, and it is her experience during the Brussels period that Charlotte tries to give.

It is clearly of Emily she is thinking when she writes of the conversation between Hunsden and Frances—

“If Abdiel the Faithful himself” (she was thinking of Milton) “were suddenly stripped of the faculty of association, I think he would soon rush forth from ‘the ever-during gates,’ leave heaven, and seek what he had lost in hell. Yes, in the very hell from which he turned ‘with retorted scorn.’

“Frances’ tone in saying this was as marked as her language, and it was when the word ‘hell’ twanged off from her lips, with a somewhat startling emphasis, that Hunsden deigned to bestow one slight glance of admiration. He liked something strong, whether in man or woman. . . . He had never before heard a lady say ‘hell’ with that uncompromising sort of accent. . . . The display of eccentric vigour never gave her pleasure, and it only sounded in her voice or flashed in her countenance when extraordinary circumstances—and those generally painful—forced it out of the depths, where it burned latent. To me, once or twice, she had, in intimate conversation, uttered venturous thoughts in nervous language; but when the hour of such manifestation was past, I could not recall it; it came of itself and of itself departed.”

This fits the Emily Brontë of *Wuthering Heights*, for whom Charlotte found it out of her power to apologise for the using of “those expletives with which profane and violent persons are wont to garnish their discourse.”

After the repeated rejection of *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë set to work on *Jane Eyre*, and in the summer of 1847 it was accepted, being published before either *Wuthering Heights* or *Agnes Grey*. On that remarkable novel her fame was assured. Recently, a first edition of *Jane Eyre* was sold for £27. It is probable that there are more anecdotes associated with the first reading of this novel than gather around any other, which testifies to its absorbing interest and to the force with which it carries its readers onward.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### WUTHERING HEIGHTS

**AUTHORSHIP** of the novel—Various claims examined—Charlotte Brontë's testimony—Late recognition of Emily Brontë's genius—Swinburne's opinion of the novel—M. Heger's influence on Emily Brontë—Poem by Emily Brontë—Charlotte's discovery of some of Emily's poems—Emily's position at home—Her workshop and material.

AMONG all the novels of the nineteenth century, none has awakened greater curiosity than *Wuthering Heights*. Even to-day, sixty-six years after it was written, the authorship is questioned. Four different members of the Brontë family—Charlotte, Emily, Branwell and Anne—have each been credited with the writing of it, and supposed proofs have been accumulated, the effect of which would be to deny the authorship to Emily Brontë, who undoubtedly wrote the novel as it now stands under the *nom de guerre* of Ellis Bell.

Not only has the authorship been a source of mystery, as well as the pseudonym of the writer, but the places mentioned in the story have never yet been traced to any satisfactory originals, and the supporters of different theories have been divided into opposite camps, but, when it is remembered that the souls that create permanent literature know no geographical boundaries, it is not to be wondered at. Parson Grimshaw's house, Sowdens, on the moors, not far from the Haworth Vicarage with the initials H. E., 1659, carved on, which may or may not stand for the original "Hareton Earnshaw, 1500," though "the crumbling griffins and shameless little boys" are not there: Law Hill, Southowram: the Withens, a small lonely farmstead on the Haworth Moors, some three or four miles from the village, have all been claimed as the original of *Wuthering Heights*, which is, however, a composite picture, owing something to the three places mentioned. The name Heathcliff is significant, for he partakes of "the heath with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, which grows faithfully close to the giant's foot" to quote Charlotte Brontë, and of

the cliff or crag, which "stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock."

Emily meditated on actual people, just as Charlotte did for her characters, and it is because Emily used the same original, though under totally different aspects, for her great novel, as Charlotte did for her three stories, each being a variation of the same person, that confusion has arisen regarding the authorship of *Wuthering Heights*. Also Emily used Charlotte's passionate dreams and deliriums of the period when she was breaking her heart for news from M. Heger, which material Charlotte afterwards used in *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*.

"Joseph," the Yorkshire servant, is a masterpiece, dour and dogged, and of a type fast passing away; he was what Charlotte called "a ranting Methodist." Emily eclipsed that in her description. "He was, and is yet most likely, the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours." Joseph owed something to Old Tabby, who ruled the parsonage, but was jealous of the honour of the Brontës. The Yorkshire dialect which Joseph uses in the first edition is correct, and Charlotte did not improve matters by altering it in a later edition, though perhaps she made it more intelligible to all but Yorkshire folk. Nelly Dean is far too accomplished a story-teller to be a Yorkshire servant at the latter end of the eighteenth century, but it was a clever device for Emily Brontë to put the story in the mouth of one of the servants, though she herself is the real story-teller, for she was the actual nurse to the original of Cathy; parts of the narrative as told by Nelly cannot be excelled for original power in any prose of the nineteenth century. The novel stands alone; it cannot be put into any category, for it is without kith or kindred; it belongs to no school, and is supremely indifferent to time, but it is the soul-fact that matters in this great novel, as also in Charlotte's stories.

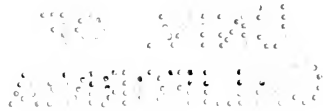
The authorship was first falsely claimed for Branwell Brontë, and, in connection with this, it is interesting to note that Mr. Francis A. Leyland and Mr. Francis H. Grundy, who both knew



*Photo by*

THE WITHEMS, HAWORTH MOORS

*J. J. Stead*



Branwell Brontë, thought they could trace his pen in some of the phrases, and, indeed, they stated that Branwell had read parts of the story to them. This may have been quite possible, for it is very probable that parts of an earlier version were to be found in the parsonage, and he may have taken them and read them to his friends. He may, unwittingly, have contributed something to the story by his wild tales of the lonely homesteads on the moors around Haworth. Anyone who has read any of his poetry, or unpublished prose, needs little persuasion to convince himself, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Branwell could not possibly have written *Wuthering Heights*. Of late years Charlotte Brontë has been claimed as the author, solely because some of the scenes and characters have something in common with *Jane Eyre*, but it is ample tribute to the genius of Emily Brontë that it has taken more than sixty years before anyone has noted the marked resemblance between some of the scenes in both novels to suggest a common authorship, though Sydney Dobell mentioned a certain similarity as far back as 1848. When Charlotte Brontë denied the authorship, he accepted her statement, but wished to discuss the novel with her later.

Miss Rigby, in the *Quarterly Review*, had also noted the likeness between Jane and Rochester on the one hand, and Cathy and Heathcliff on the other, and they certainly are akin.

The force and passion of *Wuthering Heights* are so immeasurably above what is to be found in Charlotte Brontë's novels that it cannot be said for a moment to come from the same pen. Whilst Charlotte's novels breathe the spirit of revolt, Emily's novel passionately makes for freedom and liberty. The great poetic and passionate scenes are elemental and easily seen by those who understand, but place and time are of no moment.

Instead of claiming that Charlotte Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights*, it would probably be nearer the truth to say that Emily assisted Charlotte to write *Jane Eyre*, for, after Emily's death, Charlotte refers to the terrible time she went through when writing *Villette*, because she had no one with whom she could discuss the manuscript as was the case with *Jane Eyre* and

two-thirds of *Shirley*. It is certain her father and Anne could not help, so it must have been Emily.

Seeing that *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were both accepted at the same time, and that *The Professor* was rejected over and over again, Charlotte must have copied the spirit of Emily's novel, when writing *Jane Eyre*, for *Agnes Grey* was evidently not good enough for a model. Emily Brontë wrote without any thought of the critic; Charlotte wrote *The Professor* with the critic at her elbow.

To Sydney Dobell belongs the honour of first directing attention to the real genius of the work of Emily Brontë, but, as *Wuthering Heights* was published three months *after* *Jane Eyre* (although it had been accepted three months before), Mr. Dobell made the mistake of thinking that *Wuthering Heights* was an earlier attempt at writing a novel by the author of *Jane Eyre*, and that, as *Jane Eyre* had been so readily accepted, *Wuthering Heights* was offered under the shadow of the great success. Charlotte Brontë denied this, whilst warmly thanking Mr. Dobell for his just and well-merited critique. Emily Brontë, the author of the novel, never heard one word of commendation, for she was dead before the world recognised her great ability either as a poet or a novelist.

For a good reason known to Charlotte, Emily Brontë never, by word or pen, acknowledged the authorship; it was sent out as the work of Ellis Bell, and only as such was she determined that it should be known. Emily never approved of the sisters disclosing their real names.

When Mr. Williams, of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., suggested that Emily Brontë should accept an invitation to London, Charlotte hastened to tell him that it would be quite useless to ask her, as she was absolutely certain that Emily would not be interviewed, and when he called Charlotte's attention to the reviews—notably that of the *Athenaeum*—which showed how puzzled the reviewers were concerning the three Brontës, wondering if they were three brothers or three sisters, or one person writing under three different names, Charlotte only laughed, and remarked that they preferred to be known as authors, whether men or women was immaterial.

However, Mr. Williams seems to have got the impression that either there was no such person as the one who wrote under the *nom de guerre* of Ellis Bell, or else that Charlotte had some share in the authorship, for she had written to say that she ought not to have admitted, at the time when she and Anne paid their hurried visit to London in July, 1848, that there were *three* sisters. She explained that she inadvertently mentioned it, and she requested that Mr. Williams should never write of Emily Brontë, but only of Ellis Bell, and that he was not under any circumstances to use the word *sisters* in his correspondence with her, but to speak of one sister only. It is also strange that no correspondence has ever been revealed between Emily Brontë and any publisher. Charlotte appears to have acted as editor and correspondent for the three novels, and, after *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were accepted, Anne attended to the publisher's correspondence.

Then, again, Charlotte wrote to Mr. Williams saying that she had no real claim to be known as the author of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, though she should not be ashamed to be known as such, but that, if she did claim the novels as hers, she would deprive the true authors of their just meed.<sup>1</sup> The question arises, what share had Charlotte in the novel? Did Emily use certain material written by Charlotte first and rewrite it in her own way, or did Charlotte act as editor and revise the manuscript before it was sent out? There is no doubt that Charlotte had some share in it, but not in the writing of it as it now stands.

With regard to the claim made on behalf of Anne Brontë, that was advanced by the publishers in America, when her *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was advertised as being by Acton Bell, the author of *Wuthering Heights*, the English publishers, Messrs. Newby, were to blame for giving the impression that the writer of *Jane Eyre* was also the author of *Wildfell Hall*. One reviewer turned the tables on Charlotte and criticised *Jane Eyre* as being by the author of *Wuthering Heights*. The three sisters worked together and evidently helped one another ;

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontës : Life and Letters*, by Clement K. Shorter.

Emily was the greatest genius, but Charlotte knew more of the world, and she was the most prolific writer, judging by the number of manuscripts left by her.

All this mystery has been increased by the fact that no MS. of *Wuthering Heights* has ever been found, either in the handwriting of Emily or her sisters, and the theory is often advanced that Charlotte destroyed it after Emily's death. In addition, no statement has been left by Emily Brontë to testify to the fact that she and she only wrote *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Brontë was certainly indignant that she should be credited with the authorship, and when the third edition of *Jane Eyre* was issued she added a modestly-worded disclaimer.

"I avail myself of the opportunity which a third edition of *Jane Eyre* affords me, of again addressing a word to the Public, to explain that my claim to the title of novelist rests on this one work alone. If, therefore, the authorship of other works of fiction has been attributed to me, an honour is awarded where it is not merited ; and consequently, denied where it is justly due.

"This explanation will serve to rectify mistakes which may already have been made, and to prevent future errors."

But this did not satisfy some of the critics. Therefore, in 1850, Mr. George Smith asked Charlotte Brontë to write a statement, settling the question of the authorship of the Brontë novels once for all.

Charlotte Brontë's denial of the authorship of *Wuthering Heights* must stand for all time as the literal truth concerning the question. Of course, there is her statement that she had no *real* claim to it, and what she means by that is easily seen, for the two novels, though having something in common, are so different in style and wording, that it would be difficult to prove that the same pen could have written both. Charlotte, proud of her French and of her knowledge of books, could scarcely have avoided betraying her inclination when writing the novel.

Emily evidently had her own ideas of writing a prose story of an outcast, in her own way. This would not be difficult, for she had already composed several poems about a nameless



outcast of the moors, and it is noticeable that she had an ideal lover, judging by her earlier poems.

When writing her *devoirs* at Brussels, she would change not only the style of the composition read to her, but also the subject, and characteristically she decided to write a novel quite removed from her sisters, both in style, subject and time, for she ante-dates her story to the latter part of the eighteenth century ; but she keeps to the family model of an outcast, and places him on the Yorkshire Moors, which was her little world in which she could revel to her heart's content. Compared with Charlotte's boast, that she would make her plain little heroine, Jane Eyre, as attractive as her sister's more beautiful heroines, the hero Heathcliff is a suburb masterpiece. Could there be any hero so debased as the wretched little gutter child that old Earnshaw unrolled from his cloak "as black as if he came from the devil" ? Yet all through the story he holds the reader spell-bound without any physical attractions, but with a passionate love that excels that of any other hero in fiction. Emily Brontë's fame as the greatest novelist of the nineteenth century rests on this one great character alone.

Both Charlotte and Branwell Brontë seem to have some sort of connection with the plot, but not with the actual writing of the story. In the first chapter, Lockwood is summing up Heathcliff's character. "He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. No, I'm running on too fast ; I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him." This is undoubtedly Emily Brontë's own estimate of herself ; she dwelt apart and was reserved and silent. Then Lockwood, who is the narrator, goes on to say, "While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature : a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I 'never told my love' vocally ; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears ; she understood me at last, and looked a return—the sweetest of all imaginable looks. And what did I do ? I confess it with shame—shrunk icily into myself, like a snail ; at every glance retired colder and

farther ; till finally the poor innocent was led to doubt her own senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistakes, persuaded her mamma to decamp. By this curious turn of disposition I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness ; how undeserved, I alone can appreciate."

In a long letter, written on 20th November, 1840, Charlotte Brontë gives some very sage advice to Ellen Nussey on love and marriage, and she surely refers to Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* and to Branwell Brontë in real life when she says, "Did I not once tell you of an instance of a relative of mine who cared for a young lady, until he began to suspect that she cared more for him, and then instantly conceived a sort of contempt for her ? You know to whom I allude—Never as you value your ears mention the circumstance." <sup>1</sup>

Both Branwell and Charlotte Brontë had had experiences of haunted rooms, or thought they had ; Branwell once slept in a haunted room at Haworth and was much frightened, and Charlotte was prone to see ghosts at Roe Head and Brussels. Then Branwell's mad passion for his employer's wife could not but influence Emily's version of Heathcliff's regard for Catherine, when she was the wife of another ; but the purity of the passion depicted by Emily is far above Branwell's infatuation for Mrs. Robinson ; and, though Sir Wemyss Reid found in Branwell Brontë's letters certain phrases used by Heathcliff, it does not prove that he had written a line of the novel.

Just as Emily Brontë's poems are greatly superior to Charlotte's and Anne's, so her novel shows much greater genius than anything written by her sisters.

Emily's one novel is full of strength and power, and yet there is not the faintest suggestion of impropriety ; it is, as Swinburne says, "pure mind and passion," which only a great genius could depict. (The love between Cathy and Heathcliff is of the essence of purity, and represents soul speaking to soul. It is the scenes that are remembered apart from the actual wording. Charlotte speaks of the relation between Heathcliff and Cathy as inhuman, but her Rochester imitates it, though

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontës : Life and Letters*, by Clement K. Shorter.

he never soars to the heights that Heathcliff reaches. Cathy and Jane have much in common, the difference mainly representing that which separates the two writers. Emily was a child of the moors—original, crude, fierce—but true to her natural gifts. The very childishness of parts of the novel proves its essence of purity, and its naturalness. Charlotte's novel was the creation of a mind that had been tamed; that had tried to conform to the rules of society. Roe Head, Stonegappe, Rawdon, and most of all Brussels had influenced Charlotte, and she never shook herself quite free. She told Mrs. Gaskell that her most vivid scenes were thought out night after night, and that in the morning she awoke with it all clear in her mind. She also told Mrs. Gaskell that on sleepless nights she wrote down her thoughts. It was not so with Emily; (from the moment Nelly Dean, the old servant, takes up the story, it seems to be told almost in one breath.) It has been said that Emily was not influenced by those she met, but in Brussels she found in M. Heger a character that suggested Heathcliff, or rather that fitted in with her imaginary lover, mentioned over and over again in the poems, written when she was little more than a child. Emily knew that M. Heger had suffered and borne his grief alone.

Emily Brontë's recognition as a great genius has been long delayed, but her fame is established, and her life as it is revealed, bit by bit, shows a brave, good woman, domesticated, affectionate, loyal and true, in spite of a certain harshness and a masculine demeanour. Mrs. Gaskell never really grasped Emily's character, and her remarks on *Wuthering Heights* showed that she did not quite approve of it. Yet the plot of the story appealed to her so forcibly that she modelled her *Sylvia's Lovers* on it. Cathy, the winsome, mischievous, heroine, and Sylvia have much in common. Heathcliff and Kinraid each love the heroine of the story—who is courted by a richer lover, Edgar Linton in the one, and Philip Hepburn in the other—and afterwards they go away and are not heard of again for some time. In each case the discarded lover returns after the marriage of the heroine, and there is a painful scene. Though the return of Kinraid is the most dramatic part of

*Sylvia's Lovers*, it does not approach by a long way the passion of Heathcliff's return to Cathy.

*Wuthering Heights* must stand alone as a great tragedy, worthy of the author of *King Lear* himself.

† Swinburne, Emily Brontë's greatest critic, has said, "Those who have come to like *Wuthering Heights* will probably never like anything else much better; the novel is what it is because the author is what she is." Until Swinburne gave his magnificent critique on this extraordinary novel, the world had almost passed it by, for Sydney Dobell's splendid appreciation in 1850 had almost been forgotten, and his eulogium is marred by his suspicion that Charlotte had written the story. His reasoning is the work of a genius, and so far as the introduction of the story goes he may be right, for a fragment of an unpublished story by Charlotte Brontë has a somewhat similar beginning. Added to this is the account of Charlotte's dreams and deliriums, and of Shirley Keeldar's dreams and visions.

The four letters written by Charlotte Brontë to M. Heger, which have recently been published in *The Times* (July, 1913), throw a light on *Wuthering Heights*.

When Charlotte Brontë left Brussels on the last day of 1843 in distress, she arrived at Haworth ill and dejected; there was the brave Emily and the father to receive her, but it is certain she would not confide in her father.

As these two sisters walked on the moors, it cannot be doubted that Charlotte—the impulsive, eager, passionate, Charlotte—poured out her reasons for leaving Brussels to Emily, who with her sympathetic feeling heard the story of her sister's grief, and her whole soul revolted that she should have suffered so cruelly. *The Times* letters refer to Charlotte's conversation with Emily about M. Heger. It must be remembered that Emily Brontë knew M. Heger, which helped her to realise the position much better. M. Heger was unstinting in his praise of Emily when Mrs. Gaskell interviewed him, and Emily would not have been a woman if she had not recognised that M. Heger admired her great powers. Was it the case of Shirley Keeldar unconsciously attracting the love of Robert Gerard Moore, to the grief and sorrow of Caroline

Helstone as revealed at the close of Chapter XXIII in *Shirley*? Who knows? Certain it is that, as Shirley Keeldar was superior to Caroline Helstone in personal and intellectual qualities, so was Emily Brontë superior to Charlotte. Had Emily experienced a brief gleam of love either in Brussels or elsewhere? And was that her Heaven that she dreamt of, a case of soul recognising soul as a kindred spirit?

"I dreamt once that I was there. . . . I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I awoke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other." Mrs. Humphry Ward interpreted this to mean that Emily preferred the moors to Heaven, but that is not so. Emily Brontë's Heaven was where, like Cathy, she found her affinity.

"O could it thus for ever be,  
That I might so adore;  
I'd ask for all eternity,  
To make a paradise for me,  
My love—and nothing more."

She wrote these lines in 1843 whilst Charlotte was in Brussels. In the last chapter of *Wuthering Heights* when Heathcliff is dying, and he welcomes death as he hopes to meet Cathy, he says, "I tell you I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me."

Emily Brontë's heaven was to be with the spirit of the ideal she loved. In the memorable conversation between Cathy and Nelly Dean, when Cathy tells her that she intends to marry Edgar Linton, Emily Brontë gives the highest conception of passionate love ever written; Wagner and Shelley have a similar idea of the passion, but they do not show the masterful force that is Emily Brontë's.

In speaking of Heathcliff, Cathy says: "If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it," and in her immortal "Last Lines" she writes—

"Though earth and man were gone,  
 And suns and universes ceased to be,  
 And Thou were left alone,  
 Every existence would exist in Thee."

These two quotations prove that the same mind had inspired the mighty words, and show that the lover Heathcliff is put in the place of God.

In the French translation of *Wuthering Heights* the title is *L'Amant*, and certainly it gives a better description of the novel, for it is more about a lover than a building or a district. In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë puts into the mouth of the little cripple, "I'll write a book that I may dedicate it to you," and Shirley replies, "You will write it, that you may give your soul its natural release," and that is just what Emily has done.

Devotees of Emily Brontë have searched far and wide for the man who inspired her to create a Heathcliff. Look around on her limited male acquaintances and who was there that could for a moment appreciate and understand her as it is known M. Heger did? He placed her not only above Charlotte, but above all women: "She ought to have been a man, a great navigator." Mrs. Gaskell never explained why M. Heger was so eager to praise Emily, and why he gave such scant praise to Charlotte. In *Shirley* the two Moores, Robert and Louis, are presented as being so alike as to be taken the one for the other, and Caroline is surprised that Shirley has kept the secret of having known Robert's brother. Was this the explanation of Emily's secret that she found her ideal in Brussels, but could not stay there, and was glad to get back to her moorland home? Unfortunately there is but one letter from Emily after her stay in Brussels besides her novel and poems. Those written in Brussels in 1843 when she was with her father are all sad enough, and the question arises if Emily suffered in 1843 as Charlotte did in 1844.

Who but M. Heger could have stood as the original of Heathcliffe? A strong, powerful tyrant, with the pure and fierce love of a very god, albeit he had the mind of a little child.

Witness his passionate tears when his pupils could not

understand the beauty of his rendering of choice literature, and his beautifully expressed letter of condolence to Mr. Brontë when Miss Branwell died. On the other hand, one of his pupils told me he was a terror to the dull pupils, or to those he did not like.

Charlotte in one of her letters says that Mary Taylor has no one like M. Heger to be kind to her and lend her books ; and her letter to Ellen Nussey on leaving Brussels points in the same direction. " I shall not forget what the parting with M. Heger cost me, it grieved me so much to grieve him, who has been so true, kind and disinterested a friend." Yet another time she says, " He is a professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in temperament ; a little black being, with a face that varies in expression. Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tom-cat, sometimes those of a delirious hyena." Certainly extremes meet in such a character, as they did in Heathcliff.

Now turn to Emily's *Wuthering Heights* where she speaks of Heathcliff as " a dark-skinned gipsy," and again as " the little black-haired swarthy thing as dark almost as if it came from the devil," and then read of his agony by Cathy's grave. Both Charlotte and Emily tried to get the germ of a character by tracing it from its childhood. Charlotte only met Mr. George Smith when he was twenty-three, yet she tries to write of him as Graham Bretton when a schoolboy. More than once in *Villette* she describes Paul Emanuel as being of Spanish descent, but in a few words Emily conveys the impression of his ancestors. Charlotte, in her explanation of the authorship of *Wuthering Heights*, says, " It was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced *Jane Eyre*. Unjust and grievous error ! We laughed at it at first, but I deeply lament it now." The laughing point was that the critics had seen the similarity in certain scenes, but they did not discover that the two sisters had the same models for the chief characters of the stories, though Cathy and Jane are as different as Emily and Charlotte Brontë : one is " a wild slip of a girl," who loves to wander over the moors ; the other " the staid little governess."

Long before Emily Brontë went to Brussels she had cherished an idea of a noble being with a soul that could take flights like her own, and reach to a Heaven of pure passion, and in an unpublished MS. by Charlotte, written in 1834, she also had her idea of an imaginary hero, which fits M. Heger in many ways.

M. Heger was the first man to approach Emily Brontë's ideal, and he saw in her a spirit that could mate with his own. She, like Cathy, recognised a kindred spirit in him. Frances in *The Professor*, and Shirley Keeldar in *Shirley*, where she is pupil to Louis Moore, are based upon Emily Brontë's life at Brussels. Whether she realised M. Heger's influence before she left Brussels in October, 1842, or not is not plain, but her high moral rectitude kept her from returning to Brussels; and with characteristic self-effacement she let Charlotte go alone, who in a letter written years afterwards called it "selfish folly." Anne could have taken Emily's place at home, if Emily had chosen to return with Charlotte, for Anne was far from happy at Thorpe Green, and the father could have spared Emily and probably would have preferred her to accompany Charlotte. It is very probable that Charlotte Brontë never found out Emily's secret, until she discovered the poems which Emily guarded so carefully, but, as Charlotte Brontë says in her preface to *Wuthering Heights*, "The writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master." *Wuthering Heights* is what it is, not only because the author is what she is, but because of what the author knew and experienced during her life.

If Emily Brontë must write a novel, then, like her sister, she must write from the heart, using the experience of which she was conscious. When Lockwood first met Heathcliff he says, "Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. Possibly, some people might suspect him of a degree of underbred pride; I have a sympathetic



chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort : I know, by instinct that his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of mutual kindliness.”

That is just what Emily Brontë could and would say on meeting M. Heger, for former pupils testify to M. Heger's negligence in dress, and Charlotte tells us he did not speak to them for three months after they became his pupils, only writing his remarks of their *devoirs* on the margin of their exercise books. Emily Brontë was only nine months in Brussels, and six weeks of this period was vacation, when M. Heger was away from the pensionnat, so that he did not have much to do with the two sisters during the remaining four months. M. Heger advised M. l'Abbé Richardson, when beginning his career as a teacher, to spend the first fortnight studying the temperament, idiosyncrasies, ability and habits of his pupils, but a fortnight did not suffice for M. Heger to study the Brontës ; it took him three months, and then he must have proceeded warily. When Mrs. Gaskell interviewed him he had gauged Emily's character with surprising accuracy, but it has taken the world more than half a century to come to the just conclusion that M. Heger formed in these few months.

Charlotte Brontë's longing for love as expressed in her novels was quite as real to Emily, and possibly felt with more intensity. The poem, *The Old Stoic*, was written in 1845.

On 17th May, 1842, Emily Brontë wrote a poem at Brussels, which helps to prove that she had had a vision of perfect love in Brussels, and this poem shows that none but Emily could have written *Wuthering Heights*, though the sex of the actors is changed. It was well known in Brussels that M. Heger had lost his young wife nine years before the Brontës went, and it was known that the loss had nearly overwhelmed him, and it was probably the knowledge of this love story that prompted Emily to write this poem—

“ In the same place, when nature wore  
The same celestial glow,  
I'm sure I've seen these forms before  
But many springs ago ;

But only *he* had locks of light,  
 And she had raven hair ;  
 While now his curls are dark as night,  
 And hers as morning fair.

Besides, I've dreamt of tears whose traces  
 Will never more depart,  
 Of agony that fast effaces  
 The verdure of the heart.

I dreamt one sunny day like this,  
 In this peerless month of May,  
 I saw her give th' unanswered kiss  
 As his spirit passed away.

Those young eyes that so sweetly shine  
 Then looked their last adieu,  
 And pale death changed that cheek divine  
 To his unchanging hue.

And earth was cast above the breast,  
 That once beat warm and true,  
 Where her heart found a living rest  
 That moved responsively.

Then she, upon the covered grave,  
 The grass-grown grave, did lie,  
 A tomb not girt by English wave,  
 Nor arched by English sky.

The sod was sparkling bright with dew,  
 But brighter still with tears,  
 That welled from mortal grief I know,  
 Which never heals with years.

And if he came not for her woe,  
 He would not now return ;  
 He would not leave his sleep below,  
 When she had ceased to mourn.

O Innocence, that cannot live  
 With heart-wrung anguish long,  
 Dear childhood's innocence forgive,  
 For I have done thee wrong !

The bright rosebuds, those hawthorn shrouds  
 Within their perfumed bower,  
 Have never closed beneath a cloud,  
 Nor bent beneath a shower.  
 Had darkness once obscured their sun  
 Or kind dew turned to rain,  
 No storm-cleared sky that ever shone  
 Could win such bliss again." <sup>1</sup>

Again in May, 1843, whilst Charlotte is away, Emily Brontë writes a serenade, one verse of which reads—

"And neither Hell nor Heaven,  
 Though both conspire at last,  
 Can take the bliss that has been given,  
 Can rob us of the past." <sup>1</sup>

These are the thoughts expressed in *Wuthering Heights*. On 28th July, 1843—two days before Emily Brontë's twenty-fifth birthday, she writes—

"I know our souls are all divine,  
 I know that when we die  
 What seems the vilest, even like thine  
 A part of God himself shall shine  
 In perfect purity.

Let others seek its beams divine  
 In cell and cloister drear ;  
 But I have found a fairer shrine  
 And happier worship here.  
 By dismal rites they win their bliss,  
 By penance, fasts and fears ;  
 I have one rite—a gentle kiss ;  
 One penance—tender tears," <sup>1</sup>

and in the following year, 2nd March, 1844, three months after Charlotte Brontë's return from Brussels, she writes—

"This summer wind with thee and me  
 Roams in the dawn of day ;  
 But thou must be, when it shall be,  
 Ere evening—far away.  
 The farewell's echo from thy soul  
 Should not depart before  
 Hills rise and distant rivers roll  
 Between us ever more.

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, edited by Clement Shorter.

I know that I have done thee wrong,  
 Have wronged both thee and Heaven ;  
 And I may mourn my lifetime long  
 And may not be forgiven.

Repentant tears will vainly fall  
 To cover deeds untrue,  
 For by no grief can I recall  
 The dreary word adieu !

Yet those a future place shall win,  
 Because thy soul is clear ;  
 And I who had the heart to sin  
 Will find a heart to bear.

Till far beyond earth's frenzied strife,  
 That makes destruction joy,  
 Thy perished faith shall spring to life,  
 And my remorse shall die."<sup>1</sup>

Emily Brontë has been treated as a visionary and a mystic, with nothing definite and tangible about her, but, although "she dwelt apart," she had a more intense and real affection for the things that matter than most people.

"What my soul bore my soul alone  
 Within itself may tell."

The moorland was her home, and it was on those desolate heights that she fought out her thoughts and conquered only by death.

"There stands Sidonia's deity !  
 In all her glory, all her pride !  
 And truly like a god she seems.  
 Some lad of wild enthusiast's dream.  
 And this is she for whom he died !  
 For whom his spirit unforgiven  
 Wanders unsheltered, shut from heaven,  
 An outcast from eternity."<sup>1</sup>

Who but the creator of Heathcliff could have written those lines ?

On the authority of members of the Heger family, Charlotte Brontë told pitiful tales of her brother and of her home life to the Hegers, and it is not too much to surmise that M. Heger,

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, edited by Clement K. Shorter,

related some of his own early troubles in such a way as to make an impression on the future novelists, for Charlotte taught English to M. Chappel, whose wife was sister to M. Heger's first wife.

Little did M. Heger recognise what his influence was with the odd geniuses; what he told them became scenes for their novels, their souls knew no geographical boundaries; what they had idealised and dreamt of in Haworth, they applied to the religious, passionate "Master of literature," who, with all his fierce passion, became Charlotte's "Christian hero" and Emily's ideal lover.

When M. Heger died, it was recorded that after the death of his first wife it was feared he would not survive; he had to find relief in work, which implies that his sorrow was so great that he had to continually find something to assuage his grief.

M. Heger evidently told Charlotte Brontë some facts connected with his early life and the death of his first wife, and Charlotte in turn related these to Emily, who with sympathetic heart and keen intellect put them into her great novel. Charlotte and Emily Brontë never knew anyone in Yorkshire who loved as Heathcliff loved Cathy, but if they knew, as they probably did, of M. Heger's overwhelming grief, it would fit in with their conception of pure and undefiled love of one soul for another. In *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë tells of Paul Emanuel's Justine Marie, whose spirit haunted him, and the incident fits in with Cathy's spirit haunting Heathcliff.

Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. (Emily Brontë had the true lyric note, and the unseen had a greater fascination for her than the mere sayings and doings of men. As a mystic she valued the things that matter, and like all mystics she believed that someway and somehow true love was returned.) She was right in agreeing with an unknown poet who sang—

" The knowledge gained at every turning,  
On that high road by Science trod,  
Serves but to increase our yearning  
For light and liberty and God.

Yet murmur not though knowledge only  
 The vastness of our ignorance prove,  
 For there's no soul so dark and lonely  
 But it can both be loved and love."

Shelley appealed to her, and the love between Heathcliff and Cathy soars to the same heights that Shelley attains in *Epipsychidion*—verses addressed to Emilia V. (or Emily as he calls her later) in a convent.

"How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me!  
 I am not thine: I am a part of *thee*."

Compare this with Cathy's vehement: "I *am* Heathcliff."  
 "He's more myself than I am."

And again, Shelley foreshadows the absolute unity of spirit between Heathcliff and Cathy in his verses to Emilia.

"We shall become the same, we shall be one  
 Spirit within two frames. Oh! wherefore two?  
 One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,  
 Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,  
 Those spheres instinct with it become the same,  
 Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still  
 Burning, yet ever inconsumable.

One hope within two wills, one will beneath  
 Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,  
 One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,  
 And one annihilation."

Charlotte in one of her novels mentions Shirley's love for Shelley as a poet. Undoubtedly this sorrow of M. Heger's attracted both Charlotte and Emily. It has often been said, if Emily had lived, how much more she could have given to the world, even greater and better, but there is no evidence that she was eager to write another novel. Unlike Charlotte and Anne she was not anxious to write a second; she had spent her strength on her masterpiece. Nothing could have given a greater conception of love between two spirits than that depicted in her one great story. Mr. Malham-Dembleby in his *Key to the Brontë Works* has travelled on the right road when he shows that Heathcliff, Rochester, Robert Moore, and

Paul Emanuel each owe something to M. Heger, but he does not prove that Charlotte wrote *Wuthering Heights*. *Wuthering Heights* is "pure mind and passion," to quote Swinburne again, and the material things of life are so dwarfed in the story that they hardly matter. (The intensity of the passion is the dominating note of the novel, and after the death of Cathy her spirit broods over the pages and is never absent.)

(Emily Brontë wrote from instinct.) (No novelist can be drawn to write of what repels her, and it is evident that Emily had a conception of great beauty in the love between Cathy and Heathcliff, and, if she must write a love story, it must show the essence of true love as it appeared to her.) Charlotte said later that Emily might have become a model essayist, but it would not have been possible to tell a story of such thrilling interest in an essay. (No form of literature other than a novel could have been the medium for portraying such a tragic tale of love and suffering.) (The personality of Emily shines through the story, "moorish, wild and knotty as a root of heather," and yet what a mind she had to conceive characters like Heathcliff and Cathy!) "Stronger than a man, simpler than a child." How her readers shudder under the tyranny of Heathcliff, and tremble at the intensity of his passion; and, if those who read it feel it, what must have been the thoughts of Emily as she wrote? Charlotte tells in her letters that when M. Heger was angry she cried, and that put matters right, but Mrs. Gaskell says that Emily answered him back, just as Cathy would have done. Some of the passages are among the most sublime in the English language, and the heights and depths are beyond ordinary comprehension. It is amateurish and wanting in technique, but so powerful is the passion of the story that the construction of the plot does not seem to matter. Emily's sympathy with her chief characters, Cathy and Heathcliff, is intense, and it is that sympathy which grips her readers, though some of the scenes are cruel and appalling.)

There is more of the real Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* than in any of her poems. She associates this intense love story with the moorland people at the end of the eighteenth

century, but the vital issue is from herself, and her hero is a foreigner.

Having written this novel, she never wrote anything more except the immortal "Last Lines." It has been said over and over again, that Brussels made no impression on Emily Brontë; that cannot be proved. Granted that in her few months at Brussels she made a greater impression on M. Heger than Charlotte did in two years, it is unthinkable that she did not receive much from her experience in Brussels that altered her whole outlook on life. In the poems written by Emily after her return from Brussels, there is a longing for love, and a still greater longing for death.

Mr. Swinburne has written the most just criticism of *Wuthering Heights*, and he concludes, "It may be true that not many will ever take it to their hearts; it is certain that those who do like it will like nothing very much better in the whole world of poetry or prose."

It is strange that Emily Brontë should have objected to Charlotte seeing her poems, unless they contained something which she wished to conceal. The one poem, written in Brussels in May, 1842, and the poems written in the years 1843 to 1845, which include those written in the year that she was alone with her father, point to her meditations on the overwhelming sorrow for the loss of the loved one. Comparing these poems with those written previous to her visit to Brussels it is evident that M. Heger's love story which she had heard in Brussels fitted her conception of a deathless love, and that she idealised the wanderer on the moor by comparing him with M. Heger.

"Listen! I've known a burning heart,  
To which my own was given;  
Nay, not with passion, do not start,  
Our love was love from heaven."

Again she writes—

"Angelica, from my very birth  
I have been nursed in strife;  
And lived upon this weary Earth  
A wanderer all my life.



The baited tiger could not be  
So much athirst for gore,  
For men and laws have tortured me,  
Till I can bear no more.  
The guiltless blood upon my hands  
Will shut me out from heaven,  
And here, and even in foreign lands,  
I cannot find a haven.”<sup>1</sup>

On July 26th, 1843, Emily writes—

“ Had there been falsehood in my breast  
No doubt had marr’d my word ;  
This spirit had not lost its rest,  
Those tears had never flowed.”<sup>1</sup>

Emily Brontë was not so visionary and introspective as she has been described. (People and places did affect her, though not sufficiently to tempt her to reveal their identity,) and her hard work in Brussels was not lost on her. Had she never gone to Brussels, she would not have written her best poems—*The Old Stoic*, *Death*, and the immortal *Last Lines*. Far from being a mere dreamer, she has shown at her highest a powerful grip of both worlds. Just as Charlotte Brontë grew both in mind and soul, so did Emily ; it is idle to think she differed so much from her family. Mrs. Gaskell has done ill by Emily in describing her as *hard*, and as giving all her love to animals ; but those who love animals cannot truly dislike human beings, and Paul Emanuel is described by Charlotte as having a great love for his little dog. In Chapter XII of *Shirley*, M. Heger, as Robert Moore, is discussed by Caroline and Shirley, and his love of animals is mentioned in his favour. Mrs. Gaskell made a mistake in attributing this to Charlotte Brontë.

In Charlotte’s letter, published in *The Times* on 29th July, 1913, she says, with reference to the starting of a school at the Haworth parsonage, “ Emily does not care much for teaching, but she would look after the housekeeping, and, although something of a recluse, she is too good-hearted not to do all she could for the well-being of the children. Moreover she is very generous.” Good-hearted and generous ! those words describe the “ Sphinx of Literature,” the incomparable Emily Brontë.

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë*, by Clement K. Shorter.

In a conversation that I had with Martha Brown's sister, she described Emily as being kind and generous to all in the home, and she believed Emily died of a broken heart for love of her brother Branwell, because she realised what he might have been if he had been guided aright. It is strange that it was Emily who had most sympathy for Branwell; seeing Charlotte had suffered for love of her master, she ought to have had more pity for her brother. Besides M. Heger's story, and his passionate personality, Emily had two studies before her—Charlotte's passion for M. Heger and Branwell's for Mrs. Robinson—but Branwell was not in keeping with her hero: he was too weak, and Charlotte's fierce passion resulted in fevers, deliriums and bad dreams, caused by her poignant regrets on leaving Brussels.

Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* trampled on every code of a wife's duty to her husband, but if her delirium, in which she fasted for three days, is studied, it is easy to see that Edgar Linton is based upon old Patrick Brontë, who had a sad time with his headstrong daughter. (Emily does not give anything of a real husband's feelings in Edgar Linton's indifference to Cathy's state after she locks herself in her own room, subsequent to her mad fit of temper, when she wishes to spite Edgar by dying. This is not only a weak character, but it is treated with lack of knowledge.) Cathy says, "I'll choose between these two: either to starve at once—that would be no punishment unless he had a heart—or to recover and leave the country."

" . . . . These three awful nights I've never closed my lids—and oh, I've been tormented! I've been haunted, Nelly! But I begin to fancy you don't like me. How strange! I thought, though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me. And they have all turned to enemies in a few hours: *they* have, I'm positive; the people *here*. How dreary to meet death, surrounded by their cold faces! Isabella, terrified and repelled, afraid to enter the room, it would be so dreadful to watch Catherine go. And Edgar standing solemnly by to see it over; then offering prayers of thanks to God for restoring peace to his house, and

going back to his *books* ! What in the name of all that feels has he to do with *books*, when I am dying ? ” Charlotte Brontë says in one of her letters to M. Heger : “ Oh, it is certain that I shall see you again one day—it must be so—for as soon as I shall have enough money to go to Brussels I shall go there—and I shall see you again, if only for a moment ” ; evidently like Cathy she had resolved either to die or go to Brussels.

The incident of the two locks of hair which Nelly Dean twisted together and enclosed in a locket worn by the dead Cathy is mentioned in *Shirley*, and possibly has some connection with Charlotte Brontë.

It was the sense of beauty—indispensable to the creative artist—that Emily, with her visions, saw in Charlotte’s dreams, and in meditating on these, Emily created her novel. Charlotte Brontë varied in her estimation of M. Heger just as Cathy did in the case of Heathcliff. Did Charlotte find out that Emily had some regard for M. Heger, and did Emily discover Charlotte’s secret from her deliriums ?

Emily describes Isabel Linton’s admiration for Heathcliff, and Cathy in her amazement pictures him to Isabel as “ an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone,” whilst Isabel says, “ All, all is against me : she has blighted my single consolation. But she uttered falsehoods, didn’t she ? Mr. Heathcliff is not a fiend : he has an honourable soul, and a true one.” Genius never fully discovers itself till brought into contact with fellow genius, and both Emily and Charlotte found in M. Heger a character that altered all their former opinions of men. (A novelist who sees something exciting in life, cannot refrain from transmitting the vision to others ; she must tell the story in some way.) Emily had written verses, but they did not convey all she wanted to tell, and, when Charlotte suggested that the three sisters should each write a novel, Emily had hers ready to hand. She had meditated on M. Heger, on Charlotte and her fevers, dreams, and deliriums, and on Branwell. All her life she had been brooding over the mysteries of love and death, and when it is remembered that *Wuthering Heights* was begun in the latter part of 1845, or early in 1846, it is not a matter for surprise that “ Over it

there broods a horror of great darkness," and that "in its storm-heated and electrical atmosphere, we seem to breathe lightning," to quote Charlotte Brontë, for it was in January, 1844, that Charlotte came home infatuated with her "Master, and from that time to the end of 1845 she was frantic for letters from him, and in the very depths of despair for a sight of him—a monomaniac, as she describes herself. Charlotte in some phases stood for Cathy, and Emily created the *intensely* passionate Heathcliff to match her, but it is the spirit of the two that matters to the exclusion of everything else.

In one of her poems Emily writes—

Watch in love by a fevered pillow,  
Cooling the fever with pity's balm ;  
Safe as the petrel on tossing billow,  
Safe in mine own soul's golden calm !

Guardian-angel he lacks no longer ;  
Evil fortune he need not fear :  
Fate is strong, but love is stronger ;  
And *my* love is truer than angel-care."

As Charlotte and Emily tramped the moors "to the damage of their shoes, but the benefit of their health," Charlotte told her sister of her sorrow and anguish, and Emily had to bear with her for nearly two years. We read in her letter, dated November, 1845, "I have denied myself absolutely the pleasure of speaking about you—even to Emily ; but I have been able to conquer neither my regrets nor my impatience." It is easy to understand Charlotte's never-ending sorrow for the loss of Emily, for it was she who comforted and bore with her during this wretched time. If Charlotte wrote down her dreams, and Emily wrote of her deliriums during her illness, no wonder Charlotte said on preparing a new edition of *Wuthering Heights* that, on looking over the papers, they left her prostrate and caused her sleepless nights.

A year and a half after Charlotte's miserable home-coming, Branwell was dismissed in July, 1845, and he returned to Haworth frantically mad for the love of Mrs. Robinson. He had been at Thorpe Green two and a half years, though in the Preface to *Emily Brontë's Complete Poems*, it is stated

under date March, 1844, "Branwell got worse and worse, drinking heavily to excess," which is quite untrue.

Here was Emily, the patient housekeeper, with a love-sick brother and sister, both incapable of controlling their thoughts or feelings. It is not surprising that Charlotte said that Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation if they could not believe the scenes pictured in *Wuthering Heights*. We see Emily trying to comfort both Charlotte and Branwell, and yet keeping her own counsel. In a letter now privately printed by Mr. Wise, Charlotte says she could bear to let Anne go because she seemed to belong to God; but she wanted to hold Emily back when she died, and she felt that for years afterwards.

Emily's spirit seemed strong enough to bear her to fulness of years, and Charlotte never ceased to mourn for her.

It becomes necessary to find some reason for Emily writing, at white heat, *Wuthering Heights*—a live document. Surely it was because she could not help herself. She heard Charlotte's passionate story, and she most probably heard the record of her dreams and knew of her pitiful letters. Lucy Snowe tells of sending letters to Paul Emanuel, but before she sent them she wrote another version for herself, and in those long, sleepless nights of 1844 and 1845 Charlotte probably wrote her thoughts.

It seems quite probable that Charlotte Brontë did write her passionate thoughts which have found their way into *Wuthering Heights*, and afterwards she discarded them. Possibly, they told too much, for in her poems—*Frances*, *Apostacy*, *Gilbert*, and the long poem in *The Professor*, she tells her heart's secrets without any reserve. Did she first write her thoughts in prose? She was the soul of truth and could not conceal her feelings. As more and more of her life is revealed, we see how that life is reflected in her novels. In her preface to *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë says, "Nor is even the first heroine of the name (Cathy) destitute of a certain strange beauty in her fierceness, or of honesty in the midst of perverted passion and passionate perversity." In after years Charlotte probably saw her infatuation as such.

Over and over again, *Wuthering Heights* has been described as a dream, a nightmare, and certain scenes *are* veritable nightmares. Mrs. Humphry Ward calls it a baseless nightmare. Now we know that Charlotte, like Cathy, did actually have dreams and fever : that, like Cathy, she was delirious : that she resembled Caroline Helstone, who, when ill, was pining for Robert Gerard Moore : and like Jane Eyre, who longed for Rochester, when ill at Morton, after leaving Thornfield, it is easy to see that there was some foundation for the character of Cathy. If Cathy owes something to Charlotte then there is only M. Heger for Heathcliff, who undoubtedly is a different type of lover from Rochester, Moore, or Paul Emanuel, although all are drawn from the same original. Some of the scenes in *Wuthering Heights* were suggested to Emily Brontë by what she saw in her own home.

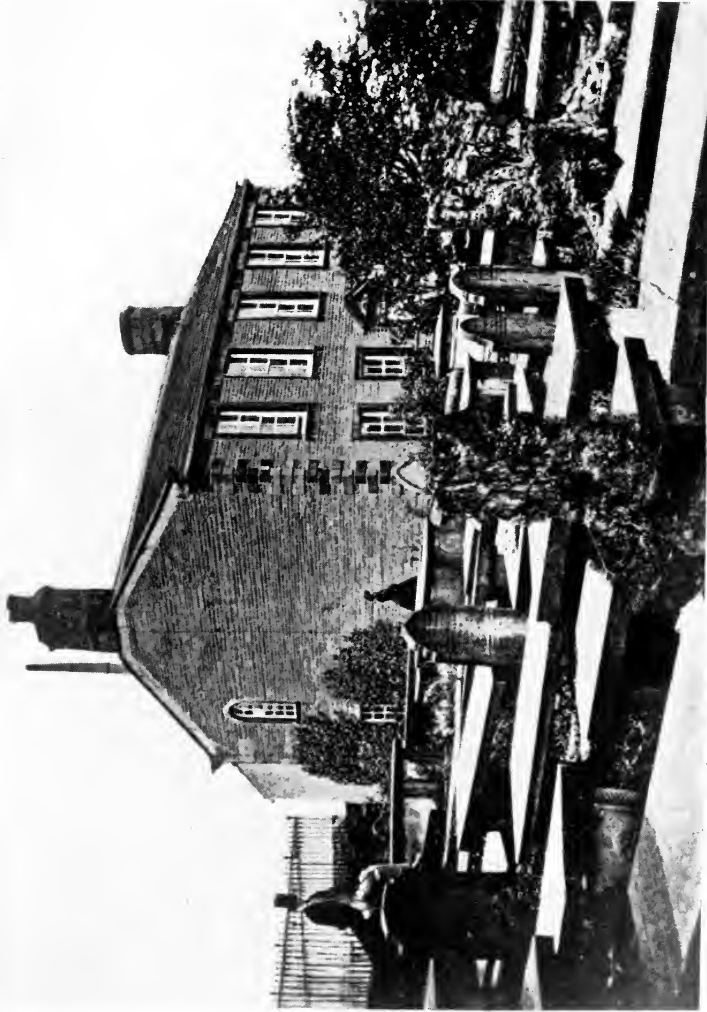
It is hardly fair to say that Emily's genius was entirely introspective, for the one novel breathes the very atmosphere she was surrounded by in 1844-46. It was the passionate intensity of vision which moved her to write her masterpiece. (What she saw she felt compelled to transmit, and the emotion that is felt by the reader of certain passages in *Wuthering Heights* must have been felt in greater intensity by Emily Brontë when she was writing her novel.) Like Byron she possessed

“ A fount of fiery life  
Which served for a Titanic strife ” ;

and as Charlotte says of this best beloved sister whom she addressed as “ Mine bonnie love ”—“ having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done.”

It is probable that Emily and Charlotte occupied the same bedroom. The present rector of Haworth thinks that the tiny room over the passage, which was said to be Emily's, could scarcely have been used as a bedroom, as it is only ten feet by five ; in any case, if Emily did not sleep in the same room, she would certainly have to nurse Charlotte in her illness, for Charlotte was ill during 1844-45. Emily, good and faithful, would keep old Tabby away as much as possible.

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HAWORTH VICARAGE

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It would not be too much to say that the two sisters agreed to write a novel, Emily writing of Charlotte and an imaginary lover and Charlotte writing of Emily and Crimsworth, which for the nonce represented M. Heger, as the conversations relating to the *devoirs* are certainly founded on actual remarks made on Emily's work at Brussels, for both sisters put into their novels much of their own life. In the light of the recently published Brontë letters in *The Times*, it is certainly remarkable that Sydney Dobell should say in the *Palladium* in 1850, "Let her (the author) rejoice if she can again give us such an elaboration of a rare and fearful form of mental disease—so terribly strong, so exquisitely subtle—with such nicety in its transitions, such intimate symptomatic truth in its details, as to be at once a psychological and medical study. It has been said of Shakespeare, that he drew cases which the physician might study; Currer Bell has done no less." This critique was written when the writer insisted that *Wuthering Heights* was written by Charlotte Brontë, and it is an open question whether she did write down her dreams and nightmares. Seeing that it was Charlotte Brontë who had fever and delirium, and that, according to her letter to M. Heger, she pined away, would it be possible for her to remember the thoughts passing through her mind? Does not this fact point to Emily as the nurse who takes Nelly Dean's place, and records the deliriums?

Sydney Dobell, in answering Charlotte Brontë, suggests a *double entente*, but the scenes in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, which are similar, are not to be compared for passion, though the fact that Charlotte was delirious accounts for some of the scenes which she may have copied from *Wuthering Heights*, which are given by Emily. Compare the case of Cathy in the locked and haunted room with Jane Eyre under similar circumstances; it is quite possible for Emily to be in the place of Nelly Dean and to be able to tell the tale quite graphically, and at the same time for Charlotte to relate it in *Jane Eyre* as it appeared to her. Charlotte Brontë admits to M. Heger in one of her letters, "Day and night I find neither rest nor peace. If I sleep I am disturbed by

tormenting dreams, in which I see you always severe, always grave, always incensed against me," and, in a letter to Mr. Williams commenting on Thackeray's genius, Charlotte Brontë says, "*he* borrows nothing from fever; his is never the energy of delirium." Surely it was a dream when Heathcliff visited Cathy just before her death; only a woman in the throes of delirium would hold a lover down and say "I wish I could hold you . . . . till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't *you* suffer?" "I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, 'That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw? I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is passed. I have loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must leave them!' Will you say so, Heathcliff?" There is a scene in *Shirley* based on this dream in the chapter on *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, and the author says: "I was appalled and dared not rise to seek pencil and paper by the dim watchlight." Charlotte, in her recently published letters, tells of writing to ease her suffering, but, as she had been warned to tone down her letters, she writes her highly strung thoughts in solitude for herself. In Chapter XII, there is Cathy's three days' fast and her fever which point to the ravings of delirium. A dreaming mind is said to be a powerful although a primitive mind, and, if all dreams are based on a wish, it is easy to see the origin of Charlotte's dreams at this time.

Nightmare has been defined as the suppression of an urgent wish; if this definition is correct, then it is easy to trace Charlotte Brontë's nightmares during the year 1844 and 1845, when she was regretting having left M. Heger and longing to see him, if only for a moment. It is thus plain to see why *Wuthering Heights* has been attributed to Charlotte Brontë, and why she said she possessed no real claim to it. Parts of the novel are based on her dreams, nightmares, fevers and her infatuation for M. Heger, but Emily was the nurse just as Nelly Dean was to Cathy; and just as Cathy told her dreams

to Nelly and she in turn related them to Lockwood, so Charlotte Brontë told her dreams to Emily who wove them into her novel, though the effect of this pitiful state of Charlotte urged Emily to create a cruel Heathcliff. Added to this is Emily's own experience. Charlotte tells us that *Wuthering Heights* was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials.

The wild workshop was the Haworth parsonage on the desolate moors, and the homely materials Emily found in her own home. "He (Ellis Bell) wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations." Well might Charlotte Brontë use the word *meditations* rather than *imaginations*. Emily, the brave visionary, saw power and strength in Charlotte's and Branwell's infatuation, but she also saw the evil that a passionate, selfish spirit could accomplish, because it could not have its own way and realise its own ardent wish. Because Heathcliff could not possess Cathy, body and soul, he trampled on every human being that came in his way, and took his revenge by destroying all who had in any way opposed him.

"'I seek no revenge on you,' replied Heathcliff less vehemently. 'That's not the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against him; they crush those beneath them.'" There is much expressed by Emily here.

The character of Heathcliff was not to Charlotte Brontë's liking, and it is possible that, if Emily had used him again, she would have toned down some of the traits in his character. Emily had her own troubles, but she sacrificed herself in her efforts to comfort other members of the family.

*Wuthering Heights* has been described by Mr. Dobell as "the unformed writing of a giant's hand; the large utterance of a baby god." Had he known Emily Brontë he would have recognised how well his words applied to her, rather than to Charlotte. Although he did not quite understand Charlotte's disclaimer, he wrote asking her to visit him and his wife in their home near Cheltenham, saying, "We will talk over *Wuthering Heights* together, and I will ask you to tell me

everything you can remember of its wonderful author. I see how freely I may speak to you of my estimate of her genius." He would not have pressed her to discuss Emily's novel, if he had known that it contained records of the darkest time of her life when she was writing to M. Heger, and that is just the part that puzzled Sydney Dobell. "I shall not re-read this letter. I send it as I have written it. Nevertheless, I have a hidden consciousness that some people, cold and common sense in reading it would say—'She is talking nonsense.' I would avenge myself on such persons in no other way than by wishing them one single day of the torments which I have suffered for eight months. We should then see if they would not talk nonsense, too." So writes Charlotte to M. Heger in November, 1845. And again "One suffers in silence so long as one has the strength so to do, and when that strength gives out one speaks without too carefully measuring one's words." That is the passionate Cathy, with her torments and her unbridled tongue in *Wuthering Heights*, as Emily describes her.

What makes a hero, is *less* the deeds of the figure chosen than the understanding sympathy of the artist with the figure. Emily Brontë had loved, but the loved one was beyond her. Whether it was an ideal or a person matters not; her passion soars beyond that of any other woman writer. At times she seems choked in expressing herself. It has been said there is no language for spirits, but Emily Brontë approached as near as any writer in the conversation between Cathy and Heathcliff; it was spirit speaking to spirit. Charlotte Brontë attempted a similar task, but never attained the same heights, though Jane Eyre said to Rochester, "It is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are!"

Hate is a source of inspiration just as love is, and it has been responsible for many works of creative genius. Shelley's poems owed much to his hatred of tyranny and conventionality. Granted that Emily Brontë saw in M. Heger an ideal, when she found that Charlotte's passion for him was treated with

contempt and that Branwell's mad love for Mrs. Robinson made him an object of derision, she may have been inspired to make Heathcliff as the type of a passionate lover, brutal and unforgiving ; and yet his end is his longing for Heaven—his union with Cathy. "O God ! It is a long fight, I wish it were over !"—and later when death draws near he exclaims, "I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself." It may be asked finally why Emily Brontë created such a character as Heathcliff to mate with Cathy, since, with his fierce passion, he killed the woman he loved. Charlotte answers this question in the preface to *Wuthering Heights* where she says the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master, something which at times strangely wills and works for itself ; and in support of this she quotes from Job xxxix 10, where it says : "Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow ? or will he harrow the valleys after thee ?" She also makes use of verse 7 : "He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver." *Wuthering Heights* is the outcome of a great mind ; it is not meant for human enjoyment or human opposition. It is there, and we may take it or leave it.

In Charlotte Brontë's novels the love of the woman is always greater than that of the man, and the heroines Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone, and Lucy Snowe long for love first, but in Emily's there is equality in the love. Charlotte refers to this in her preface, when she says Ellis Bell could never be brought to comprehend that faithfulness and clemency, long-suffering and loving-kindness, which are esteemed virtues in the daughters of Eve, become foibles in the sons of Adam. "The intensity of the passion between Heathcliff and Cathy leaves the readers with the firm conviction that it is immortal, so beautifully expressed in the concluding words of the novel. "I lingered round them, under that benign sky ; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth."

And we hear Cathy's voice twenty years after her death as given in the third chapter—

“ ‘Let me in—let me in!’

“ ‘Who are you?’ I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

“ ‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied. . . . ‘I’m come home : I’d lost my way on the moor!’ ”

And in the last chapter we see the boy on the moor with “a sheep and two lambs before him : he was crying terribly ; . . . . ‘what is the matter, my little man?’ I asked.

“ ‘There’s Heathcliff and a woman yonder, under t’ Nab,’ he blubbered, ‘un I darnut pass ’em.’ ”

“ I saw nothing ; but neither the sheep nor he would go on ; so I bid him take the road lower down.”

( As the story begins with one spirit crying to another in distress, it appropriately ends with the two who haunt the moors together for evermore. )

## CHAPTER XXV

### CHARLOTTE AND ANNE BRONTË'S VISIT TO LONDON DEATH OF BRANWELL AND EMILY BRONTË

ANNE BRONTË and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*—Branwell Brontë and Anne's second novel—Charlotte and Anne Brontë visit London—They stay at the Chapter Coffee House—Interview with the publishers—Visit to the Opera—Death of Branwell and Emily Brontë.

ALTHOUGH of the members of the family at Haworth parsonage Anne Brontë had the least claim to genius—though, if she had not been overshadowed by her sisters, she might have ranked higher—such was her delight on the acceptance by the publishers of *Agnes Grey* that she set to work on a second novel. Mr. Newby, the publisher, remarked that he considered *Wuthering Heights* a dreadful book, and it seems that *Agnes Grey* was the first of the trio of novels to get accepted.

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was probably the first temperance novel, and it was written with a purpose. Charlotte Brontë loved to act as censor, and she considered that the subject was not by any means suitable for her sister to deal with, but Anne was determined, and she wrote from a most conscientious motive. Some of the reviewers found much fault with this novel; it was considered exaggerated, which Anne Brontë denied in the preface of the second edition. She affirmed that the story was true enough, though she admitted that the profligate—the principal character, "Arthur Huntingdon"—was an extreme case. "I wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral." Charlotte Brontë says that the choice of subject was an entire mistake, though the motives which dictated this choice were pure. "She (Anne Brontë) had, in the course of her life, been called on to contemplate near at hand, and for a long time, the terrible effects of talents misused, and faculties abused. . . . She brooded over it, till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail

(of course with fictitious characters, incidents and situations) as a warning to others."

It is a pity that whenever a bad character appears in a Brontë novel, or one of the characters appears in an unfavourable light, either in speech or action, poor Branwell should get the credit of being the original. Almost every writer on the Brontës attributes Huntingdon and his vices to Branwell Brontë. The Haworth friends, who knew the best as well as the worst of Branwell, emphatically denied it, and it is certain that Charlotte Brontë's allusion to the characters in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has been misunderstood. Anne Brontë would never have betrayed her only brother by portraying him as a drunken profligate; she was too loyal to her home to expose any member in this manner, and, moreover, it is incomprehensible how anyone can for a moment think that a married man, such as Huntingdon is portrayed, could ever be said to have had an original in Branwell Brontë.

Charlotte's remarks apply to a Mr. C——, a curate near Haworth, of whom she writes in a letter to Ellen Nussey—

"Mrs. C—— came here the other day, with a most melancholy tale of her wretched husband's drunken, extravagant, profligate habits. . . .

"I am morally certain no decent woman could experience anything but aversion towards such a man as Mr. ——. Before I knew, or suspected his character, and when I rather wondered at his versatile talents, I felt it in an uncontrollable degree. I hated to talk with him—hated to look at him; though as I was not certain that there was substantial reason for such a dislike, and thought it absurd to trust to mere instinct, I both concealed and repressed the feeling as much as I could; and, on all occasions, treated him with as much civility as I was mistress of. I was struck with Mary's<sup>1</sup> expression of a similar feeling at first sight; she said, when we left him, 'That is a hideous man, Charlotte!' I thought 'he is indeed.'"

The Squire, Mr. Lawrence, in *Wildfell Hall* and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* have something in common, both being

<sup>1</sup> Mary Taylor.



accused of "excessive reserve" and "an aversion to showy displays of feeling."

When Mr. Newby accepted *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* he sold the sheets of the novel to an American publisher, and caused it to be understood that the story was by the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey*, thus creating the impression that the three novels were written by the same person. Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., Charlotte Brontë's publishers, had arranged to sell the sheets of her next novel to a certain publisher in America, but when *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was advertised as by the author of *Jane Eyre*, the American publishers at once asked Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. for an explanation. They in turn wrote to Haworth parsonage, and caused such a commotion in that quiet household, that Charlotte quickly arranged to take Anne with her to London in order to "confront Newby with the lie," after taking the advice of Mr. George Smith. Charlotte Brontë was always careful not to offend Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., who had treated her in a manner so different from the publishers with whom Emily and Anne had had to deal. The hurried preparations, the walk on a July day through a thunderstorm from the vicarage to Keighley—a hard four mile walk—a railway journey from Keighley to Leeds, and then a night journey to London had sufficient excitement to suit Charlotte immensely. Anne, however, was quiet and serene, and probably slept during the night travel. Charlotte had been interested in London when she had passed through on her way to and from Brussels, and the chance of visiting it again, even when on an unpleasant errand, satisfied her love of change and excitement.

The arrival at Euston at seven o'clock on that Saturday morning afforded something for Anne to look back upon, for she had never been out of Yorkshire before. The two sisters went straight to Charlotte's old quarters at the Chapter Coffee House in Paternoster Row. The proprietor was doubtless surprised to see two quaintly dressed country women asking if they could have breakfast and lodgings for the week-end. After a meal, they meant to get a cab to Cornhill, but in their confusion they managed to cross the road and walk to number

65 Cornhill ; Mr. Smith tells us it occupied nearly an hour to cover the half-mile.

It is an old story how they walked into what was apparently a bookseller's shop, and asked for Mr. George Smith. After waiting a while, they were received by the busy editor, and Charlotte placed in his hand the letter which he had sent her. Mutual recognition resulted, and it was now Mr. Smith's turn to become excited : "*You wrote Jane Eyre,*" he exclaimed, looking at the little woman. Charlotte laughed at Mr. Smith's question, and admitted the authorship, and after "talk, talk, talk," they found their way back to the Chapter Coffee House. In the evening Mr. Smith called upon them, accompanied by his mother, his sisters and Mr. Williams, and it was decided that the whole party should go to the Opera to see *The Barber of Seville*.

Charlotte was elated at the prospect, while Anne was quiet and composed, as she always was, so Charlotte tells us. Charlotte, on the other hand, was all excitement, and she found it necessary to take a strong dose of sal-volatile before entering the carriage with her visitors.

Mr. Williams remembered Charlotte Brontë saying : "You know I am not accustomed to this kind of thing," as she leaned on his arm when ascending the steps of the Opera House.

Mary Taylor received a good and detailed account from Charlotte Brontë, which Mrs. Gaskell published.

The sisters refused to accept an invitation to stay with Mr. Smith's mother at 4 Westbourne Place, Bishop's Road, preferring to be independent. Charlotte loved the stir and bustle of the City, and in *Villette* she says—

"Since those days, I have seen the West End, the parks, the fine squares ; but I love the City far better. The City seems so much more in earnest ; its business, its rush, its roar are such serious things, sights, sounds. The City is getting its living—the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the City you are deeply excited."

The sisters had to pass through Kensington Gardens on their way to the home of Mr. Williams, where they took tea. They

were struck by "the beauty of the scene, the fresh verdure of the turf, and the soft rich masses of foliage," and still more were they struck by the soft and varied intonation of the voices of the people in the South compared with the rough and blunt speech of the North.

This visit to London was the subject of much conversation for a long time in the Haworth vicarage, and when some years afterwards Martha Brown, the servant, had an opportunity of visiting London, she was much interested in Paternoster Row and the Chapter Coffee House as well as the publishing firm in Cornhill. She had assured Charlotte Brontë that she should visit the two latter places and tell them that she came from Haworth parsonage. "You never will, Martha!" said Charlotte. "But I will," replied Martha, in her broad Yorkshire, and her sister, Mrs. Ratcliffe, affirmed that she carried out her intention in part by making herself known at the Chapter Coffee House to the waiter, whilst at Cornhill she was content with seeing the young man behind the counter on which were books, some of which had "Currer Bell" on the cover. Her courage failed, however, and she did not dare to ask for the head of the firm, which very much amused Charlotte Brontë.

After the two sisters had returned to Haworth, Charlotte worked hard at *Shirley*. Mrs. Gaskell does not tell us much that happened when Charlotte and Anne visited Mr. Newby, but Mary Taylor, in one of her letters, says: "What did Newby say when he met the real Ellis Bell?"<sup>1</sup> which is strange, seeing that it was Currer and Acton that went to see him. The matter was left mainly in the hands of Mr. George Smith, who was not successful in obtaining the money due to the Brontë sisters, Emily and Anne.

Branwell was causing trouble in the home, and the sisters were keeping the secret of their authorship not only from him, but also from their friends. Whilst in London they adopted the name of Brown, and they were determined that the secret should not leak out through them. It was about this time,

<sup>1</sup> Evidently an error as in her next letter she refers to Emily as the author of *Wuthering Heights*.

when Branwell was drinking heavily, that he narrowly escaped with his life. Having gone to bed drunk, he managed to set his bedclothes on fire, and Charlotte, passing the bedroom, saw the flames and called to Emily, who quickly threw water over the bed and partly dragged and partly carried Branwell to her own room. It was all a matter of a few moments, and after giving up her own bed she contented herself with the couch in the dining-room, the one on which she breathed her last. That horsehair sofa is still in use in Bradford, though, when I last saw it, it was in a house near the vicarage at Haworth.

Mr. Clement Shorter has questioned this incident, which Miss Robinson first mentioned in her monograph on Emily Brontë, but the account is quite true. The story was confirmed by Dr. Ingham, the Haworth doctor who attended some of the members of the Brontë family. As Mr. Brontë was still living when Mrs. Gaskell collected her information, Dr. Ingham did not volunteer any details about the family, though he was able afterwards to point out several errors in the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

Branwell Brontë's health was completely undermined by his drinking habits, and in fact he was slowly dying of consumption. Mrs. Ratcliffe told me that he became a mere skeleton. She well remembers the last time he was in her father's house, when she and her sisters were teasing him because his clothes hung on him so loosely; they asked him if he had got his father's coat on. Poor fellow! he was dead two days afterwards. John Brown, the sexton, went to see him in his bedroom on the day that he died, and he affirmed that Branwell did not die standing up, as stated by Mrs. Gaskell. From what the father told Mr. Brown, Branwell lost all his bravado; he raised himself a little, as the last paroxysm came on, just before he died, and was very penitent and prayed for forgiveness from all the members of the family. He whispered "Amen" after his father had prayed by the bedside.

Haworth mourned for this misguided brother, for with all his faults he was a favourite. In his early days, much was expected of the brilliant youth, who, it was hoped, would hand down the name of Brontë to future generations as one worthy of being remembered.

According to the old servants, Emily mourned most for the brother. "She died of a broken heart for love of her brother Branwell," said Martha Brown's sister. She realised what he might have been, had he been trained and guided aright. Charlotte seemed surprised that Branwell should have died so soon, but Emily, who waited for him, night after night, probably knew that the end was not far off. She was the only sister who wrote stanzas to his memory. Charlotte had lost patience with him and, if Haworth tales are to be believed, she did not speak to him for weeks together before his death. Anne, like Emily, pitied him; she writes of his illness and of his having much tribulation when at Thorpe Green, and, like Emily, she hoped "He would be better, and do better in the future."

The funeral was the first after the aunt's death. All the family attended, as well as the Browns, and a neighbouring clergyman. Emily went back to the house broken-hearted; she was present at the funeral service on the following Sunday, and that was the last time she was out of doors. It was September, and a cold on the chest developed lung trouble. At all costs a doctor should have been consulted, whether she agreed or not. Charlotte's pitiful appeal to Mr. Williams for help and advice is sad reading, but it needed a stronger will than Charlotte's to deal with Emily. What the father was thinking of is a puzzle, but Emily was considered to be the strong member of the family. When Tabby was old and feeble, it was Emily who took her place in the early morning, and it was she who traversed the moors in all sorts of weather with her dogs at her heels.

Charlotte and Anne had a sad time during the illness of Emily, who seemed to be a fatalist, and was prepared to suffer rather than yield and consult a doctor. In early December Charlotte searched the moors for one sprig of heather, however faded, but Emily was too ill to appreciate it. The old servants said that she dreaded giving trouble; she had great faith in her own strong will power. Well might she write in her *Last Lines*, "No coward soul is mine."

There are few more pathetic scenes described in literature

than that of Emily Brontë in her dying moments. Getting out of bed, she tried to comb her hair before the fire, but such was her weakness that the comb fell from her hand into the fire. Martha Brown was near, and the poor, dying Emily gasped, "See, Martha, my comb has fallen into the fire, and I cannot get it." Martha picked it up and recognised that Emily had not long to live. After dressing herself she was quite exhausted and remarked, "I will see a doctor now," but it was too late; she leaned on the couch and passed quietly away. The brave, heroic spirit was quenched, and Charlotte and Anne, with the old father, had to suffer another and a greater bereavement.

There is not the slightest doubt that Emily might have lived longer if she had received medical aid in time, but "while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity."

The old comb, with a piece burnt out, that fell from Emily's grasp, is now in my possession. It was the last thing that Emily held, and, when she could no longer retain it in her hand, she realised that she was meeting death, of which she had so often written.

Haworth had scarcely recovered from the shock of Branwell's death, when the old church bell tolled for Emily, the pride of the family, and the willing helper of the old servants. She whom none had quite understood was taken from them, and the parsonage had lost its most helpful inmate. There are no letters of Anne's to show her grief, but, if Charlotte missed the sister "who made the sunshine of her life," what must Anne have felt, to whom Emily had been as a second mother? Anne was frail and timid, though brave, as all the Brontës were, but Emily was always ready to shield and defend her. The little gate of death at the end of the garden had once more to be unlocked to permit of another sad procession to wind its way through to the church. The poor, broken-hearted father, Charlotte, Anne, the servants and the curate, Mr. Nicholls, were there. The whole village gathered round the grave; it was pitiful that Emily—the Major, as she was called, because of her smart, soldierly bearing—should so soon have followed Branwell to his last, long home.

"As the old bereaved father and his two surviving children followed the coffin to the grave, they were joined by Keeper, Emily's fierce, faithful bull-dog. He walked alongside of the mourners, and into the church, and stayed quietly there all the time that the burial service was being read. When he came home, he lay down at Emily's chamber door, and howled pitifully for many days."

Charlotte Brontë's letters at this time are sad reading: there is no rebellion. She would know from Emily's poetry that death was welcome to this child of nature. Her poems are full of an ache for the release of the spirit; the body seemed to clog it, and it may be that she longed for rest and welcomed death. The date of her poem entitled *Death* is 1843, the year after she left Brussels. If Emily Brontë could have chosen her grave, it would not have been in the cold, damp church, but on the wild moors.

"DEATH.

Death! that struck when I was most confiding  
 In my certain faith of joy to be—  
 Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing  
 From the fresh root of Eternity!

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish  
 Where that perished sapling used to be;  
 Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish  
 That from which it springs—Eternity."

Charlotte tells how, as Emily's physical strength diminished, mentally she grew stronger. "Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love." Emily Brontë's *Last Lines* must have been written at this time.

"No coward soul is mine,  
 No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere;  
 I see Heaven's glories shine,  
 And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,  
 Almighty, ever-present Deity!  
 Life—that in me has rest,  
 As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds  
 That move men's hearts : unutterably vain ;  
 Worthless as withered weeds,  
 Or idle froth amid the boundless main.

To waken doubt in one,  
 Holding so fast by Thine infinity ;  
 So surely anchored on  
 The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love  
 Thy spirit animates eternal years,  
 Pervades and broods above,  
 Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,  
 And suns and universes ceased to be,  
 And Thou wert left alone,  
 Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,  
 Nor atom nor his might could render void ;  
 Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,  
 And what Thou art may never be destroyed."

Much as Charlotte felt the loss, she tried to be resigned. "Emily suffers no more from pain or weakness now. She will never suffer more in this world. . . . There is no Emily in time or on earth now. Yesterday we put her poor, wasted, mortal frame quietly under the church pavement. We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise ? The anguish of seeing her suffer is over ; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by ; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime. But it is God's will, and the place where she is gone is better than that she has left." Poor Charlotte ! left with delicate Anne to struggle through that hard winter of 1848-1849.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### SHIRLEY

1848-1849

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S preparations for writing the story—Difficulties in her way—The curates in *Shirley*—Charlotte Brontë and Mr. A. B. Nicholls—Characters in the novel—Writing of the novel laid aside owing to Anne Brontë's death—The story continued and completed—Reception of *Shirley*—Mrs. Gaskell's first letter to Charlotte Brontë—The curates in the story recognised and defended.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË commenced *Shirley* in the spring of 1848, after having fixed on a subject. Mr. Butterfield of Keighley said she had asked his opinion about writing a novel based on the Chartist movement, but he dissuaded her, and then, possibly at the suggestion of her father, she gathered all the information she could on the Luddites, obtaining the loan of old copies of the *Leeds Mercury* for 1812, '13 and '14, and taking notes, as well as getting information from her father, her Birstall and Gomersal friends, and the Wooler family at Dewsbury. Mr. Brontë, Miss Wooler and the Nusseys took the side of the masters, being Tories and staunch church folk. The Taylors of Gomersal were Nonconformists and Radicals, and took the side of the people.

*Shirley* was the book that was written on the rebound of the popularity of *Jane Eyre* : the success, in spite of some scathing reviews, had given Charlotte a great zest for her work and a desire to excel, but when she exerted herself most she seemed to please least. She had fixed on *Hollows Mill* for the title ; later she hesitated between *Fieldhead* and *Shirley*, and her publishers decided on *Shirley*.

It was a happy thought to immortalise her sister, but, by the time twenty-three chapters had been written, the old parsonage was full of trouble : Branwell was very ill and had become a slave to opium. Emily at this time was assisting in the housework and rendering what help she could to her miserable brother. It was quite in agreement with Emily's

unselfishness to release Charlotte as much as possible, so that she could get her second novel finished.

It is easy to see why Charlotte had no patience to talk to Branwell; she had her novel to write, and it engaged all her thoughts. The kindness she had received from her publishers made her very anxious to please. *Shirley* was not a story in the first person, as was the case with *Jane Eyre*; she had to make the chapters fit in, and create the characters, which to Charlotte Brontë was far from being an easy task. *Shirley* never touched the heights realised in *Jane Eyre* and later in *Villette*.

Just as Mrs. Gaskell wrote *Cranford* on the rebound after *Mary Barton*, and proved that she could write a humorous as well as a sad story, so Charlotte Brontë, though almost devoid of the saving grace of humour, tried to raise a laugh in *Shirley*, if only at the curates. Unlike Mrs. Gaskell, she showed a tendency to become sarcastic rather than humorous, and the curates, except, perhaps, Mr. Nicholls, were not too pleased with the liberty which had been taken with their characters, and above all, with their office. Moreover, Charlotte Brontë had been careful not to caricature her father's curate for the time being—Mr. Nicholls—as he might have retaliated and thus made it awkward for her father as well as for herself. Haworth people, who knew Charlotte Brontë and Mr. Nicholls too, thought that the flattering portrait that Charlotte drew of Mr. Nicholls as Mr. Macarthey was the first step in their love affair. Mr. Nicholls himself was extremely pleased to be shown in such a favourable light by the distinguished author, and especially that he should have been immortalised with so much eulogy. It is probable that he inferred that the novelist had a kind regard for him, which might grow into something more affectionate. Some of the villagers were none too proud of him, as they knew him well, and they agreed with old Mr. Brontë that he was not good enough for Charlotte. They thought *Shirley* was responsible to a great extent for the beginning of the love affair, though it is doubtful if Charlotte for one moment suspected it. Her independent spirit would have rebelled against the idea that

she could make the first advance, for she quite gave Ellen Nussey the impression that she did not like Mr. Nicholls in the early days, so that the favourable representation of him in *Shirley* may be taken as a clever bit of diplomacy. If *Jane Eyre* offended the Mrs. Grundy of the period, *Shirley* was not altogether pleasant reading for those nearest home. Outsiders could laugh at the curates' tea parties, but those in the Haworth district were quick to recognise the originals. The sexton's family was fond of telling how Mr. Nicholls nearly raised the roof with his boisterous laughter over the shortcomings of the curates, and *Shirley* pleased him far more than *Jane Eyre*. He was not a genius himself, and he could not detect genius in others very readily, but *Shirley* was more to his taste than either *Jane Eyre* or *Villette*.

Charlotte Brontë put some of her best work into *Shirley*, though the story is somewhat disjointed, and it does not, like *Jane Eyre*, carry the reader on by a mighty torrent. There is not in it the same passion and life, and the figures at certain times move like puppets at a show. Although Shirley Keeldar, who is based on Emily, or rather is what Emily would have been under such circumstances, figures as the heroine, Caroline Helstone is the most convincing character. Ellen Nussey liked to think that she herself was the original of Caroline Helstone, but, as a matter of fact, Charlotte Brontë put too much of herself in the character. Caroline Helstone is a much more modest figure than Jane Eyre, but Charlotte is there with her longing for love, though she does not betray herself quite so openly as Jane Eyre does. Harriet Martineau reviewed *Shirley* in the *Daily News*, but the criticism did not please Charlotte Brontë.

There are one or two reveries in *Shirley* that look like extracts from some old mystic ; the first was when Caroline and Shirley were together on the calm evening in the Briarmains churchyard, which is Birstall churchyard. "Nature is now at her evening prayers ; she is kneeling before those red hills. I see her prostrate on the great steps of her altar, praying for a fair night for mariners at sea, for travellers in deserts, for lambs on moors, and unfledged birds in woods. . . I see her, and I

will tell you what she is like : she is like what Eve was when she and Adam stood alone on earth."

The second is in the chapter on the "First Blue-Stocking," and was suggested by a *devoir* written by Charlotte and corrected by M. Heger. The original, which I have handled, is now in the possession of the Heger family ; it was written by Charlotte Brontë in 1843 when at the Heger pensionnat, and it is possible that she had this in mind when she wrote the chapter in *Shirley*, headed "The first blue-stockings—the account of the meeting of Genius and Humanity."

M. Heger wrote at the end of the *devoir* his own description of genius which differed from his pupil's.

Shirley Keeldar is quite an imaginary character, though said by Charlotte Brontë to be based on her sister Emily ; she does not ring quite true to life. Who could for a moment think of Shirley Keeldar as the author of *Wuthering Heights* !—it is impossible. Robert Moore has something of the temperament of Rochester, but he is not quite so coarse and brusque, though both owe much to M. Heger and also to Mr. Joshua Taylor. Louis Moore is not a good character, and he seems made to order for *Shirley*, and not at all quite real enough for the mistress of Fieldhead.

Mrs. Pryor owes something to Miss Margaret Wooller, but she is not one of Charlotte Brontë's best drawn characters. The Yorkes are the Taylors of Gomersal, true to life, and the houses which figure in the story are all to be found in the vicinity of Birstall and Gomersal, in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Helstone, "the old Cossack," owes much to Patrick Brontë, though the character is really founded on Hammond Roberson whom Charlotte Brontë only saw once, but she heard much concerning him from her father, the Taylors, Nusseys, and her schoolmistress, Miss Wooller.

Oakwell Hall—the Fieldhead of *Shirley*, and the home of Shirley Keeldar—is the most important house in the story. The Walkers, who lived there at the time that Charlotte Brontë visited the house with Ellen Nussey, were friends of the Nusseys. In Henry Nussey's diary he mentions the wedding of one of the Walkers of Oakwell Hall.



*Photo by*

## OAKWELL HALL

*Albert Lyles*

Figure 1 consists of two scatter plots. The left plot shows a positive correlation between the number of children and the number of adults, with a regression line indicating a positive slope. The right plot shows a negative correlation between the number of children and the number of adults, with a regression line indicating a negative slope.

On 6th October, 1908, I was privileged to go through every room in the house accompanied by the lady who lives there. With a copy of *Shirley* at hand it is easy to trace all the delightful scenes associated with this beautiful home. The large banqueting hall, "very sombre it was, long, vast and dark," is full of historic interest, dating from 1583, when the floor was strewn with rushes, and the hunters came back from the chase with their spoils and their dogs. The beautifully carved fret-work gates at the bottom of the stairs leading to the gallery were necessary then to keep the dogs from entering the upper rooms ; it was through those open gates, on to the gallery above, that Mr. Donne escaped from Tartar, one of the most graphic scenes in *Shirley*.

The old oak panels are still very handsome. "These shining brown panels are very yellow in colour and beautiful in effect," says Charlotte Brontë. The large window of two thousand diamond-shaped panes has many names scratched on it, the most distinguished being that of Charlotte Brontë, which may still be seen. Near the door hangs a framed invitation card for the last hunt held in the Birstall district ; it contains the names of the fourteen gentlemen who took part in the chase, and who afterwards dined in the banqueting hall from the venison they brought. In this hall is an arm-chair bought by Mrs. Maggs at Miss Nussey's sale in May 1898, because it was Charlotte Brontë's favourite chair when staying with the Nusseys. She sat in this chair when correcting the proofs of *Jane Eyre*. The gallery on one side of the hall is worn and slippery, and it slopes towards the room below. The bedrooms open on the gallery, and it was in one of these that Mr. Donne hid when Tartar was on his heels.

The story of the ghost and the bloody footprints which Mrs. Gaskell mentions in connection with the Batts, the original owners, are gone and this room has lost its importance, but as no ghost haunts the house now the tenant has supplanted it by a skeleton in the cupboard, this being the painting of a skeleton on the back of an old cupboard in the gallery. Fortunately the present tenants have not attempted to modernise the place, but have restored the hall to its former grandeur.

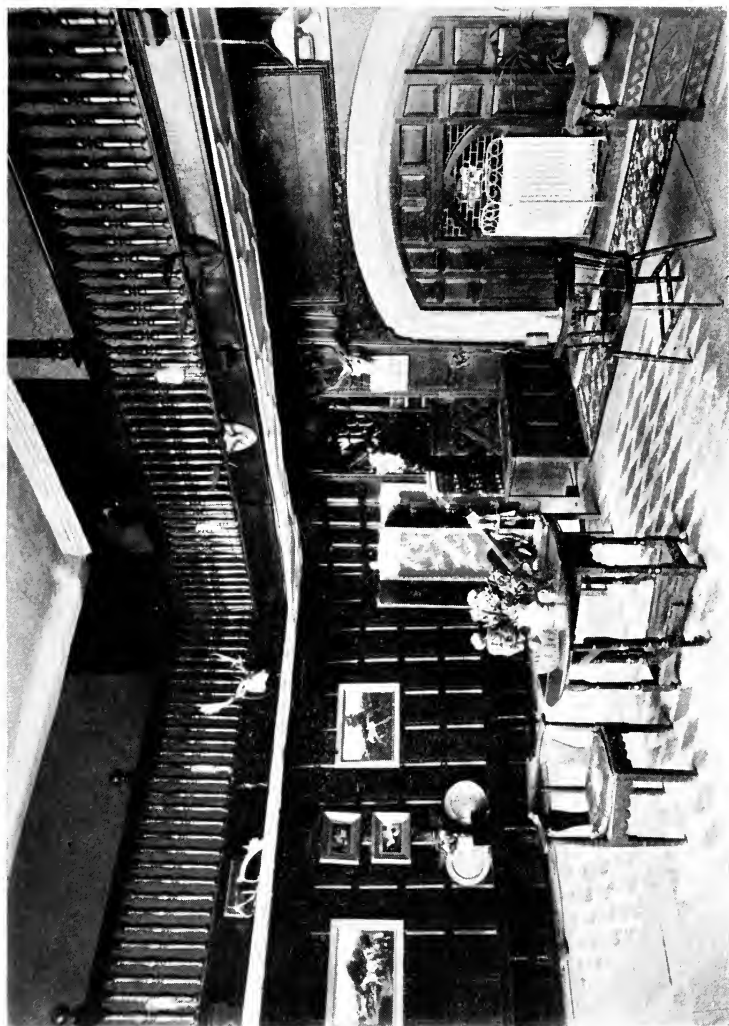
It is decorated with shields and stag-heads, which are in keeping with its old associations.

Here is the drawing-room that Charlotte Brontë described as being "pinkie white," which she commended as being less trouble to the housemaid than the original oak panels, which needed so much polishing, but it is a matter for regret that the oak, even in Charlotte's days, had been covered by a coat of paint. Even the old Tudor fire-place had been blocked up, but the present owner has had the modern fire-grate removed and its place taken by the old sixteenth century one. Formerly the ceiling was stucco, and on it were depicted the little griffins and devils, but some time ago the house was untenanted for years, and during that period the old ceiling fell and the stucco was destroyed with the exception of a little by the side of the windows. Even the old oak panels in the bedrooms had been painted green, but the paint has now been removed. Attached to the best bedrooms are small powder-rooms, which were necessary in the days of powdered hair. The house shows that it was built in troublous times, for each of the bedroom windows has strong iron bars across, and the outside doors are provided with bolts which reach from one side of the door to the other. The hall bears traces of having been built in the time of the Civil Wars; there are the remains of a moat round the house. The battlefield of Adwalton Moor is near by, where the Parliamentarians, under Lord Fairfax, met with a severe reverse, some two thousand being killed or mortally wounded. The old-world garden at the back of the house is much as it was when Shirley and Caroline walked in it. In spring-time the blossom on the trees gives it the appearance of fairyland.

Birstall Church is only about a mile from Oakwell Hall, and by the "green hedges and greener leas" Robert Moore walked home with Caroline Helstone, taking three-quarters of an hour to walk a mile, as Shirley said. In the churchyard Ellen Nussey lies buried. Like Haworth Church, all but the tower has been re-built, and the old rectory, where Caroline lived, has also been demolished.

About a quarter of a mile from the church is The Rydings,





*Photo by*

INTERIOR OF OAKWELL HALL

*J. J. Stead*

Figure 1 consists of two scatter plots. The left plot shows a positive correlation between the number of children and the number of adults, with a regression line indicating a positive slope. The right plot shows a negative correlation between the number of children and the number of adults, with a regression line indicating a negative slope.

2  
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[illegible]

where Charlotte Brontë spent so many happy days with the Nusseys, and which she pictures as Thornfield. There is a sunk fence, and until within the last few years there was an old oak tree that had been split by lightning, which suggested the memorable scene in *Jane Eyre*. Only a short distance away is Gomersal, and on the main road is the Red House, still the home of a branch of the Taylor family. Roe Head, Mirfield and Kirklees Hall—the Nunnely of *Shirley*—are not far away. The whole district has come to be known as *The Shirley Country*, and in summer the residents of the houses associated with the Brontës are much troubled by visitors, as many as twelve large parties on one Saturday afternoon asking to go through Oakwell Hall, one excursion party wondering if they could have tea on the lawn.

Miss Wheelwright told me that she would have recognised that *Shirley* was written by Charlotte Brontë because of Hortense, whom she knew as Mdlle Hausse, in the Heger Pensionnat, but Charlotte Brontë was then known to be Currer Bell. The disguise is so slight in the tale that there is no difficulty in recognising the originals both of persons and places. An article written by the Rev. Canon Bailey, a nephew of Mr. Roberson, was published in the *Heckmondwike Herald and Courier* after Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was issued, complaining of what had been published both by Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë regarding Mr. Hammond Roberson. Ellen Nussey was most indignant concerning what was said of Charlotte Brontë in this article, and she got a friend to write to the paper complaining, and she quoted what the author of *Shirley* herself had said. "You are not to suppose that any of the characters in *Shirley* are intended as literal portraits," but this did not satisfy the parsons in the story, as it was not difficult to identify them. Ellen Nussey went so far as to sign herself Caroline Helstone when writing to the Vicar of Birstall, who signed himself Cyril Hall.

Charlotte Brontë had got as far as Chapter XXIII, where Louis Moore comes on the scene, and then her pen was laid aside for months. "I should consider myself blameworthy I attempted to write," she avowed, and well she might.

Branwell's death in September, followed by Emily's illness and death in December, and the very sad time between then and the following May, when Anne died, caused the author to put the novel aside. There was just the possibility that she might never complete the story, though it must be acknowledged that the literary effort which she made to complete it was a means of blessing to her and saved her from herself. After a few days at Scarborough, after Anne's death, with Ellen Nussey she visited the little farm at Easton, and there she took up again the thread of her novel.

Chapter XXIII, probably written in the August or September of 1848, was entitled, "An Evening Out." After the interval previously referred to, she calls her next chapter "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," and the first paragraph—a sort of prologue—seems necessary to bridge the last chapter and the new one.

"The future sometimes seems to sob a low warning of the events it is bringing us, like some gathering though yet remote storm, which, in tones of the wind, in flushings of the firmament, in clouds strangely torn, announces a blast strong to strew the sea with wrecks; or commissioned to bring in fog the yellow taint of pestilence, covering white Western isles with the poisoned exhalations of the East, dimming the lattices of English homes with the breath of Indian plague. At other times this Future bursts suddenly, as if a rock had rent, and in it a grave had opened, whence issues the body of one that slept. Ere you are aware you stand face to face with a shrouded and unthought-of calamity—a new Lazarus."

The twenty-fourth chapter in *Shirley* concludes, "Till break of day, she wrestled with God in earnest prayer."

Charlotte Brontë arrived home in the middle of June, 1849, and by the end of August the book was finished, and Mr. James Taylor, of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., called at Haworth parsonage and took the manuscript with him to Cornhill. Writing to her faithful friend, Ellen Nussey, she tells her that the publishers are delighted with *Shirley*, which is a support to her, but life is a battle. She had begun to write *Shirley* full of love for her favourite sister, and she took pleasure in

making her the heroine that she meant Shirley to be, but it must have been hard to continue writing about the sister when she was cold in the grave. The story, however, grows, and Brussels contributes to it. There is the finding of the old copy books, the praise of Shirley's French—all true to life. The daring of the last chapter entitled "The Winding Up," resembles the conclusion of a play: all the members toe the line and bow to the audience; but the writer does more than that, she gives running comments on all her characters. Mr. Nicholls, as Mr. Macarthey, comes in for eulogium, which is more than the other curates get.

"There came as his successor another Irish curate, Mr. Macarthey. I am happy to be able to inform you, *with truth*, that this gentleman did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit: he proved himself as decent, decorous, and conscientious, as Peter was rampant, boisterous, and—— (this last epithet I choose to suppress, because it would let the cat out of the bag). He laboured faithfully in the parish: the schools, both Sunday and day-schools, flourished under his sway like green bay-trees. Being human, of course, he had his faults; these, however, were proper, steady-going, clerical faults; what many would call virtues: the circumstance of finding himself invited to tea with a dissenter would unhinge him for a week; the spectacle of a Quaker wearing his hat in the church, the thought of an unbaptized fellow-creature being interred with Christian rites—these things could make strange havoc in Mr. Macarthey's physical and mental economy; otherwise he was sane and rational, diligent and charitable."

The conclusion of the story tells of a double wedding, which is reminiscent of Patrick Brontë's and the Rev. William Morgan's marriage; the brides were cousins, Miss Branwell and Miss Fennell, and in *Shirley* the bridegrooms are brothers. The author has evidently exerted herself to let the story end happily with the wedding bells and the mention of a færish (fairy) in Fieldhead Hollow. "That was the last færish that ever was seen on the country side (though they've been heard within these forty years). A lonesome spot it was and a bonnie spot—full of oak trees and nut trees. It is altered now."

This refers to Kirklees Park, near Roe Head. Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed a chat with Old Tabby when visiting Haworth, and, with characteristic love of the supernatural, she delighted to hear Tabby tell of the fairies of the district, as she mentions in one of her letters.

*Shirley* was a great success, and quickly went into a second edition. The publishers had wished for certain slight alterations, but Charlotte Brontë would not give way; she had satisfied herself, and there were no censors at home now, as her father did not count. The story has always taken the third place in Charlotte Brontë's novels. If the bolts of death had not fallen in the midst of the tale, it might possibly have been different in some respects, but it probably followed the lines the author intended.

Mrs. Atkinson, Charlotte Brontë's godmother, who lived at Green House, Mirfield, was very angry because of the treatment meted out to the clergy in the story, and consequently Charlotte Brontë got no further recognition from her. Though Mr. Atkinson is not known to figure in the story, the novelist probably felt like Mrs. Gaskell with regard to *Cranford*, "They say I have put them in the story, do they! very well, if the caps fits they may wear it."

*Shirley* was published on 26th October, 1849, and the reviews were for the most part favourable. Some readers prefer it to the other Brontë novels because it is not quite so passionate, and it does not offend the prude. Just as Mrs. Gaskell could enjoy reading *Cranford* with a laugh, so Charlotte Brontë, in later days, could enjoy the earlier part of *Shirley*.

She received the same amount for the copyright of *Shirley*, viz., five hundred pounds, that she had been paid for *Jane Eyre*. It has been said that there were no offers from rival firms, but Ellen Nussey, on the authority of Charlotte Brontë herself, said that other firms did offer larger sums of money, but the author was loyal to her first publisher, who had given her a kindly word of encouragement in connection with *The Professor*, and had raised her from the despair which chilled her heart by accepting *Jane Eyre*.

*Shirley* was responsible for Mrs. Gaskell's first letter to

Charlotte Brontë. She had got her publisher to forward a copy of *Shirley* to Mrs. Gaskell, whose reply reminded Charlotte Brontë of Emily.

Charlotte Brontë never seemed to lose sight of her sister Emily. She likens her to Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Martineau before she had seen them, because she thought they were like Emily in mind. When she met George Henry Lewes, she thought he was like Emily, and when she saw her own unfinished portrait by George Richmond, with tears in her eyes, she remarked that it reminded her of Emily; Emily's face haunted her.

Though *Shirley* was well received both in England and America, many critics, including Charles Kingsley, were displeased with the opening chapter, which caused some prejudice against the book, but in answer to a letter from Mr. W. S. Williams Charlotte Brontë said that the first chapter was all true. However, it deeply offended "the fighting gentry," as Charlotte termed the curates, and they complained of the author's account of the tea parties and said they were meetings for theological discussion. Even Mr. Nicholls said that Charlotte Brontë was wrong in her statement, but he considered it was fiction and not given as truth.

*Shirley* was scarcely just to the curates who figured as Mr. Donne, Mr. Malone, Mr. Sweeting and Mr. Macarthey. In real life these were respectively the Rev. Joseph Brett Grant, who was at the time master of the Haworth Grammar School and afterwards curate and subsequently Vicar of Oxenhope, the Rev. James William Smith, the Rev. James Chesterton Bradley and the Rev. A. B. Nicholls. Mr. Smith was a graduate of Dublin University and for two years a curate at Haworth. He was accused by Charlotte Brontë of being too fond of drink, and those who wish to find a reason for the novelist's leaving Brussels in January, 1844, other than the true one, have suggested that this curate was influencing his vicar and causing him to imbibe too freely. There is no truth in this, and as recently as 3rd May, 1902, the Rev. James Chesterton Bradley, who was formerly curate at Oakworth, wrote bearing testimony to Mr. Smith's excellent character, and protested against the false and cruel way in which Charlotte

Brontë had held up Mr. Smith in *Shirley*. The nephew, Mr. W. Smith, wrote to the *Tatler* on 2nd April, 1902, defending his uncle, who had led an exemplary life and had tried to build up a home in Canada for his Irish relatives. If Charlotte Brontë took a dislike to anyone, she seemed unable to keep him out of her stories, and her letters to Ellen Nussey show that she had some antipathy to Mr. Smith, and was afraid of his paying attention to her friend.

It is interesting to find in the old minute book of the Haworth Mechanics' Institute a resolution proposed by Mr. Nicholls, about the time that *Shirley* was published, advocating that fiction should not be purchased for the library at the expense of more solid books.

Not only was *Shirley* bought in its three volume form, but such was the demand for it that a time limit was placed on its use by subscribers to the library, and a fine of one shilling was imposed on those who kept it too long. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* were too far-fetched for the people of Haworth, but *Shirley* was more to their taste.

Martha Brown's sister told me of the tremendous excitement which the novel caused in Haworth. When it was known who had written it (for it was a native of the Haworth district living at Liverpool who identified the curates and traced the authorship of the novel to the Haworth parsonage), Martha Brown burst into the dining-room one day saying, "Oh, Miss Brontë, you have gone and written the two grandest books that ever were known, and the Committee of the Mechanics' Institute are arranging to buy them." Charlotte told the proud domestic to be off and not talk nonsense, and then she was troubled, thinking what the natives of the village would say. Her conscience, no doubt, pricked her when she found how easily the characters were identified.

William Johnson Cory, in his journal, writes of *Shirley* as the best of books, and tells of his longing when on tour in Yorkshire to find some of the originals of the story. He speaks of it as a book of courage and says that he preferred Caroline to all women in books. He thought that Charlotte Brontë "was not nearly so good or wise as Mrs. Gaskell, or Juliana



(Mrs. Ewing) or perhaps Christina Rossetti, but she told us all about her eager, passionate life."

When visiting the old parsonage, years after *Shirley* was published, he wrote, "Out of that prison the little Charlotte put forth a hand to feel for the world of human emotion. I wish she would come back to us, and count up the myriads to whom she has given new souls."

It was no use for Charlotte Brontë to attempt to hide her identity any longer. A young author living at Bradford suspected that she had written *Shirley*, and he wrote to her and sent a copy of his book, which she acknowledged in her own name, and so the *nom de guerre* of Currer Bell, though still used by her, did not hide her identity, and to-day Currer Bell is seldom used, but Charlotte Brontë is recognised throughout the whole literary world.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### DEATH OF ANNE BRONTË

1849

*Jane Eyre* and the *Quarterly Review*—Anne Brontë's illness—Charlotte and Anne Brontë go to Scarborough, accompanied by Ellen Nussey—The journey broken at York—Arrival at Scarborough—Ellen Nussey's account of Anne Brontë's last hours—Funeral at Scarborough—Inexplicable conduct of Mr. Brontë—Grave-stone in St. Mary's Churchyard—Charlotte Brontë's return to Haworth.

It was during the sad December when Emily Brontë died that the scurrilous article on *Jane Eyre* appeared in the *Quarterly Review*. Charlotte Brontë was too much absorbed in her sad bereavement to trouble much about it then, but later it was frequently in her mind. The copy of the *Quarterly*, which was sent to her, was for long in the possession of Martha Brown. It had evidently been well thumbed, and was found in a drawer after Charlotte's death. It is clear that she had taken the criticism very much to heart, but her sorrow for her dead sister and her anxiety concerning Anne left her little time to worry about it. It was probably at a later period, after Anne's death, that she read and re-read this review of her book, and she kept it from her father.

Mrs. Gaskell, who knew to her sorrow what it meant to receive a spiteful and unfair review, was highly indignant. It was the flippancy that annoyed her, and also the fact that the review was not signed. "We call it then cowardly insolence." "Who is he that should say of an unknown woman, she must be one, who, for some sufficient reason, has long forfeited the society of her sex?"

Too much has been made of this scathing review, and it stands out with too great prominence. To-day it would not be accepted as a review at all, for a good part of it has little to do with *Jane Eyre*; it is a treatise on governesses and their work. It was intended to be very severe, but Andrew Lang

detected in it the work of two writers, and he thought that the part about the governess was written by Miss Rigby (who afterwards became Lady Eastlake) and the bitter, critical part by Lockhart. If this is so, then the most objectionable part of the review cannot be attributed to a woman. Charlotte Brontë's only revenge was to put some of the review into the mouth of one of the vulgar women characters in *Shirley*, but few readers have recognised this. "Governesses," Miss Hardman laid down, "must ever be kept in a sort of isolation : it is the only means of maintaining that distance which the reserve of English manners and the decorum of English families exact." . . . . "We need the imprudences, extravagances, mistakes and crimes of a certain number of fathers to sow the seed from which *we* reap the harvest of governesses."

Reviews—good, bad or indifferent—were matters of little importance to Charlotte Brontë at this time, for all her thought was for her only surviving sister, Anne, who had never been strong, and whose years as a governess, both at Blake Hall and Thorpe Green, had been very strenuous. At the same time, it is questionable if the writing of their novels had not been a greater strain than teaching to both Emily and Anne. Charlotte remarked that the bringing out of their poems had been hard work, but the novels seem to have furnished a much more severe task. To such sensitive natures, the reviews must have caused great and unnecessary anxiety. Branwell had added to the burden, and with no one else to lean upon the women in the Brontë family had a hard time whilst they were groping their way into the field of literature. From January to May, 1849, Anne was ill, and Charlotte was almost beside herself to find a check to the hand of death. The well-known Dr. Teale, of Leeds, was consulted, and also Dr. Forbes, a homœopathic doctor of London ; nothing was spared, for, unlike Emily, Anne was willing to try any remedy in order that she might live, and the legacy which she had received from her god-mother, Miss Outhwaite of Thornton, enabled her to afford any medical skill. The faithful Ellen Nussey did all she could, and as a last resource Anne wished for a change of air. She had been to Scarborough with the Robinsons on several

occasions, and she felt that if she could get to the sea she would be better. Charlotte's heart was at breaking point ; the loss of Emily was ever with her. " The feeling of Emily's loss does not diminish as time wears on ; it often makes itself acutely recognised." Again Charlotte refers to it : " I cannot forget Emily's death day ; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant though resolute, out of a happy life." How well to know that Charlotte considered Emily's a happy life !

Anne wished to live, and that helped both her and her friends. She writes to Ellen Nussey : " I have no horror of death . . . but I wish it would please God to spare me, not only for papa's and Charlotte's sake, but because I long to do some good in the world before I leave it. I have many schemes in my head for future practice—humble and limited indeed—but still I should not like them all to come to nothing ; and myself to have lived to such little purpose, but God's will be done." M. Dimnet, in his *Les Sœurs Brontë*, says, " This pious little Anne would have been considered a genius in any other family, but her sisters overshadowed her."

Anne was actually dying when she started for Scarborough, and Martha Brown remarked it as she helped the poor invalid to the conveyance that was to take her down the steep Haworth hill for the last time. Charlotte felt that her sister would never return, but she could not deny her last request. It was arranged that Ellen Nussey should meet Charlotte and Anne at Leeds, but on the day fixed for the journey Anne was too ill to go, and Ellen Nussey told in later days how she waited for hours on the platform at Leeds, and whilst waiting she saw two coffins carried from two different trains, which she considered to be a bad omen. As Charlotte Brontë had not been able to communicate with Miss Nussey she returned home, but she started the next day for Haworth, and was just in time to see the servants helping the dying Anne into the conveyance. Ellen Nussey never cared to talk of this sad time, but she wrote an account of it for Mrs. Gaskell. The sexton's family all deplored Anne's being taken away, as

Martha Brown said, death was written on Anne's face. There is no mention of the old father's wishes in the matter ; he had allowed his daughters to manage for so long that he seemed powerless to interfere, and he agreed to all they wished. Although a good and a kind man, he never understood women ; his daughters must have been far stronger before Branwell's death than has generally been assumed, for only strong women could have walked the long distance to and fro to the falls on the moor, to Wycoller or to Keighley, the roads being rough and stony.

There is no doubt that both Emily and Anne injured their health in the period when they were writing their novels, and when they were staying up until midnight, discussing their stories. Charlotte tells us that at that time Anne could hardly be persuaded to go out for a walk, so intent was she on her work. The walks on the moors had benefited them previously, for the vicarage was far from healthy. Well might Emily develop consumption if she slept in that tiny box-room over the passage with no fireplace and little opportunity for open windows owing to the cold winds that sweep over the moors.

On that sad May morning when Charlotte, Anne and Ellen Nussey drove to Keighley railway station, Charlotte says there was always someone at hand to render the necessary assistance. Anne was carried from the conveyance to the train for Leeds and then on to York, where the trio stopped for the night and actually purchased new bonnets, etc., visiting York Minster in order to gratify Anne's wish. Anne knew York, for she and Emily had made a short pilgrimage there in 1845 when they pretended to take part in the battle of their mysterious Gondals. Evidently they were acting a bit of history with fictitious characters, for the Royalists did actually march on York in 1644.

Churches and especially cathedrals attracted Anne ; she was truly good and rejoiced in the worship and ritual of the Church of England. Mr. William Scruton, the well-known author of *Thornton and the Brontës*, told me of some circumstances connected with Anne's illness at Roe Head in 1837,

which showed Anne's religious fears, and her anxiety to get spiritual comfort. The Rev. James La Trobe, a bishop of the Moravian Church, and a descendant of a noble Huguenot family that had been driven from France by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was the minister of the Moravian Church at Mirfield, when Anne was at Roe Head School. When ill, Anne requested that this minister might be sent for, and Mr. Scruton received a letter, years after Anne Brontë's death, from Mr. La Trobe, saying—

“ She (Anne Brontë) was suffering from a severe attack of gastric fever, which brought her very low, and her voice was only a whisper : her life hung on a slender thread. She soon got over the shyness natural on seeing a perfect stranger. The words of love, from Jesus, opened her ear to my words, and she was very grateful for my visits. I found her well acquainted with the main truths of the Bible respecting our salvation, but seeing them more through the law than the gospel, more as a requirement from God than His gift in His Son, but her heart opened to the sweet views of salvation, pardon, and peace in the blood of Christ, and she accepted His welcome to the weary and heavy laden sinner, conscious more of her not loving the Lord her God than of acts of enmity to Him, and, had she died then, I should have counted her His redeemed and ransomed child. It was not till I read Charlotte Brontë's *Life* that I recognised my interesting patient at Roe Head, where a Christian influence pervaded the establishment and its decided discipline.”

Anne Brontë was acquainted with the history of York, for whilst staying at Thorpe Green, Little Ouseburn, she visited the city several times, and, with its numerous churches and ancient Minster, it was a place most congenial to her. The journey from Haworth to York was more than enough for the poor emaciated invalid ; it seemed a mockery, as Charlotte said, to think of buying bonnets and dresses, but Anne appeared happy.

The following day, 25th May, they reached Scarborough, and on Sunday, 28th May, the invalid was evidently worse. Ellen Nussey gives a pathetic account of her death—

“The night was passed without any apparent accession of illness. She rose at seven o’clock, and performed most of her toilet herself, by her expressed wish. Her sister always yielded such points, believing it was the truest kindness not to press inability when it was not acknowledged. Nothing occurred to excite alarm till about 11 a.m. She then spoke of feeling a change. ‘She believed she had not long to live. Could she reach home alive, if we prepared immediately for departure?’ A physician was sent for. Her address to him was made with perfect composure. She begged him to say ‘How long he thought she might live;—not to fear speaking the truth, for she was not afraid to die.’ The doctor reluctantly admitted that the angel of death was already arrived, and that life was ebbing fast. She thanked him for his truthfulness, and he departed to come again very soon. She still occupied her easy chair, looking so serene, so reliant: there was no opening for grief as yet, though all knew the separation was at hand. She clasped her hands, and reverently invoked a blessing from on high; first upon her sister, then upon her friend, to whom she said, ‘Be a sister in my stead. Give Charlotte as much of your company as you can.’ She then thanked each for her kindness and attention.

“Ere long the restlessness of approaching death appeared, and she was borne to the sofa; on being asked if she were easier, she looked gratefully at her questioner, and said, ‘It is not *you* who can give me ease, but soon all will be well through the merits of our Redeemer.’ Shortly after this, seeing that her sister could hardly restrain her grief, she said, ‘Take courage, Charlotte; take courage.’ Her faith never failed, and her eye never dimmed till about two o’clock, when she calmly and without a sigh passed from the temporal to the eternal. So still, and so hallowed were her last hours and moments.”

Was ever a funeral of an author more simple; just the two mourners, the necessary minister and carriers? In addition there was a lady—a stranger—who had interested herself in the little party, and she stood as a silent spectator of that sad scene in the old churchyard at Scarborough.

To those who do not know of the wall of separation between the father and his children, it appears unthinkable that he should not have hurried to his daughter's side and taken his part in the funeral of his youngest child, who had never known a mother. Although Anne died on the Monday, Charlotte did not write to her father until Tuesday, and then she excused him from attending on account of some church meeting. Argue in favour of the father as one will, his absence is inexplicable. In Anne's last talk with the doctor, she certainly expressed a wish to get home to die, and why Charlotte decided to "lay the flower where it fell" rather than make arrangements for the body to be taken to Haworth, so that it could rest in the family vault, has never been satisfactorily explained. Ellen Nussey said that afterwards Charlotte regretted the course she adopted, but, when she found how difficult it would be to have the body exhumed, she gave way and arranged for a tombstone to be placed over the grave. It could not be altogether a question of money, for Anne had more money of her own than Emily and Charlotte, as she had earned more than either, and she had carefully hoarded what she had obtained during the six years whilst she was a governess. In addition she had a legacy from her godmother. Moreover, the grave and the tombstone cost more than the transfer of the body to Haworth would have done. Charlotte was always impulsive, and in deciding to bury Anne at Scarborough she probably acted on the spur of the moment, without consulting her father in any way. In a privately printed letter Charlotte says: "For the present Anne's ashes rest apart from the others. I have buried her here at Scarborough to save papa the anguish of the return and a third funeral."<sup>1</sup>

Haworth has from time immemorial shown much reverence for funerals, and the whole village gossiped about Charlotte's lack of consideration in burying her sister away from her own kith and kin. The old servants, Tabby and Martha, were not pleased that their young mistress—Miss Anne as they were accustomed to call her—should have been buried in what they considered a foreign grave. Ellen Nussey says that even

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mr. Williams privately printed by Mr. T. J. Wise.



after Charlotte was married she worried about the grave being so far away, and had it not been for Mr. Nicholls' objection she would have had the remains transferred, for she came to the conclusion that Anne would have preferred to be buried at Haworth, and Ellen Nussey agreed, but she would not dissuade Charlotte from carrying out her own wishes in the matter.

Patrick Brontë never visited the grave of his youngest child, and Charlotte went only once to see the grave-stone. Anne's money came to Mr. Brontë and Charlotte, who felt afterwards that she had not acted wisely. The grave is in the detached portion of the burial ground, at the east end of the church, and can be seen near the boundary wall. Charlotte gave minute directions for the placing of the stone over her sister's remains, but she did not go to see it until three years later, and then, writing to Ellen Nussey on 23rd June, 1852, she says, "On Friday I went to Scarborough, visited the churchyard and stone. It must be refaced, and re-lettered; there are five errors. I gave the necessary directions. *That* duty, then, is done; long has it lain heavy on my mind; and that was a pilgrimage I felt I could only make alone."

Visitors to the Brontë shrine in St. Mary's churchyard, Scarborough, will find that the grave-stone has been painted white and the inscription reads—

" HERE  
LIE THE REMAINS OF  
ANNE BRONTË  
DAUGHTER OF THE  
REVEREND P. BRONTË  
INCUMBENT OF HAWORTH, YORKSHIRE.  
SHE DIED AGED 28  
MAY 2—, 1849."

Anne Brontë died on 28th May, but instead of the figure "8" there is a dash actually cut in the stone. The only explanation is that when the grave was painted the date must have been obliterated. It is strange that the date was not cut in the stone as was the rest of the inscription, the result being that the date must have been forgotten, although it

could easily have been obtained after Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published. On the upper part of the gravestone is a draped urn, standing on a book. It is noticeable that small pieces of the edge of the monument are chipped out, evidently purposely, by some relic hunter.

Scarborough shares in the reflected glory of the Brontës, not only because of the visits of Charlotte and Anne to the now fashionable watering-place, but more especially because "Acton Bell," the author of *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, lies buried there.

If the letters which Anne Brontë wrote to her sisters when at Scarborough with the Robinsons had been preserved, they would have proved very interesting, though in *Agnes Grey* much of her actual experience is given. In 1849 Scarborough was very different from the fashionable watering-place of to-day. Anne Brontë died at No. 2, The Cliff, within sight of the sea. The house has since been demolished, and the Grand Hotel now stands on the site. She obtained her first view of the sea at Scarborough; indeed, it was the only sea-side place that she knew, but it was to her, in her narrow life, a very haven of rest. She loved the place, and it was to this district that she and her sister looked forward as a suitable place for a boarding school. If the aunt had lived, the probability is that the three sisters would have realised their dream, and would have found health and strength for their work, but, if this had happened, it is doubtful if any novels by the Brontës would ever have seen the light. It was when other means of livelihood seemed likely to be failures that they turned to literature.

In *Agnes Grey* there is a chapter headed "The School," in which is a description of Scarborough as it was when Anne Brontë visited it, and in *The Professor* and *Villette* the school appears at the conclusion of the story. The school was their pole-star, as Charlotte said, but they never reached it.

Old Mr. Brontë, after Anne's funeral, urged Charlotte to remain at Scarborough for the sake of her health. In no single instance did the daughters ever go away with the father, or have a holiday with him so far as is known. After all was over,

Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey stayed at Scarborough for a little while and then after a brief visit to Easton, to Mr. and Mrs. Hudson's small farm, they parted.

It has been said that Charlotte Brontë's greatest attribute was fortitude, and certainly during the time from 24th May to the end of June she had a severe struggle. Mrs. Hudson said that, whilst Charlotte was staying at the farm, for this her second visit, she was writing continually, and it is now known that she was working on *Shirley*. The first chapter written at Easton was entitled "The Valley of the Shadow of Death." She had evidently taken her manuscript to Scarborough, hoping, perhaps, that she might have the joy of seeing Anne recover and whilst there she hoped to work at her second novel which her publishers were impatient to receive.

She appeared to dread returning to the parsonage. "I tried to be glad that I was come home. I have always been glad before except once. Even then I was cheered." (The "except once" has been attributed to the last return from Brussels, when she felt so wretched on leaving M. Heger.)

Perhaps the most pathetic incident on her return from Anne's funeral was the welcome she got from the dogs—Emily's faithful Keeper and Anne's pet dog. "I am certain they regarded me as the harbinger of others. The dumb creatures thought that, as I was returned, those who had been so long absent were not far behind."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S VISITS TO LONDON

1849-50

CHARLOTTE BRONTË visits London at the invitation of her publisher—Her stay at Westbourne Place, Paddington—She dedicates the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray—Unfounded rumours in consequence—Charlotte Brontë meets Thackeray and Miss Martineau—She renews the acquaintance with the Wheelwright family—Return to Haworth—Visit to Gawthorpe Hall—Her fifth visit to London—A disputed portrait—Sue's story in the *London Journal*—*Kitty Bell* and *Jane Eyre*—A Brontë manuscript bought at a public auction in Brussels.

AFTER *Shirley* had been launched, and the reviews had showered upon the novelist, her publishers prevailed upon her to accept an invitation to London, at the end of November, 1849. Mrs. Wheelwright, the mother of Charlotte Brontë's friends at the Heger Pensionnat, also wrote inviting her to their home at Phillimore Gardens. It was six years since they had met, but Mr. George Smith and his mother much preferred that she should remain as their guest, and fearing to offend them Charlotte Brontë consented, only paying a short visit to Dr. Wheelwright's family. No one was prouder of Charlotte Brontë's success than Dr. Wheelwright and his family, and they delighted to tell of the pleasant visits which she paid to them in London. A work-bag, which she made in Brussels, and presented to Mrs. Wheelwright, is still treasured by Mrs. Wheelwright's grand-daughter, Mrs. J. J. Green, of Hastings.

This visit to London in 1849 is memorable as being the one when Charlotte Brontë met Thackeray for the first time, and also Harriet Martineau, in addition to several less noted writers. The house in which Mr. George Smith lived with his mother, two sisters and a younger brother, was No. 4 Westbourne Place, Bishop's Road, Paddington; it is now No. 26 Bishop's Road, and it was the house in which Charlotte and Anne Brontë had been entertained in July, 1845. Bishop's Road, close to Paddington Station, was then a quiet and select



DR. WHEELWRIGHT  
1850



MRS. WHEELWRIGHT  
1850



thoroughfare, very different from what it is to-day. The house is still standing, but is now divided into two shops on the ground-floor. On one side of what was formerly the dining-room is now a small shoemaker's shop, and on the other side is an underlinen draper's ; the other parts of the house are let in tenements. Some ten years ago a hairdresser rented the house, and it was possible for ladies to have their hair dressed in the very drawing-room in which Charlotte Brontë first met Thackeray, John Forster, and other notabilities, and on the ground-floor in a room at the back, which was once Mr. George Smith's sanctum, and where he first read the manuscript of *Jane Eyre*, one Sunday in August, 1847, it was possible for men to have a shave. Nearly fifty years afterwards, Mr. George Smith published an account of his receiving the manuscript of *Jane Eyre* from Mr. Williams in order that he might read it during the week end ; he tells how he repaired to his private room on the Sunday morning, and having begun the story could not leave it : how he refused to go to lunch with his mother and sisters, preferring a sandwich and a glass of wine : how he ignored tea altogether, as the novel kept him enthralled, and it was only with difficulty that he was persuaded to join the family at dinner : and before he went to bed he had finished the thrilling novel and the next day sent Charlotte Brontë a letter accepting the copyright of the novel for five hundred pounds. The dining-room of the house was on the ground-floor to the front, and here it was that Charlotte and Anne Brontë sat trembling at their first dinner party in London in July, 1845.

Charlotte speaks of the drawing-room as being " very grand," but it was modest enough from Mr. George Smith's account, though, in contrast with the bare and shabby parlour at Haworth parsonage, it was probably considered palatial. At this visit to London in 1849 Charlotte Brontë was treated most royally, and Mr. George Smith and his mother humoured her every whim. At this time her hero was W. M. Thackeray, and without knowing him, or even asking for permission, she dedicated the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to him in most flattering terms. This led to much speculation on the part of the readers of

*Jane Eyre* and *Vanity Fair*. It was even reported that Currer Bell was governess to Mr. Thackeray's children. She was quite innocent of all this gossip, and knew absolutely nothing of his domestic affairs; all she did know was that his novels stood first in her estimation, and in pure and simple hero-worship she dedicated the second edition of her book to him.

Thackeray wrote her a kind letter in acknowledgment of her eulogistic dedication, and possibly explained the sad circumstances of his own home—that his wife was mentally afflicted as was the case with the wife of “Rochester,” and that it was necessary for her to live away from the rest of his family, but he charged Charlotte Brontë not to show his letter to anyone. Charlotte Brontë's hero-worship caused her much sorrow, but she was cheered by Thackeray's kindness, and when he sent her a signed copy of *Vanity Fair*, in acknowledgment of a copy of *Jane Eyre*, she was delighted.

General Wilson, in his *Thackeray in the United States* says, “Charlotte Brontë, the shy Yorkshire governess, instinctively fixed her eye upon him just after he had published *Vanity Fair*, and saluted him in the remarkable dedication to her second edition of *Jane Eyre*. It was the sharpest-eyed woman in England recognising the sharpest-eyed man.” There is little doubt that Charlotte Brontë's dedication did much to bring the author of *Vanity Fair* to the front, though Thackeray himself said that he thought his Christmas story, *Mrs. Perkins's Ball*, was the cause of his sudden popularity, but as Sir Whitelaw Reid wrote, “The dedication counted most of all.” In conversation with Charlotte Brontë, Thackeray once told her that she had jumped into popularity very quickly, whilst he had been waiting for ten years before he came to his own. She replied that she had been writing for more than ten years.

Though Charlotte Brontë stipulated with Mr. George Smith that she was not to meet many people, she was particularly anxious to know Thackeray, and Mr. Smith invited the celebrated author to meet her at his house. This proved mutually helpful, as Mr. Smith had not known Thackeray personally until he accepted this invitation, so that Charlotte Brontë had



the honour of bringing these two men together, to their mutual advantage.

It was unfortunate that at the time arranged for this meeting, Charlotte Brontë had had a hard day sight-seeing, and for some reason not explained she had not had any meal since her early breakfast. "At the moment Thackeray presented himself I was thoroughly faint from inanition . . . ; exhaustion made savage work of me that evening. What he thought of me I cannot tell." Referring to Thackeray in a letter to her father, she says, "We were not introduced, but when they all rose to go down to dinner, he just stepped quickly up and said: 'Shake hands,' and I shook hands." She told Mrs. Gaskell how difficult she found it to decide whether Thackeray was speaking in jest or in earnest, and that she had (she believed) completely misunderstood an inquiry of his; he asked her "if she had perceived the scent of their cigars, to which she replied literally, discovering a minute afterwards, by the smile on several faces, that he was alluding to a passage in *Jane Eyre*." A few days afterwards, in a letter to Mr. W. S. Williams, she tells how she lost her self-possession when Thackeray was announced. In describing her London holiday to Ellen Nussey she says, "Thackeray is a Titan of mind. His presence and powers impress one deeply in an intellectual sense; I do not see him or know him as a man. . . I felt sufficiently at my ease with all except Thackeray; with him I was fearfully stupid."

The other notable person whom Charlotte Brontë met at this time was Harriet Martineau. Currer Bell had sent her a copy of *Shirley*, in acknowledgment of the gratification *he* had received from Miss Martineau's works. Miss Martineau began her letter of thanks "Dear Madam," although she addressed it to "Currer Bell, Esq." She sent the letter from a house in London that was not far from Mr. George Smith's, and when Mr. Smith explained to Charlotte Brontë how near this house was to Westbourne Place, the impulsive little novelist wrote a letter to Miss Martineau asking if she might be allowed to call on her. Miss Martineau and her friends invited Charlotte Brontë to tea on the Sunday afternoon. At every ring, the eyes of the party turned towards the door, for they were not

sure if Currer Bell was a lady or a gentleman. Whilst waiting, a very tall gentleman arrived, and they wondered if he could be the famous author. Later, the writer of *Jane Eyre* arrived, and the footman announced her as "Miss Brogden," instead of Miss Brontë, for Currer Bell had decided to give her real name.

Miss Martineau tells how a young-looking lady in deep mourning, neat as a Quaker, with beautiful brown hair, great blazing eyes, and a sensible face showing self-control, appeared and, hesitating to find four or five people, looked round and then went straight to Miss Martineau, and sheltered near her with child-like confidence. She told the party something of her history, and Miss Martineau, drawn to the little woman, remarked, after Charlotte Brontë had told her of her sad and lonely life, "I should have been heartily glad to cry."

It was on 7th November, 1849, that Currer Bell had sent a copy of *Shirley* to Miss Martineau, saying, "In his mind, *Deerbrook* ranks with the writings that have really done him good, added to his stock of ideas, and rectified his views of life."

Harriet Martineau says that she had made up her mind that a certain passage in *Jane Eyre* about sewing brass rings on to the curtains after the fire at Thornfield could only have been written by a woman or an upholsterer. "I had more reason for interest than even the deeply interested public in knowing who wrote *Jane Eyre*, for when it appeared, I was taxed with the authorship by more than one personal friend, and charged by others, and even by relatives, with knowing the author, and having supplied some of the facts of the first volume from my own childhood. When I read it, I was convinced that it was by some friend of my own, who had portions of my childish experience in his or her mind." Charlotte Brontë told Harriet Martineau long afterwards that she had read with astonishment those parts of *Household Education*, by Harriet Martineau, which related her own experience. It was like meeting her own *fetch*, so precisely were the fears and miseries there described the same as her own, told or not told, in *Jane Eyre*.

The two authors became friends at once, but in later days, when *Villette* was published, Charlotte Brontë regretted it,

though perhaps she was too sensitive, for Miss Martineau was far above being envious of her contemporary.

Mr. Smith could not help the literary circles of London knowing that he had the author of *Jane Eyre* staying with him, and on condition that he did not personally present Charlotte Brontë to any of them, he was allowed by his little guest to invite a number of literary critics to meet her. John Forster was one. Charlotte Brontë did not dislike him, though she characterised his conversation as "swagger," and compared him unfavourably with Thackeray. She went twice to the theatre and saw Macready act in "Macbeth" and "Othello." Whilst on this visit she renewed her acquaintance with Dr. and Mrs. Wheelwright and their family. Miss Wheelwright delighted to recall the visits paid to them by Charlotte Brontë after she had become famous as an author.

This visit to London proved trying and exhausting, especially the meeting with so many distinguished authors and critics, and the novelist confessed that she did not sleep at all after the big dinner party, and so tired was she when she reached Derby on her return, that she had to stay the night, causing her father much anxiety, for he was expecting her to come direct to Haworth from London.

This visit to her publishers gave Charlotte Brontë an insight into London literary circles, but she did not enjoy it; she somewhere says she would prefer to walk straight into a red-hot Yorkshire fire, rather than go into what is called society. The Smiths wished that she would have stayed with them a month, but a fortnight caused as much excitement as she could bear. She had the chance of meeting Charles Dickens, and several other distinguished people, but she declined as she did not wish for notoriety.

At this time, she had many offers from editors, who were anxious to get the author of *Jane Eyre* to contribute a serial to their magazine. Charles Dickens would have welcomed her as a contributor to *Household Words*, and Mary Howitt wrote asking for a contribution from her pen, but Charlotte Brontë was determined not to write to order. She tells in one of her letters of waiting for the spirit to move her in Quaker-like fashion.

The winter of 1849-50 was one of restless anxiety concerning *Shirley*; every review was studied, and she was anxious to benefit by what the reviewers said. Criticism she never refused, but she would not accept it unless she considered it just. People began to make pilgrimages to Haworth to get a glimpse of the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*. The Vicar found his congregation increasing, for it became fashionable to join the worshippers at Haworth Church, in order to see Charlotte Brontë sitting alone in the roomy vicarage pew near the pulpit. She was not at all pleased by this notoriety, and used to stay behind until the others had gone, and then walk quickly out by the side door, though often a number of people would be waiting to see the famous novelist.

Miss Wooler, Charlotte Brontë's old schoolmistress, wrote soon after *Shirley* was published, expressing disapproval of her novels, but adding that she should still be friendly with her old pupil. Charlotte Brontë at once took the defensive, and said that she was not at all ashamed of anything she had written. The quarrel did not last, for there are kindly letters between the two later.

Two of the most persistent admirers of the author of *Shirley* were Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and his wife, Lady Shuttleworth, who lived about eight miles over the moors from Haworth, on the Lancashire side, at Gawthorpe Hall, some three miles from Burnley. They delighted Mr. Brontë by calling at the Haworth parsonage, and offering their congratulations to the clever daughter, who preferred however to remain unknown. Their admiration of Charlotte Brontë, the woman, was as great as of Currer Bell the writer, and they were eager to take her back with them on a visit to their home, but she excused herself. Very soon, however, a second invitation came, which, to please her father, she accepted, spending three days in March, 1850, at Gawthorpe Hall.

It is a beautiful old mansion, about three hundred years old. The oak in the interior is very fine, and the coat-of-arms of the Shuttleworths is carved in each room. The grounds are beautifully laid out, and if Charlotte Brontë could have felt more at ease she would have enjoyed the visit. Her miserable



GAWTHORPE HALL

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shyness, however, prevented her from feeling comfortable, and strange faces always brought on a nervous depression, which caused her to appear awkward. Whilst staying at Gawthorpe Hall, she spent much of the time driving about to the different places of interest, but she was glad to get home again.

Sir James Kay Shuttleworth was a keen lover of literature, and was the author of two novels ; he was trained as a doctor of medicine, but became Secretary of the Committee of Council for Education. He married Janet, the only child and heiress of Robert Shuttleworth, of Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley, in 1842, and he took his wife's name. In 1849, he was made a baronet.

He was very anxious to have Charlotte Brontë as his guest in London, but the Smiths were always adverse to her staying with anyone but themselves ; possibly they did not wish any information to be disclosed regarding any work by Charlotte Brontë before it was published.

Towards the end of May, 1850, Charlotte Brontë again visited London, and stayed with the Smiths, who had removed from 4 Westbourne Place to a larger house, No. 76 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park Gardens, afterwards known as 112 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park. The writer once had the pleasure of going through the house, which resembles many other houses in the West End of London. The dining-room is beneath the drawing-room, and the spare bedroom, which Charlotte Brontë occupied, was pointed out.

This visit in the summer of 1850 was the longest Charlotte Brontë, ever paid to London.

There has been a certain amount of controversy during the last few years about a water-colour painting of Charlotte Brontë, which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. This water-colour painting is doubtless a clever fraud, and had I not succeeded in getting it taken from the wall of the National Portrait Gallery for the purpose of a thorough investigation, it would probably have remained there for an indefinite period as a genuine portrait of Charlotte Brontë.

The late Director of the National Portrait Gallery first heard of it in July, 1906, through Charlotte Brontë's publishers, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., who would have purchased it

had the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery been unwilling to do so.

The Smiths had the portrait submitted to them by a Miss Alice Boyd Green, who stated that her family had received it in 1871 from a Dr. Baylis, who was said to have acquired it from the Heger family in Brussels. As Dr. Baylis was once a personal friend of Lord Lytton, it hardly seemed probable that he would knowingly possess a "faked" portrait of Charlotte Brontë, though it must be admitted that the Heger family deny that the portrait was ever in their possession. Miss Green stated that Dr. Baylis had other Brontë relics, including an oil-painting of Emily Brontë by her brother Branwell, and also two of Emily Brontë's letters, once in the possession of the Hegers. These, she said, were given to her brother, who is now in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> The then Director of the National Portrait Gallery was very sceptical of the portrait when it was first submitted to him, but he was unable to find any valid reason for disbelief in its genuineness, and it was hung close by the Richmond portrait of Charlotte Brontë. Unfortunately, it was not until after it was purchased that its genuineness was questioned by Mr. Shorter in *The Times* for December, 1906.

It was evidently considered to be a genuine portrait, though several tests might have been applied which would have shown this was not so. It measures 12 inches by 9, and represents a lady in a green dress, sitting reading *Shirley*; beneath the word "Shirley" is painted "C. Brontë." On the right-hand side of the painting is the signature "Paul Héger, 1850." It is evidently the work of a skilled artist, though it bears traces of having been altered in places, which may have been done with the intention of deceiving a purchaser. At the back are two inscriptions, the upper one being—

"THE WEARIN' OF THE GREEN,  
FIRST SINCE EMILY'S DEATH."

and near the lower edge of the paper there is the following—

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I have thoroughly investigated the matter, and the evidence is most conflicting and unsatisfactory.



"CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

This drawing is by P. Heger,  
done from life in 1850.

The pose was suggested first  
by a sketch done by her brother Branwell  
many years previous."

There are also directions probably intended for the original  
framer of the picture—

Stretched (*sic*) on wood.

$\frac{1}{2}$  Imperial Trimed (*sic*).

The first inscription is evidently painted in a medium of pale sepia with a brush, to represent faded ink, and also to imply that it was written by Charlotte Brontë—the letter d in the word "death" being very similar to her Greek style of writing that letter, as noted in 1863 by W. Johnson Cory. Across the first inscription may be traced in very faint pencil the capital letters P and H, which may have been put there to indicate the name of the supposed artist, Paul Heger.

The water-mark on the drawing-paper is "Whatman, Turkey Mills, 1850." This helps to limit the date, though the painting could easily have been done at a later period, as it is not impossible to obtain drawing paper with an old water-mark. The second inscription is presumably by a lady, but on a careful examination it is evidently by the same hand as the two inscriptions on the front. Even this is written in a pale sepia medium, giving the appearance of faded ink.

It is quite impossible for any member of the Heger family, or Charlotte Brontë, to have painted this portrait. M. Heger, Charlotte Brontë's professor, always used the signature "C. Heger," and his son, Dr. Paul Heger, was only a boy of four in 1850. He has assured me, both in conversation and by letter, that his father did not either paint or draw, and as one of M. Heger's daughters, Mdle Louise Heger, is a professional artist, it is impossible that there can be any mistake in the matter, and yet the inscription at the foot of the frame reads "Signed Paul Heger, 1850." I was able to convince the present Director of the National Portrait Gallery that this could not possibly be correct, and the plate with the inscription on was removed in my presence.

Whoever painted the portrait knew something of the Brontë story, for it was in 1850 that Charlotte Brontë had her portrait painted by George Richmond, R.A., and it was in that year that she enjoyed the popularity of *Shirley*. Moreover, on 12th June, 1850, she was invited to a dinner-party by Thackeray, to meet a number of the great writers, and Thackeray's daughter—Lady Ritchie—forty years afterwards, in her *Chapters from Some Memories*, describes Charlotte Brontë as clad at that party in a barège dress, with a pattern of faint green moss. This is not quite correct, however, for when I showed Lady Ritchie a portion of the dress worn by Charlotte Brontë she recognised it at once; it is a white delaine, with a pattern of tiny bright blue leaves, and small tendrils, joined together with a faint line. This is confirmed by Mrs. Ratcliffe, the sister of the old servant at the Haworth Rectory—Martha Brown—the daughter of the sexton, who received all Charlotte Brontë's clothing from Mr. Nicholls after his wife's death, including even her wedding veil. The Browns had no recollection of a dress with a green pattern, but the white delaine was produced, and it is now in my possession. One of the daughters of Mrs. Ratcliffe, Eleanor, wore it for a little time when she was a girl.

That Charlotte Brontë did wear a coloured dress in June, 1850, bought for her by Mrs. Smith, the mother of Mr. George Smith, in order to accompany them to the Opera, is an admitted fact. This is the origin of the incident in *Villette* where Mrs. Bretton buys Lucy Snowe a new pink dress and Paul Emanuel afterwards teases her about it, calling it scarlet, upon which Lucy Snowe replies, "Scarlet, Monsieur Paul? It was not scarlet! It was pink, and pale pink, too; and further subdued by black lace." To which he responded "Pink or scarlet, yellow or crimson, pea-green or sky-blue; it was all one." Charlotte mentions in her novel the light fabric and the bright colour, which exactly describes the material.

Connecting the facts concerning *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë's writing, and the dress with a pattern of faint green moss together, it is evident that someone utilised these for the

inscriptions on the portrait. It should be remembered, however, that *Shirley* was not issued in 1850 under the name of C. Brontë. Every volume in that year had on the title page, in capital letters, "Currer Bell," as the name of the author, whereas the book held by the lady in the picture has "C. Brontë" in small letters. It is also clear that Charlotte Brontë never wore a green dress in 1850, as could easily have been ascertained by examining specimens of the material used in her dresses, all of which were available in 1906. It should also be remembered that Charlotte Brontë did not wear curls in 1850; on the independent authority of three persons who met her in that year her hair was thin, and there would not be sufficient to allow for a coil at the back and curls in front. Mrs. Brookfield says she wore a crown of brown silk on her hair because she had not sufficient, and Lady Ritchie refers to it as a bandeau. She told me quite recently that Charlotte Brontë's hair was thin and quite straight, coming down over her ears. Then in 1868 Mr. Stores Smith, in an article published in the *Free Lance*, says, "She had rather light-brown hair, somewhat thin, and drawn plainly over her brow," when he met her in Sept., 1850. Then, comparing the oval face with the Richmond portrait, they could not both represent the same person.

This all goes to prove that Charlotte Brontë could not have sat for the portrait as it is, and the signature is evidently written by someone who knew that M. Heger was the original of Paul Emanuel in *Villette*. As Mr. Clement Shorter has given the name "Paul Heger" to the portrait of M. Constantin Heger in his book, *Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters*, published in 1896, this may possibly have led to the signature on the portrait, for all the inscriptions have been added later than 1850.

Shortly after my visit on 2 Oct., 1913, the officials of the National Portrait Gallery found an impression of an inscription in large hand across the back of the painting "Portrait of Miss Mary Vickers." It is very faint, and it took several hours to decipher it by means of magnifying glasses and mirrors. This confirms my arguments that the painting

is a fraud. The first letter P can easily be detected, and it is marvellous that this writing was not discovered before.

On my submitting the photograph of the painting to Mrs. Ratcliffe, Martha Brown's sister, at Haworth in August, 1908, she failed to recognise it, and when asked if it looked like Charlotte Brontë replied without the slightest hesitation, "Not a bit of it! she was a much smaller woman than that. That's never Miss Charlotte."

The name of the artist is unknown, and it is not clear how the portrait came into the hands of Dr. Baylis, but it is absolutely certain that the portrait could never have represented Charlotte Brontë, or been so altered as to represent her.

\* \* \* \* \*

In a letter to Miss Lætitia Wheelwright, dated 3rd June, 1850, Charlotte Brontë says: "I came to London last Thursday, and shall stay perhaps a fortnight. *To-morrow, I expect to go out of town for a few days*—but next week, if all be well, I hope to have the pleasure of calling on you. If you write to me meanwhile address as above, and I shall find the letter on my return."

The Wheelwrights were living at Phillimore Gardens, and were Charlotte's only friends in London, besides the Smiths. Evidently she did not wish them to call on her during her absence, and she wrote the letter to keep them from making inquiries.

On the very same day, 3rd June, she writes to Ellen Nussey, and, intimate friend as she was, she does not mention the "going out of town," but she does say she has "some little business to transact," though at that time she had no book on hand, and *Villette* did not appear until nearly three years later.

On 4th June Charlotte Brontë writes to her father a long and interesting letter, but she does not mention one word about "going out of town for a few days," which is strange. Then again, on 12th June, she writes again to Ellen Nussey, but does not mention having been out of town; though she says, "I have not had many moments to myself, except such as it was *absolutely* necessary to give to rest. . . . Of course, I cannot in a letter give you a regular chronicle of how my time has been spent. I can only just notify what I deem three of

the chief incidents," which she gives as a sight of the Duke of Wellington, a visit to the House of Commons, and an interview with Thackeray. The letter is long, but there is no mention of the days spent out of town.

These letters seem to point to the fact that Charlotte Brontë went over to Brussels, for she had no friends out of town, except the Brussels friends, and her relatives in Cornwall.

It is possible that the Smiths were in the secret, as Charlotte Brontë could scarcely go away for a few days without telling Mrs. Smith where she was going. The business that she had on hand must in some way have been connected with *Villette*, though it was not until March, 1851 that there is any mention of her writing another book. A portion, however, had evidently been written by that time, though it was not completed until November, 1852. The fact that Mrs. George Smith and Mr. Reginald Smith considered the water-colour painting genuine would seem to show that they had some information concerning a meeting between Charlotte Brontë and M. Heger, which they would get from Mr. George Smith. Then again, Charlotte says in her letter to the Wheelwrights that she expected to stay with the Smiths for a fortnight but the holiday was extended to six weeks, showing that something kept Charlotte in London.

Why Brussels should have supplied the novelist at this time with another story is somewhat strange, as both *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* had no connection with Madame Heger, and she seems to have decided to leave it alone. It was not that *The Professor* had been rejected so often, for *Villette* is quite a different tale from *The Professor*. The reason seems to hang on this visit "out of town" in 1850, and the meeting between Charlotte Brontë and M. Heger may be accounted for by a story first discovered by Mr. Malham-Dembleby, and referred to at length in his *Key to the Brontë Works*.

This serial is entitled *Mary Lawson*, by Eugène Sue, and appeared in the *London Journal* from October, 1850, to March, 1851. It is evidently a translation from the French, as the English translator in several foot-notes refers to the French copy, and not to a manuscript. Whether the story was first

published in a French journal is not certain, but an abridgment of *Mary Lawson*, under the title of *Miss Mary, ou l'Institutrice*, has been published in book form by Ernest Flammarion, who is stated to be the editor of Eugène Sue's works. An author's note in the preface, dedicating the novel to M. Geordy M. . . ., MacFarlan Cottage, near Limerick, and dated "Paris, 20 April, 1851," says that the story was written two years earlier, after a visit to Ireland.

It is important to note that this date was two years after *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847.

*Mary Lawson* of the *London Journal*, and *Miss Mary, ou l'Institutrice*, are practically the same, but two short stories which are sandwiched in *Mary Lawson* are omitted in *Miss Mary*, and there are certain minor differences. These two short stories are *Kitty Bell, the Orphan*, and *Giulio and Eleanor*.

The story of *Kitty Bell* is supposed to be a manuscript sent to M. and Madame de Morville, for their opinion and criticism by a former governess, Mdle Lagrange. *Giulio and Eleanor* is said to be a story printed in a magazine by a well-known French writer, who had collected the facts from the friends of the family of the governess. On this becoming known, all the copies of the magazine were bought up, and destroyed, except the one in the possession of Mary Lawson, who reads it to her employers.

*Kitty Bell, the Orphan*, is undoubtedly another version of the early part of *Jane Eyre*. My own view with regard to the story is that it was actually written by Charlotte Brontë, either when she was alone in Brussels in 1843, in which case M. and Madame Heger may have had a copy, or after Charlotte Brontë's return in 1844-1845, when it may have been sent to the Hegers.

Mr. Malham-Dembleby thinks that *Kitty Bell* was written by Eugène Sue, from information supplied by some one who knew Charlotte Brontë in Brussels, possibly the Hegers, but that could hardly be so, for the principal names used in the story are such as were common in Haworth in the Brontë days, and are still to be found in the district, as anyone who has lived in Haworth can testify — Heaton, Parker, Lambert,

Hutchinson, Wright, Briggs, Brown, and the name of the heroine Bell which the Brontë sisters adopted. It could hardly be possible for Belgians to remember all these Hawthorne names. Moreover, the story is written in an autobiographical style, which could hardly be copied by a Frenchman. Eugène Sue could scarcely have fixed upon those surnames by chance; they are too Yorkshire. Then again, in the story of *Kitty Bell* there are facts concerning Charlotte Brontë's life that were not commonly known until after her death, when Mrs. Gaskell published her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. In the first edition, Mrs. Gaskell says, in speaking of Charlotte Brontë, "Her great friend was a certain Mellany Hane (as Mr. Brontë spells the name), a West Indian . . ."

In *Kitty Bell* she is referred to as "the beautiful Creole from Trinidad, Isabella Hutchinson," and Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* is from the West Indies. The hair-cutting scene given in *Jane Eyre* is described much more graphically. Mellany Hane's brother was a curate at Sydenham, as stated by the lady superintendent at Cowan Bridge, and it is very probable that he wrote to Mrs. Gaskell, asking that the words "West Indian" should be deleted, as they do not appear in the later editions.

In one of her letters to Miss Wooler, not published until 1896, when it appeared in Mr. Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, Charlotte Brontë mentions that whilst at Cowan Bridge the pupils suffered from skin diseases, and in *Kitty Bell* the heroine says, "I have been awake half the night, tormented by the acute shootings of the sores upon my chest and limbs. The doctor calls this complaint the *herpes*."

In the story of *Kitty Bell* there is an orphan, who, like Jane Eyre, was very unhappy at home with an aunt, and who was sent to a school called The Kendal Institute. The Clergy Daughters' School is in the district of Kendal. Until the death of Agnes Jones, who, it is plain to see, is drawn from the same original as Helen Burns, the story runs somewhat parallel with *Jane Eyre*, but later the heroine—Kitty Bell—who at school has to submit to be called Catherine) gives place to a Miss Ashton, the superintendent of the Kendal Institute (the Miss Temple of *Jane Eyre*), and there is an account of a

governess who is harassed by her profligate brother. Then follows the removal of Kitty Bell to Bath, where she meets the Creole, who was with her at the Kendal Institute, and she becomes her rival.

It is not difficult to trace in this story of *Kitty Bell* Charlotte Brontë's early life, and in several respects it is truer to fact than in *Jane Eyre*, as in *The Professor* she uses real names of places.

In the summer of 1837 Ellen Nussey was at Bath, and she was writing to Charlotte Brontë from that city. It is possible that her letters to Charlotte Brontë may have suggested Bath to the writer of *Kitty Bell*. There is one sentence in the earlier part of *Kitty Bell* which is quite Brontë'sque. "One evening, about the middle of March, just at that pleasant hour of twilight, when two of God's wonders, Night and Day, cross each other like ships on the sea. . . ."

In *Shirley* Charlotte Brontë writes of the wonders of the change from night to day. Moreover, the telling of the story of *Kitty Bell, the Orphan*, is in keeping with the Brontë tradition that the writer must adopt the rôle of an outcast. When reading the story it is easy to detect the difference in style from Eugène Sue's, and comparison with any of his French novels proves this. The style is not that of the author of *The Seven Cardinal Sins*, but of the writer of *Jane Eyre*. Miss May Sinclair in her *Three Brontës* assumes that Eugène Sue plagiarised from *Jane Eyre*, but that could not be, as there are more actual facts of Charlotte Brontë's life in *Kitty Bell* than in *Jane Eyre*, which Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* proves, though it must be remembered that it was written seven years afterwards.

It has always been a matter of surprise that Charlotte Brontë set to work so quickly on *Jane Eyre*, whilst her father was undergoing an operation in Manchester, for, according to one of her letters to Ellen Nussey, she had a very busy time, as she had to "board" her father, the nurse, and herself. Yet, on receiving the manuscript of the rejected *Professor*, she set to work immediately on *Jane Eyre* in her lodgings in a small house, at 59 Boundary Street, Greenheys, Manchester, during August, 1846, and she wrote very quickly, until she got the heroine away from "Thornfield," according to Mrs. Gaskell.



This seems to show that the earlier part of *Jane Eyre* was already in Charlotte Brontë's mind, and that the plot was ready, though after the death of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* the similarity with *Kitty Bell* is not so clear, for *Jane Eyre* is kept to the front as the heroine all through the novel, whilst in *Kitty Bell* Kitty loses grasp. If Eugène Sue had plagiarised from *Jane Eyre* he would not have made such a blunder, and *Kitty Bell* is inferior in dramatic incident to *Jane Eyre*. There is a Captain Pottinger in the story, but he is a poor type compared with Rochester; had Eugène Sue copied the story of *Jane Eyre* he would have found something more startling to compare with it.

It is just possible that *Kitty Bell* was begun between October, 1842, and January, 1843, after Miss Branwell's death, and when Charlotte and Emily were both at home, previous to Charlotte's return to Brussels.

Charlotte Brontë evidently knew Eugène Sue's works, for in *The Professor* she mentions a row of French books in Hunsden's Library, and she also gives Eugène Sue's name as one of the authors.

In *Kitty Bell* it is mentioned that the heroine had been beaten by George Burke, and in *Jane Eyre* a milder version is given of George Reed treating Jane Eyre badly.

When M. Heger died, M. Albert Colin, the editor of *L'Etoile Belge*, writing an obituary notice for the *Sketch* for 3rd June, 1896, mentions that Charlotte Brontë was very unhappy when at Haworth, and that a drunken brother who beat her continually disturbed her home. On the evidence of those who knew Charlotte Brontë in Brussels, she gave the impression that she was happier at school than at home, until the last few months of her residence there. This certainly seems to be borne out by the fact that Charlotte determined to return a second time, and also that she left most reluctantly at the end of 1843, and her recently published letters prove she had determined to return, if possible, a third time.

Eugène Sue evidently knew of the sensation caused by the publication of *Jane Eyre*, and, as he visited Ireland in 1849, and most probably was in London during that year, he may have

read the autobiographical novel by Currer Bell, and decided to write a "governess story" of his own, for Mary Lawson, the Irish governess, and Mdlle Lagrange, her predecessor, owe something to the author of *Jane Eyre*, as anyone who is acquainted with Charlotte Brontë's life can easily tell. Whether Eugène Sue got the particulars from Brussels, or obtained possession of other manuscripts of Charlotte Brontë is not known.

The question arises whether Charlotte Brontë knew that Eugène Sue had included the manuscript of *Kitty Bell, the Orphan*, in his governess story of 1850, and had used certain particulars in *Mary Lawson* concerning Charlotte Brontë's life at the Heger pensionnat, which were not published until *Villette* and *The Professor* made their appearance some years later. If Charlotte Brontë had sent the story of *Kitty Bell, the Orphan*, to M. Heger some years before, it would be easy to recognise *Jane Eyre* as *Kitty Bell*, and Eugène Sue must by some means have got either a copy of *Kitty Bell*, or the actual manuscript, and other particulars also.

Is it possible that Charlotte Brontë found out in the summer of 1850 that her life-story was being used by Eugène Sue in a French feuilleton, and that she succeeded in getting the *Kitty Bell* story and *Giulio and Eleanor* deleted in the French version, not knowing that the English rights had been sold to the *London Journal*, which did not publish the part of *Mary Lawson* containing *Kitty Bell* until November, 1850? It is certainly strange that this *Kitty Bell* story was never referred to in the early fifties, but, had it been issued in England as a book, it might possibly have been detected. In any case, granted that the story of *Mary Lawson* did first appear in the *London Journal*, it is significant that when it was published in French in 1851 it took a new title and *Kitty Bell* was deleted; yet the publishers did not accept the story as an abridgment. The author must have had some reason for leaving out the two stories of *Kitty Bell* and *Giulio and Eleanor*.

If Charlotte Brontë went to Brussels and Paris in 1850, her visit may have had some reference to Eugène Sue's story. In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe tells of Dr. John (Mr. George Smith)

showing her places she had never seen in Villette (Brussels), and that in a short fortnight she saw more of the city than she had seen during the whole of the time she had lived there. She describes a visit to a picture gallery with Dr. John, and the pictures she describes are Flemish women. Had this referred to the National Portrait Gallery in London, there would scarcely have been a reference to Flemish portraits, although Villette sometimes represents London and sometimes Brussels. Those "few days out of town" seem to point to Brussels, and the "business," which appears to have taken up all Charlotte Brontë's time "except for the hours given to sleep," apparently points to some publishing matter in which Mr. Smith took some part, for she had no business except that which concerned her literary work.

In a letter published in the Haworth Edition of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, pages 464 and 467—Charlotte Brontë, writing to Mr. Smith, mentions that she owes him for some cards and *power of attorney*, and in her next letter she encloses one pound, eleven shillings and sixpence, for this. The letter is dated 5th August, 1850, and it proves that certain business had been transacted by Mr. Smith for Charlotte Brontë.

If she found that someone in Brussels had given particulars relating to her life and that Eugène Sue was using them in his novels, it is very probable that she determined to write a story using her experience in Brussels, and especially designed to caricature Madame Heger, for there must have been some reason for the vindictive nature of *Villette*, especially considering that in *Shirley* she had not attempted to betray any spite towards Madame Heger, although Robert Moore owes much to M. Heger.

Eugène Sue (1801–1857) was first a doctor, then a soldier, afterwards an artist, ultimately becoming an author. Owing to the part he took in French politics, he was banished and died in exile. Unless the facts concerning the life of an English or Irish governess had been supplied to him, he would probably not have been so successful in *Mary Lawson*; indeed, it is noticeable that the translator, in a foot-note, compliments M. Sue on his correct and beautiful description of an English girl.

If Charlotte Brontë read this story in the *London Journal*, as she probably did, it is very easy to understand the vindictiveness of *Villette*, and why she wrote, "I said my prayers when I had finished it. It is not pretentious, and I think will not be likely to cause hostility." Yet the Smiths were so offended that the story had to be much reduced by whole portions being cut out, which shows that they were not favourable to these parts. When the novel reached Brussels, there was still more hostility. The other manuscript sent by the governess who succeeds Mdlle Lagrange, *Giulio and Eleanor*, tells of the daughter of a lady, Mrs. Maywood, whose father took part in the Irish rebellion of 1798. It has a certain relation to *Wuthering Heights*, and the heroine Eleanor shares the fate of Cathy, who, after her burial as the wife of a man she does not love, is visited by her former lover, who has her grave opened, and longing to have Eleanor in his arms again, hears a sigh, and, snatching her from her coffin, takes her away, when she is restored to life. In *Wuthering Heights* it is the spirit that is active after death, and when Heathcliff tears up the ground which covers Cathy, saying, "I'll have her in my arms again. If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be motionless, it is sleep," he hears a sigh, but does not disturb her, though he is conscious of her presence ever after. "I was sure she was with me, and I could not help talking to her," says Emily Brontë in the novel.

There is a small volume of manuscripts entitled *The Spell, an Extravaganza*, and several other small compositions by Charlotte Brontë in the British Museum, signed and dated 1834 and 1835. The book is beautifully bound in red leather, and there is an inscription in gilt letters on the cover "Manuscripts by Charlotte Brontë." Underneath is her *nom de guerre* "Currer Bell." On the inside of the cover is written "Purchased from E. Nys, of Brussels, 10th Dec., 1892." Being curious to know how it came about that the manuscripts had been purchased from someone in Brussels, I made inquiries and found the address of M. Nys. To my inquiries concerning his possession of the volume he replied—

"Ce petit cahier a été acheté par moi avec d'autres livres :

M. Richard Garnett, qui était alors surintendant des imprimés, a tenu à l'avoir pour le British Museum. C'est tout ce que je connais de l'ouvrage. Charlotte Brontë l'aura oublié à Bruxelles, et de longues années après il a échoué au marché public.

“ Votre tout dévoué

“ S. Nys.”

It appears that M. Nys was not quite certain of the genuineness of the manuscripts, and he applied to Dr. Garnett, who was anxious to secure the volume for the British Museum, recognising it as the work of the famous novelist. Seeing that this little collection of Charlotte Brontë's manuscripts was left at the pensionnat in Brussels, or was sent to M. Heger later, it is quite possible for *Kitty Bell*, *the Orphan* and *Giulio and Eleanor* to have shared the same fate, and for Eugène Sue to have got the actual manuscripts. *Giulio and Eleanor* may account for Charlotte Brontë's claim to an earlier version of *Wuthering Heights*, but, although the plot is very similar, the style is absolutely different from Emily's great novel.

Whether these short stories were written by Charlotte Brontë or not, they are connected in some way with the Brontës. If Charlotte Brontë took her manuscripts of 1834 and 1835 to Brussels, it is very possible she took others.

During this visit to London in the summer of 1850, Charlotte Brontë had a varied experience. After her few days spent out of town, she received a call from Thackeray on 12th June, and she gave him one of her smart lectures, when he defended himself like a great Turk ; but in the evening of the same day she dined at his house in Kensington, now known as No. 16 Young Street. The house is much as it was in the days when Charlotte Brontë visited it. Now there is a bronze commemoration tablet over the door in honour of Thackeray. It was on passing this house that Thackeray said to Fields, the American publisher, “ Down on your knees, you rogue, for here *Vanity Fair* was penned.”

Lady Ritchie once described to me little Jane Eyre sitting near the drawing-room window with mittens on her small hands, looking very demure, and when the company rose to

go to dinner, her father offered his arm. Charlotte had to reach up to take it. Thackeray was six feet three, and Charlotte Brontë a little over four feet.

It was the first dinner party that Thackeray gave in Miss Brontë's honour, but it was not a success. This party has been assigned by Mrs. Brookfield to the first time Thackeray met Charlotte Brontë in November, 1849, but it was evidently on 12th June, 1850, according to Charlotte Brontë's letter.

Mrs. Brookfield says in *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle*—

"There was just then a fashion for wearing a plait of hair across the head, and Miss Brontë, a timid little woman with a firm mouth, did not possess a large enough quantity of hair to enable her to form a plait, so therefore wore a very obvious crown of brown silk. Mr. Thackeray on the way down to dinner addressed her as Currer Bell. She tossed her head and said, 'she believed there were books being published by a person named Currer Bell . . . but the person he was talking to was Miss Brontë—and she saw no connection between the two.'"

The crown of brown silk worn by Charlotte Brontë settles the question that she was not wearing mourning in June, 1850, and Lady Ritchie, describing the same dinner party, mentions "the tiny, delicate, serious little lady, pale, with fair straight hair, and steady eyes . . . she enters in mittens, in silence, in seriousness; our hearts are beating with wild excitement. This, then, is the authoress, the unknown power whose books have set all London talking, reading, speculating; some people even say our father wrote the books—the wonderful books."

The party was a failure, according to the account given by Thackeray's daughter. Conversation flagged, and Miss Brontë—the lioness of the evening—confined herself and her conversation almost entirely to the children's governess, although there were present Mrs. Crowe, Mr. and Mrs. Brookfield, Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle, Mrs. Procter and her daughter, Mrs. Elliot and Miss Perry, in addition to Thackeray and his two girls. Mrs. Brookfield tells how she made an effort to draw into conversation "the great, little Jane Eyre." "Do you like London, Miss Brontë?" she asked, and after a pause the reply came

"Yes and No." Charlotte Brontë and Mr. George Smith were the first to leave and, as soon as they had gone, Thackeray slipped out of the drawing-room, and his eldest daughter was surprised to see him open the front door, with his hat on. "He put his fingers to his lips, walked out into the darkness, and shut the door quietly behind him. When I went back to the drawing-room again, the ladies asked me where he was. I vaguely answered that I thought he was coming back," wrote Lady Ritchie.<sup>1</sup>

Lady Ritchie remembers how Charlotte Brontë was offended with her father for introducing her to her grandmother as "Jane Eyre." Evidently London and Brussels were both excited over the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*.

In telling Ellen Nussey of her interview with the author of *Vanity Fair*, she says—

"He made a morning call, and sat about two hours. Mr. Smith only was in the room the whole time. He described it afterwards as a 'queer scene,' and I suppose it was. The giant sate before me; I was moved to speak to him of some of his shortcomings (literary, of course); one by one the faults came into my head, and one by one I brought them out, and sought some explanation or defence. He did defend himself, like a great Turk and heathen; that is to say, the excuses were often worse than the crime itself. The matter ended in decent amity; if all be well, I am to dine at his house this evening."

It was whilst staying for the first time at 112 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park, that Charlotte Brontë met George Henry Lewes, "The aspect of Lewes's face almost moves me to tears; it is so wonderfully like Emily, her eyes, her features, the very nose, the somewhat prominent mouth, the forehead, even, at moments, the expression: whatever Lewes does or says, I believe I cannot hate him." Yet it was Lewes who, when dining at Mrs. Smith's, leant across the table and said, "There ought to be a bond of sympathy between us, Miss Brontë, for we have both written naughty books."

Mr. Smith tells us "This fired the train with a vengeance,

<sup>1</sup> *Chapters from some Memories*, by Lady Ritchie.

and an explosion followed," but afterwards she asked Mrs. Smith to explain what she had written which could be classed as naughty, and on another occasion she said to the friend at Briery Close, "I trust God will take from me what power of invention or expression I may have, before he lets me become blind to the sense of what is fitting or unfitting to be said."

It was during this visit in the summer of 1850 that the Smiths persuaded Charlotte Brontë to sit to George Richmond for a portrait, and she agreed, as the drawing was to be framed and presented to her father, and Ellen Nussey had also wished for a portrait of her friend. Richmond found Charlotte Brontë by no means a good subject; it is well known that he was keen about having a good picture as well as a faithful likeness. Richmond found Charlotte Brontë very depressed, and after she had given him two sittings he lost hope. It was her melancholy expression, as well as her irregular features that troubled him. On her third visit, the Duke of Wellington's servant was just leaving the studio as she entered, which caused Richmond to say in welcoming her, "If you had been here a quarter of an hour sooner, you would have seen the Duke of Wellington." Whereupon she broke out into eager talking about the Duke, and the artist caught the wistful expression given in her portrait.

When Richmond was getting on well with the drawing, Charlotte Brontë stood behind him, looking at it; he heard a sob, and on turning round she said to him, "Excuse me—it is so like my sister Emily."

When the drawing was finished, Mr. George Smith says in his paper, "In the Early Forties," "She burst into tears, and said it was so like her sister Anne, who had died the year before." The fact was, there was a family likeness between the three sisters, but Charlotte was not so good-looking as Emily and Anne. Mrs. Gaskell considered the drawing an excellent likeness, as did others who knew her in 1850.

Mr. Smith sent the drawing, and also a framed portrait of the Duke of Wellington as a present for Mr. Brontë, whom, as an Irishman, he greatly admired.

This visit to 112 Gloucester Terrace proved to be the longest



holiday Charlotte Brontë ever had, for, as the alterations at the parsonage were not completed, she extended her holiday by first going from London to Birstall to stay for a while with Ellen Nussey, and then she went to Scotland to meet Mr. George Smith and his younger brother. Charlotte Brontë had always a great admiration for Scotland and Scottish characters, and though she spent only a few days over the border, and the time mainly in Edinburgh, she enjoyed the visit immensely.

"My stay in Scotland" (she wrote some weeks later) "was short, and what I saw was chiefly comprised in Edinburgh and the neighbourhood, in Abbotsford and Melrose, for I was obliged to relinquish my first intention of going from Glasgow to Oban, and thence through a portion of the Highlands; but though the time was brief, and the view of objects limited, I found such a charm of situation, association, and circumstance, that I think the enjoyment experienced in that little space equalled in degree, and excelled in kind, all which London yielded during a month's sojourn. Edinburgh compared to London is like a vivid page of history compared to a huge dull treatise on political economy; and as to Melrose and Abbotsford, the very names possess music and magic."

Seeing that parts of *Villette* were cut out and whole pages deleted, it is very possible that the two days in Scotland found a place in the novel, but Mr. Smith may have objected, as it was well known that he went with Charlotte Brontë to Scotland.

The father, left behind in Haworth with the alterations at the parsonage, got very anxious about his daughter, who had only gone for a fortnight. She had never been away for so long a period before and the old man and the servants had got the impression that Miss Brontë was arranging to get married, or else that she actually was married, for Mr. Brontë knew that a Mr. James Taylor, of the firm of Smith, Elder & Co., was anxious to marry Charlotte Brontë, and had she been willing there is evidence that her father would not have objected. Later Mr. Taylor went to India on business for the firm, and before his return Charlotte Brontë had married her father's curate. This offer of marriage was the third that

Charlotte Brontë received, but she was emphatic in her rejection. She considered Mr. Taylor to be second-rate, and she said that she preferred to remain unmarried if Fate only offered her such a husband, though in the latest letters there is evidently a suspicion that had Mr. Taylor returned, he might have had Charlotte Brontë for his wife.

Mr. Brontë became so anxious about his daughter that he got old John Greenwood to start, staff in hand, to look for her in Birstall. He had only got to the foot of Bridgehouse Hill, in the village, when he met Charlotte Brontë in a cab, and very glad he was for Mr. Brontë's sake.

If Charlotte Brontë did have trouble over her literary work, and go over to Brussels in 1850, it accounts for Brussels being fresh in her mind when writing *Villette*, but I have an assurance from Mrs. George Smith that she never heard of her husband and Miss Brontë going to Brussels together. The question of "the few days out of town" may never be settled, but a letter was once offered for sale, said to have been written by Charlotte Brontë and dated from Paris. If that letter is genuine, it may help to throw light on the mystery, especially if the date coincides.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S FIRST AND SECOND VISIT TO THE ENGLISH LAKES

1850

CHARLOTTE BRONTË invited to Briery Close, Windermere—Her first meeting with Mrs. Gaskell—Mrs. Gaskell's account—Visits to the Arnolds of Fox How—Return to Haworth—Second visit to the Lake District—She stays with Miss Martineau at Ambleside.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË's first interest in the Lake District must have been awakened when she wrote to Southey in 1837, and afterwards to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Southey had expressed a wish to see her if she visited the English Lakes. In those days money was not too plentiful at the Haworth parsonage, and much as Charlotte Brontë would have liked to pay a visit to the Lake District it was all but impossible. Alas ! when she did get an opportunity of going, Southey had been dead for seven years, Hartley Coleridge had recently died in 1849, and Wordsworth in April, 1850, so that the poets in whom she was specially interested had all passed away. As Branwell Brontë had been at Broughton-in-Furness in 1839, and had visited Hartley Coleridge, Charlotte Brontë would have heard something of the beauties of the English Lakes at least ten years before she herself became a guest at Briery Close, Windermere.

The English Lake District, so redolent of the poets associated with its name, was an ideal spot for Charlotte Brontë to visit, and, although she had been away from home for six weeks in the June and July of 1850, her father persuaded her to accept an invitation from Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and Lady Shuttleworth to a house known as Briery Close, which they had rented on the shores of Lake Windermere, just above the little landing stage at Low-wood. The house is still there, but it has been recently altered ; it had been renovated previously and enlarged, so that it is a more palatial mansion

than when Charlotte Brontë visited it. The house is sheltered by trees, and is approached from the shore of Lake Windermere by a steep, winding path. The view from the house is the same as in Charlotte Brontë's days, and Conistone Old Man and Langdale Pikes can be seen overlooking the lake. Dove Nest, where Felicia Hemans lived, can be seen among the trees in the distance, and the view, up and down the lake, is magnificent.

Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, who knew Mrs. Gaskell in Manchester, before he was acquainted with Charlotte Brontë, had invited the author of *Mary Barton* to meet the writer of *Jane Eyre*. One who was present to meet the two novelists at this time described Charlotte Brontë as extremely nervous and shy, looking as if she would be glad if the floor would open to swallow her, whilst Mrs. Gaskell sat bright, cheerful, and quite at ease. Hitherto the two writers had not met. Charlotte Brontë did not approach the house from the lake, but from Windermere Station, the railway having been opened in 1847. She arrived at Briery Close on 18th August, 1850, and Mrs. Gaskell a day later. Sir James K. Shuttleworth never seemed weary of inviting Charlotte Brontë and trying to give her pleasure; he had written two novels himself, *Scarsdale*, dealing with the Lancashire border, and *Ribblesdale*. Charlotte Brontë seemed to be nervous in his company, though she tried to appreciate his kindness, and he certainly was very good to her.

Fortunately Mrs. Gaskell wrote a long descriptive letter concerning her first meeting with Charlotte Brontë. It has been said that Mrs. Gaskell did not keep a regular diary, but she did, perhaps, what was better: she made notes of her visits to distinguished people, and she wrote long letters to her husband and others, which were of great use when she needed material for her stories. Had she known that she was to be the biographer of Charlotte Brontë, she could scarcely have been more particular in recording her impressions of her friend. This will readily be admitted by reference to her letters.

Much as Charlotte Brontë enjoyed the scenery, she was cramped in her sight of it—

“My visit passed off very well; I am very glad I went. The scenery is, of course, grand; could I have wandered about



SIR JAMES K. SHUTTLEWORTH



amongst those hills *alone*, I could have drank in all their beauty ; even in a carriage with company, it was very well.

“ If I could only have dropped unseen out of the carriage, and gone away by myself in amongst those grand hills and sweet dales, I should have drank in the full power of this glorious scenery. In company this can hardly be. Sometimes, while Sir James Kay Shuttleworth was warning me against the faults of the artist-class, all the while vagrant artist instincts were busy in the mind of his listener. Sir James was all the while as kind and friendly as he could be ; he is in much better health.”

Her visit to the Lake District did not produce the same enthusiasm as is noticeable in her account of the time spent in Scotland, though she admits that the scenery in the Lake District was grander, which is partly to be accounted for by the difference in the company she was in ; she never seemed to relax with Sir James K. Shuttleworth, and even with Mrs. Gaskell she was reserved and afraid to be natural, whilst in the company of Mr. George Smith she could be quite free and even jolly at times. The few published letters which passed between Charlotte Brontë and Mr. George Smith show a delightful spirit ; she could make a pun and jest with him in her letters, as with no other person. Letters are said to reveal not only the writer, but also the receiver, and certainly a study of Charlotte Brontë's letters proves that she could suit her letters to the receiver, and none shows her to better advantage than those to her publisher, for in them is a joyousness and *abandon* which contradicts the impression conveyed by Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* of a woman who experienced nothing but sorrow, and who was only capable of living a sad and subdued life.

In the course of this visit, Sir James K. Shuttleworth and his guests were invited to Fox How, the beautiful home of the widow of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby. The house is still kept as it was in 1851 ; the quiet, shady garden, just off the carriage road leading to Grasmere can be seen by tourists, and drivers of carriages seldom fail to point out the house. When the present writer visited it in 1910 the drawing-room in which the party assembled to meet Charlotte Brontë was shown,

with the paintings and portraits of some of those who formed the company in August, 1850. The beautiful painting of Mrs. Arnold hangs over the mantelpiece, and there is also a strikingly fine picture of Dr. Arnold, who, his daughter told me, built the house with great care for the sake of his children. Now all the members of the household are gone, except the youngest, Miss Frances Arnold, who maintains the delightful and hospitable associations of the old home. One portrait, of which Miss Arnold is very proud, is that of her cousin, Mrs. Humphry Ward, who has spent long holidays at Fox How, during which she sometimes wrote part of her novels. Westmoreland has done much to inspire her writing, and the latest edition of her novels, for which she has written charming introductions, is known as *The Westmoreland Edition*.

Amongst the books treasured at Fox How are many from distinguished authors, including a first edition of *Sylvia's Lovers*, sent by Mrs. Gaskell to Mrs. Forster, one of Mrs. Arnold's daughters. Among the autograph letters are some from Charlotte Brontë and Mrs. Gaskell, which both in style and caligraphy are quite different.

The memories of that August meeting still linger in the home. Miss Arnold remembers Charlotte Brontë, with her high-necked black silk dress, sitting on the couch, looking nervous and tired, and shrinking from notice, though to the youngest member of the family she was most affectionate, and asked her to sit next to her. Mrs. Gaskell sat in an arm-chair near the hearth, and was considered to be the most beautiful woman of the party. She talked gaily with the members of the Arnold family, and appeared the picture of happiness. She possessed the joyous disposition which could make itself at home anywhere.

The whole family at Fox How was struck by the great difference, both in temperament and appearance, between the two novelists. Charlotte Brontë did not convey the impression that she had enjoyed the evening; she was much too constrained, though she appears to have used her eyes and her brain—as she generally did when she met new people—to sum up the characters of those who were present to meet her.



She gave, naturally, most of her attention to Mrs. Arnold and the daughters of the house, and she was very charmed with the beautiful home life.

It was early in December, 1850, that the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* was published, with Charlotte Brontë's remarkable introduction. A copy of this second edition was sent to Mr. Sydney Dobell, in appreciation of his favourable review of *Wuthering Heights* in the *Palladium*. In her letter to him Charlotte Brontë concludes—

“Tell me, when you have read the introduction, whether any doubts still linger in your mind respecting the authorship of *Wuthering Heights*, *Wildfell Hall*, etc. Your mistrust did me some injustice ; it proved a general conception of character such as I should be sorry to call mine ; but these false ideas will naturally arise when we only judge an author from his works. In fairness, I must also disclaim the flattering side of the portrait. I am no ‘young Penthesilea *mediis in millibus*,’ but a plain country parson’s daughter.”

In one of her letters to Harriet Martineau she says that if Mr. Dobell could see her sometimes darning a stocking, or making a pie in the kitchen of an old parsonage in the obscurest of Yorkshire villages, he might recall his sentence.

The year 1850 made a holiday record for Charlotte Brontë, who was then at the zenith of her popularity. The wealthy people around Haworth, including Mr. Busfield Ferrand (with whom was Lord John Manners), Sir James K. Shuttleworth and others called at the parsonage, to the great delight of Mr. Brontë, who enjoyed this notoriety much more than his daughter.

As Charlotte Brontë had not been well, her father persuaded her to accept Miss Martineau's invitation to spend a few days at The Knoll, Ambleside. Charlotte Brontë had intended to pay a visit to Mrs. Gaskell, who, however, was not at home, and so she decided to pay her second visit to the Lake District in the December of 1850. Miss Martineau's residence is now tenanted by her niece ; the house and garden are much the same as they were when Charlotte Brontë stayed there, except that the trees have grown so much as almost to hide the house

on the south side. In front of the main entrance is a sundial, which was presented to Miss Martineau by her admirers, to remind her of the old sundial in her grandmother's home in Newcastle. The bedroom over the dining-room is the one that was given up to Miss Brontë, who would appreciate the lovely view from the window.

December is not a very suitable month for visiting the English Lakes, but Charlotte Brontë appears to have had a very good time. Sir James K. Shuttleworth took her for drives almost every day, so that she got views of the surrounding country in winter as well as in summer. Miss Martineau despised driving, and she could be seen, winter and summer alike, tramping the lanes in thick boots and short skirt. She ruled the district around Ambleside as an autocrat, and her word was law in the cottages. Charlotte Brontë was much surprised at her influence and power. The two novelists had not much in common, but Charlotte Brontë felt drawn to Miss Martineau, whose strength and modesty surprised her. Although Miss Martineau did not possess her wealth of intellect, nor her ability as a writer, she was much more robust than Charlotte Brontë, who seems to have taken the second place whilst staying at The Knoll, for she asked for advice and seemed dominated by Miss Martineau.

During this second visit, Charlotte Brontë again called several times on the Arnolds at Fox How, and Miss Arnold says they all got to like the little woman, especially when the shyness wore off.

It was at this time that Charlotte Brontë met Matthew Arnold; neither seemed particularly struck with the other. Matthew Arnold writes of Charlotte Brontë as "past thirty and plain, with expressive grey eyes." He talked to her of French novels and Brussels, and she came to the conclusion that he was very conceited, though she altered her view later. He, in his turn, certainly appreciated her after her death, as his poem on *Haworth Churchyard* proves.

After her return from the Lake District, she spent the Christmas of 1850 with her friend, Miss Nussey, and then returned before the end of the year to the Haworth vicarage.

These visits, paid in 1850, were certainly beneficial to Charlotte Brontë in many ways. She became more interested in dress, and her life seemed brighter. Mr. James Taylor, of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., continued his courtship, but without success, and he went off to India on business. Charlotte Brontë's letters to him breathed little of love, though in her correspondence with Ellen Nussey she discussed the pros and cons. She appears to have had the same feeling towards him that she afterwards had for Mr. Nicholls, that she could not look up to him. It was unfortunate that she never found any man, unless it be M. Heger, who could command her complete esteem.

## CHAPTER XXX

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S SIXTH VISIT TO LONDON

1851

CHARLOTTE BRONTË visits London to hear Thackeray lecture—Mr. George Smith—Thackeray's lecture at Willis's Rooms—Charlotte Brontë's annoyance at his reference to *Jane Eyre*—Meeting between Thackeray and Charlotte Brontë at Gloucester Terrace—Thackeray's second dinner party—The Great Exhibition in Hyde Park—Charlotte Brontë sees Madame Rachel—Short visit to Mrs. Gaskell at Manchester—Return to Haworth—Visit to Scarborough—She writes *Villette*—Difficulties with the third volume—Alterations in the manuscript—She pays another visit to London to correct the proofs of *Villette*—Reception of *Villette*—Price paid for her novels—Review by Harriet Martineau—Mrs. Gaskell's defence of Charlotte Brontë's novels.

ON 28th May, 1851, Charlotte Brontë started for London. She had just declined an invitation to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Dobell to Switzerland, though they had never met. The correspondence commenced by Charlotte Brontë thanking Mr. Dobell for his critique on *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, both of which he at first attributed to her. Charlotte explained matters, but Mr. Dobell was very sure that she was responsible for many of the scenes in the books, and now sixty years later his wonderful insight is proved to be correct, for the fevers, deliriums, and dreams were the origin of the most passionate scenes.

Charlotte and Mr. Dobell never met, though the correspondence was continued. Mr. Dobell wished to discuss *Wuthering Heights* with her, and was also very anxious to know all about Emily Brontë, the author.

Charlotte Brontë's answer to the invitation was an emphatic negative. It was sad that when she had the means, she could not avail herself of pleasures, which would have helped her in her lonely life, but she had such a horror of strangers and a great fear of disappointing them, that what would have afforded pleasure to most people caused her pain.

One reason for visiting London in 1851 was to hear Thackeray lecture at Willis's Rooms. As she had made greater preparations than usual in the matter of dress for this visit, her father and the servants got an impression that she intended to get married, for, though prim and quaint in many ways, she had bought a white lace mantle instead of the customary black one, and she had also purchased a bonnet, with a pink silk lining. If she had not had an insufficient amount of money with her when making the purchases, she would have been tempted to buy a silk gown "of pale, sweet colours" at five shillings a yard. It was only because she was short of money to the extent of a sovereign—which her father said later he would have lent her—that she bought a black silk at three shillings a yard, and then regretted it, as she wrote to Ellen Nussey. The incident of Mrs. Smith buying Charlotte a new dress for a concert in 1850 possibly suggested to Charlotte that she ought to dress in brighter colours.

Miss Nussey, Tabby, Martha, and Mr. Brontë could only conjecture that Charlotte Brontë was intending to be married, or had become engaged. "How groundless and improbable is the idea! Papa seriously told me yesterday that if I married and left him, he should give up housekeeping and go into lodgings."

Ellen Nussey always affirmed that Mr. George Smith did actually propose to Charlotte Brontë. Whether this is correct or not, it is certain that she was a different creature when in the company of her publisher, a teacher like M. Heger, or an author like Thackeray. At this time, although Ellen Nussey, in her commonplace letters, wrote of little but marriage, Charlotte's answer was, "If life be a war, it seems my destiny to conduct it single-handed."

Charlotte Brontë was just thirty-five, whilst Mr. George Smith was only twenty-seven, but there is no doubt that the home at Gloucester Terrace, which in *Villette* became La Terrasse, and was placed in Brussels, was the one in which she found great happiness. If, as she admitted, *Villette* is founded on the real—though the shifting of the scenes, and the fictitious names act as a thin disguise—then Currer Bell had a warm

feeling for Graham Bretton, or Dr. John, as the novelist calls him later in the story.

In one of her letters to the Smiths, Charlotte Brontë gives as a reason for not visiting them oftener, "the pain of the last good-bye, and the unforgettable handshake," and she mentions that reaction follows, which seems to give her the heading for a chapter in *Villette*, where she describes her grief at saying good-bye to those in La Terrasse, which points undoubtedly to those in Gloucester Terrace.

Mr. George Smith only visited Haworth once, in the January of 1852, and unfortunately Charlotte Brontë was staying with Miss Nussey, and old Mr. Brontë had to do the honours of the parsonage. No reason seems to have been given for this visit, for, if it had been connected with business, it would have been an easy matter for Mr. Smith to have seen Charlotte Brontë, who was only some few miles away at Birstall. Indeed, she wrote asking Mr. Smith to meet her at Brookroyd, her friend's home, and assured him of a true Yorkshire welcome. It is possible that he was anxious to get the manuscript of *Villette*, which took so long to write. He hoped to publish it in the autumn of 1852, but it was not finished until February, 1853. Just after *Villette* was published, Mr. Smith sent Charlotte Brontë a framed portrait of Thackeray, and in thanking him she expressed a wish that he would sometime see it, as it hung on the wall of her sitting-room at Haworth; but he never visited the parsonage again.

Whether Mr. Smith proposed to Charlotte Brontë or not, she evidently saw the unsuitability of the union, and like Lucy Snowe, she recognised there was no hope for her where there was such a disparity in age and temperament. When her publisher hinted at some "discrepancy" and "want of harmony" in the conception of Dr. John, and suggested that he should marry Lucy Snowe, Charlotte Brontë wrote to Mr. Smith—

"Lucy must not marry Dr. John: he is far too youthful, handsome, bright-spirited, and sweet-tempered; he is a 'curled darling' of nature and of fortune, and must draw a prize in life's lottery. His wife must be young, rich, pretty: he must be made very happy indeed."

Charlotte Brontë knew that she could not claim to be "young, rich, and pretty."

Mr. George Smith was married to Miss Elizabeth Blakeway on 11th Feb., 1854, before Charlotte Brontë's wedding in June, 1854, but the novelist never saw Mrs. George Smith, who is still living, and who recently wrote a short article for the jubilee number of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1911.

In 1856 Mrs. Gaskell wrote of her—after an interview when collecting material for the *Life*—as "a very pretty Paulina-like little wife." This evidently had reference to the Paulina of *Villette*. As, however, Charlotte Brontë never met Mrs. George Smith, she could not possibly have been the original of Paulina, but there is good reason to think that Miss Adelaide Procter contributed something to Paulina, and evidently Charlotte Brontë had concluded that Mr. George Smith would marry her, as Dr. John married Paulina.

Miss Brontë was fond of teasing Mr. Smith, and it is said that on driving from one of Thackeray's dinner-parties she leaned across to Mr. Smith and said, "Miss Adelaide Procter would make you a very suitable wife." Mr. Smith admitted that he admired Miss Procter, and after her father's death he was very good to her and to her mother.

Mr. Smith and Charlotte Brontë became engaged about the same time, and congratulations were exchanged, but that seems to have ended the correspondence between the author and her publisher, which has been described as "a publishing idyll."

She visited London on 28th May—the second anniversary of Anne Brontë's death, and a day earlier than she had arranged. She was anxious to hear Thackeray deliver the second of his series of lectures on "The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century." The series consisted of six lectures. It was the lecture on Fielding that Charlotte Brontë heard. The charge for the full course was two guineas, and for an unreserved seat for a single lecture seven shillings and sixpence.

Charlotte Brontë was in London when the third lecture was given, but she did not attend, probably because Thackeray had offended her by pointing her out as "Jane Eyre" at a previous lecture.

She tells us that the first lecture was given in Willis's Rooms where the Almack's balls were held. "A great painted and gilded saloon, with long sofas for benches."

Dr. Forbes came to the lecture and introduced himself. He was the doctor whom Charlotte Brontë had written to in connection with her sister Emily, on the advice of Mr. Williams, and she afterwards corresponded with him on her own account.

Mrs. Smith, the lady who accompanied Miss Brontë, said that, soon after they had taken their places, she was aware that he was pointing out her companion to several of his friends, but she hoped that Miss Brontë herself would not perceive it. After some time, however, during which many heads had been turned round, and many glasses put up, in order to look at the author of *Jane Eyre*, Miss Brontë said, "I am afraid Mr. Thackeray has been playing me a trick"; but she soon became too much absorbed in the lecture to notice the attention which was being paid to her, except when it was directly offered, as in the case of Lord Carlisle and Mr. Monckton Milnes. When the lecture was ended, Mr. Thackeray came down from the platform, and making his way towards her, asked her for her opinion. This finds a place in *Villette*, where Mr. Thackeray figures for the time being as Paul Emanuel—

"As our party left the Hall, he stood at the entrance; he saw and knew me, and lifted his hat; he offered his hand in passing, and uttered the words '*Qu'en dites-vous?*'—question eminently characteristic, and reminding me, even in this his moment of triumph, of that inquisitive restlessness, that absence of what I considered desirable self-control, which were amongst his faults. He should not have cared just then to ask what I thought, or what anybody thought; but he *did* care, and he was too natural to conceal, too impulsive to repress his wish. Well! if I blamed his over-eagerness, I liked his *naïveté*. I would have praised him; I had plenty of praise in my heart; but alas! no words on my lips. Who *has* words at the right moment? I stammered some lame expressions; but was truly glad when other people, coming up with profuse congratulations, covered my deficiency by their redundancy."



Thackeray called on Charlotte Brontë at 112 Gloucester Terrace the morning after the lecture, and the big man, six feet three in height, stood on the hearth-rug, whilst the little "Currer Bell" upbraided him for accosting her in the presence of the large assembly as "Jane Eyre."

"What would you have thought if I had invited you to Haworth and introduced you to my father as 'Mr. Warrington' before a mixed company of strangers?"

"You mean 'Arthur Pendennis,'" said Thackeray.

"No, I *don't* mean 'Arthur Pendennis.' I mean 'Mr. Warrington,'" said Charlotte.

Mr. George Smith looked in at this juncture, and was greatly amused to see the giant receive his scolding from the little woman, who was in a real tantrum.

Writing of this in the *Critic* in Jan., 1901, Mr. George Smith says, "The spectacle of this little woman, hardly reaching to Thackeray's elbow, but somehow looking stronger and fiercer than himself, and casting her incisive words at his head, resembled the dropping of shells into a fortress."

Thackeray was evidently excited after his lecture, and in asking Charlotte Brontë what she thought of it, he meant to pay her a compliment, but he was not at all pleased to be taken to task by the little novelist.

In *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle* it is recorded that Thackeray most amiably arranged a second dinner-party for Charlotte Brontë whilst giving his lectures. As the first party—in June, 1850—had turned out such a fiasco, he now tried to get together a number of women writers, and one or two of his intimate friends. "There will not be a Jack amongst us," said Thackeray. The company included Mrs. Elliott and Miss Perry—altogether about six ladies, and by accident Carlyle, who had not been invited.

Miss Perry, writing to Mrs. Brookfield, says, "I remember every detail of it; such a comedy it turned out. I have somewhere dear Thackeray's amusing list of the names he asked and their works."

Miss Perry and Mrs. Brookfield agreed that the probable reason for the failure of the first party was Miss Brontë's own

inability to fall in with the easy badinage of the well-bred people with whom she found herself surrounded.

“Alert-minded and keen-brained herself, she was accustomed only to the narrow literalness of her own circle, and could scarcely have understood the rapid give and take, or the easy conversational grace of these new friends. Also she may hardly have appreciated the charming conciseness with which they told their stories ; for the members of this set were the first to break away from the pedantic ponderousness usual with all the great talkers, even those of their own time ; and Miss Brontë, a square peg in a round hole, was doubtless, too, dismayed at anecdotes that gained in elegance as they lost in accuracy.”<sup>1</sup>

Charlotte Brontë makes no mention of this second party, which must have been given in 1851, but that is not surprising as this holiday was so full of engagements. She visited the Exhibition in Hyde Park no less than five times, and she saw Madame Rachel act, which supplied her with the title of a chapter, “Vashti,” in *Villette*. She heard Cardinal Wiseman speak at a meeting of the Roman Catholic Society of St. Vincent de Paul ; this was surely in remembrance of M. Heger, who was a member of this Society. She also paid a visit to the Duke of Westminster’s Art Gallery, and attended a dinner-party at Sir James K. Shuttleworth’s, to meet Mrs. Davenport and Mr. Monckton Milnes—afterwards Lord Houghton. Then she accepted an invitation from Mr. Samuel Rogers to meet Lord Glenelg and Mrs. Davenport. On one occasion she was escorted to the Exhibition by Sir David Brewster. Altogether she had a very busy time, but the hot weather in London tried her very much. “I cannot boast that London has agreed with me well this time ; the oppression of frequent headache, sickness and a low tone of spirits, has poisoned many moments, which otherwise might have been pleasant.”

Though ill and tired of sight-seeing, Charlotte Brontë had promised to call at Manchester for a short visit to Mrs. Gaskell. She only stayed two days, but she says the visit “proved a cheering break.” It was when on this visit to Manchester

<sup>1</sup> *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle*, by C. and F. Brookfield.

that she stood on the hearth in the drawing-room at 84 Plymouth Grove, and gave Mrs. Gaskell and her family an account of Madame Rachel's performance. Her eyes fairly blazed, and she clenched her fists as she tried to give them her impression of the great French actress. Mrs. Gaskell's daughters related to the present writer their very vivid remembrance of the little woman telling them in her emphatic way of the performance.

Writing to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë says—

“On Saturday I went to hear and see Rachel; a wonderful sight—terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet, and revealed a glimpse of hell. I shall never forget it. She made me shudder to the marrow of my bones; in her, some fiend has certainly taken up an incarnate home. She is not a woman; she is a snake; she is the ——.”

How well the sight of this great actress impressed Charlotte Brontë is seen in *Villette* in the dramatic chapter on Vashti.

Later she writes—

“Vashti was not good, I was told; and I have said she did not look good; though a spirit, she was a spirit out of Tophet. Well, if so much of unholy force can arise from below, may not an equal efflux of sacred essence descend one day from above?”

In *Villette* Charlotte Brontë gives a very faithful representation of what she felt on seeing Madame Rachel, and she does not hesitate to liken her to “the very devil.” She also contrasts her impression with that of Dr. John, who judged Rachel as an artist rather than as a woman.

How the great London with its sights appealed to the shy little woman from the Yorkshire moors more strongly than to most people; her impressions were fresh and original, and with her marvellous memory she could reproduce them in her novels. In the chapter on Vashti, the performance in which the great French actress took the most important part, there is an account of a fire in the theatre. This was not from Charlotte Brontë's own experience, but was taken from a letter written by Mr. George Smith, relating what had occurred at some private theatricals at Devonshire House, Piccadilly, to which he had

taken one of his sisters and a friend. The scenery on the stage caught fire, and for a few minutes a panic was threatened. Mr. Smith's two friends were eager to leave the place, but he gripped them both by the wrist and held them in their seats. They were much frightened and resented his forced roughness, but he prevented them from joining in the general stampede for the door, and helped to restore confidence in those who sat near. The fire was quickly extinguished and calm returned. Whether Mr. George Smith told who the young lady referred to in his letter was does not appear, but Charlotte Brontë's quick brain soon worked the incident into her story and Dr. John, with his "comely courage and cordial calm," appeals to the readers as the hero of the occasion. Charlotte has rather overworked the character of Dr. John. First he finds Lucy on the steps of the church, and she turns out to be a friend; then at the fire he rescues a young lady, who becomes his wife.

Charlotte Brontë had been taken by Mr. George Smith to one of the famous amateur theatrical performances at Devonshire House, in which Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins took part some short time before, and she did not need to draw largely upon her imagination to supply the chapter in *Villette* entitled "The Concert," where she describes the interior of the ball-room of Devonshire House, although for the sake of disguise it is located in Belgium, and the concert is supposed to take place in the conservatoire in *Villette*.

The conclusion of the 1851 summer holiday was at Mrs. Gaskell's home in Manchester. She spent the two days very quietly, and she describes the house as "a large, cheerful, airy house, quite out of Manchester smoke." As the weather was so hot, the novelist sat chatting with the windows open, and "a whispering of leaves and a perfume of flowers always pervaded the rooms." Mrs. Gaskell's house and family never appeared in Charlotte Brontë's novels. The only circumstance that Mrs. Gaskell thought worth mentioning in connection with this visit was Charlotte Brontë's anxiety to procure a shoulder shawl for Tabby, in order to obtain which she visited the Manchester shops.

It is evident that Charlotte Brontë was writing *Villette* at

this time, and her London holidays gave colour and brightness to her story ; she had finished the first volume, and submitted it to Mr. Smith, who was very pleased with it.

It was during this London visit of 1851 that Mr. George Smith took Miss Brontë to see a phrenologist—a Dr. Brown, of 367 The Strand. Both went under assumed names : Mr. Smith became Mr. Fraser—a name which Charlotte Brontë tried to get Harriet Martineau to use as a *nom de guerre* later, whilst Charlotte was known only as a lady, probably Miss Brown. Both submitted to have their heads examined, and Mr. George Smith published Charlotte Brontë's "Phrenological Estimate of the Talents and Dispositions of a Lady" in the *Critic* for 1901, in his article "The Early Forties."

It is a lengthy document, and Dr. Brown gives a very good estimate of Charlotte Brontë's character as now known by her published *Life*—

"She is fond of dramatic literature and the drama. In its intellectual development, this head is very remarkable. The forehead is at once very large and well formed. . . . It is highly philosophical. It exhibits the presence of an intellect at once perspicacious and perspicuous. The lady possesses a fine organ of language. In learning any language she would investigate its spirit and structure. In analysing the motives of human conduct this lady would display originality and power."

Dr. Brown was so struck by Charlotte's head that he mentioned her wonderful imaginative power to a friend, who, meeting Mr. George Smith, told him of this wonderful woman, saying, "If I can get to know who she is I will let you know, as she ought to prove useful as a writer."

Mr. George Smith forwarded the "character" and also his own, which Charlotte Brontë thought "very like." She took a copy of her own, and was evidently not displeased—treating the whole affair as one of Mr. Smith's whims. In returning Mr. Smith's "character," she felt she must supplement it by giving him advice "about the phrenological character."

Thackeray's last lecture was on Sterne and Goldsmith. Charlotte Brontë received three different accounts from Mr.

Smith, Mrs. Gaskell, and Harriet Martineau respectively. Comparing Harriet Martineau's with Mrs. Gaskell's, she says—

“It was interesting mentally to place the two documents side by side—to study the two aspects of mind,—to view alternately the same scene through two mediums. Full striking was the difference ; and the more striking because it was not the rough contrast of good and evil, but the more subtle opposition, the more delicate diversity of different kinds of good. The excellences of one nature resembled (I thought) that of some sovereign medicine—harsh, perhaps, to the taste, but potent to invigorate ; the good of the other seemed more akin to the nourishing efficacy of our daily bread. It is not bitter ; it is not lusciously sweet ; it pleases, without flattering the palate ; it sustains, without forcing the strength.

“I very much agree with you in all you say. For the sake of variety, I could almost wish that the concord of opinion were less complete.”

The winter of 1851 was a trying one ; sickness, mostly liver trouble, kept Charlotte Brontë from working at *Villette*. She speaks of her “Quaker-like spirit,” and could not get either inspiration or enthusiasm for her work. The winter was one long trial. From Cornhill Mr. George Smith sent her books to read and patiently waited for *Villette*, for which the publishers were very eager.

The following spring Charlotte Brontë was much better in health, and in June she decided to revisit Filey, which she had not visited since Anne died at Scarborough, three years before. Whilst at Filey, she had Anne's gravestone refaced and re-lettered, and she stayed at the same house as before.

Whilst at this seaside resort Charlotte Brontë wrote to Miss Lætitia Wheelwright ; only part of the letter has been preserved and has not previously been published—

“I am now staying at Filey—a small watering-place on the east coast of Yorkshire. I have been here three weeks, and thus far I think I have derived real benefit from the change. I earnestly wish you could say as much ; of all merely national blessings, I think health is the greatest.

"Well can I sympathise with you all on the subject of your papa's state. I have watched the progress of that calamity, and know how sad is the gradual darkening.

"With kindest regards to your dear parents and all your sisters—with hopes that strength needful for the day will be given to all, and with sincere solicitude for yourself.

"I am, dear Lætitia,

"Yours affectionately,

"C. BRONTË."

Dr. Wheelwright was suffering from cataract of the eye, and, as he was living when Mrs. Gaskell got Charlotte Brontë's letters from Miss Wheelwright, it is very probable that he did not wish his state of health to be published, and so the letter was kept back. He died in 1861.

There is no doubt that the hardest task that Charlotte Brontë ever had was the writing of *Villette*, for, as she says, there was no one from whom she might ask advice. *Jane Eyre* was written quickly, and so were two-thirds of *Shirley*, but after her sisters died she had to work entirely alone. It is very certain that the nightly discussions between the three sisters were a great help, and Emily especially must have been of great service to Charlotte, who had adopted her own methods in writing *The Professor*, but was glad to adopt Emily's style, and let herself "go" in *Jane Eyre*. Well might Charlotte Brontë say after Emily's death, "There is no sunshine in the world for me now."

The autumn and winter of 1851, and the whole of 1852 up to November, was one hard struggle in writing *Villette*. Her letters at this period are quite monotonous with regard to the accounts of her health, but it is easy to see that it was her work that caused her illness and kept her in a low, nervous state. Dickens said he could write better when he was ill, and in the mid-Victorian days there was an impression that illness helped the author. Instead of the even, happy flow of language, there was the constant strain and stress, which found vent in highly strung phrases and strong passions. Whether that is so or not, Charlotte Brontë's best novels—*Jane Eyre* and

*Villette*—were written under stress : one of deferred hope and “the chill of despair,” and the other when afflicted with sleepless nights and racking nerve pain, caused by the recollection of former days. It is pitiful to read of the struggle which the novelist underwent trying bravely to do without companionship and lashing herself to finish her book. Once or twice she had to give in : on one occasion for a visit from Miss Wooler, whose companionship benefited her, and again she received a visit from Ellen Nussey, and also spent some time at Miss Nussey’s home. Then there was her visit, alone, to Filey in June for three weeks, which gave her strength to plod on with *Villette*.

Since the publication of the four *Times*’ letters, it is plain to see that Charlotte had a difficult task in writing her heart’s secrets, and the strain proved almost too much for her. She appears to have promised a novel on her Brussels’ experience, which she found difficult to fulfil.

All who knew her at this time looked on and wished to help, but her writing had to be done by herself ; the servants, Mr. Nicholls, Ellen Nussey, and Miss Wooler all sympathised with her. It was about this time that Mr. Nicholls felt full of compassion for the brave little woman in her loneliness. He lived with Martha Brown’s mother, and knew of Charlotte Brontë’s constant illness, and her hard lot. Mr. Brontë’s pride in his daughter’s work caused him not to realise how ill she was, especially as she herself tried to persuade him that she was better than in reality.

Her publishers were becoming quite impatient, and chafed at the delay in receiving the manuscript of *Villette*. She, however, felt that she was not to blame, and so she replied in a most independent spirit when her father was ill, with the result that the relation between author and publisher became somewhat strained.

Mr. and Mrs. Forster—Dr. Arnold’s daughter and son-in-law—of Fox Ghyll, Ambleside, called in the spring of 1852 with friends at the Haworth parsonage, and wished to take Charlotte Brontë back with them, but she declined ; she had set herself resolutely to refuse all invitations until she had



finished *Villette*, and on 8th October she forwarded the second volume, which contained Chapters XV to XXVIII, and practically brought in her visits to London in 1850 and 1851. The first chapter of the second part is entitled "The Long Vacation," and refers to the sad time in Brussels in 1843.

The second volume ends with the chastisement of Lucy Snowe by M. Paul, who took her to task because of her dress.

"M. Paul had reached the door; he turned back just to explain, 'that he would not be understood to speak in entire condemnation of the scarlet dress' ('Pink! pink!' I threw in); 'that he had no intention to deny it the merit of *looking* rather well' (the fact was, M. Emanuel's taste in colours decidedly leaned to the brilliant); 'only he wished to counsel me, whenever I wore it, to do so in the same spirit as if its material were *bure*, and its hue *gris de poussière*.'

"'And the flowers under my bonnet, Monsieur?' I asked.

"'They are very little ones ——?'

"'Keep them little, then,' said he. 'Permit them not to become full blown.'

"'And the bow, Monsieur—the bit of ribbon?'

"'Va pour le ruban!' was the propitious answer. And so we settled it."

It is difficult not to think that M. Heger did actually see Charlotte in a coloured dress in the summer of 1850, for the account of Dr. John showing Lucy the sights of Villette rings very true.

The publishers were much pleased with the second volume of *Villette*, which was ready in October; the third part of *Villette* caused the most trouble. The novelist seems to have had a difficulty in summing up and disposing of her characters. Even her father, who never seems to have been consulted until the last chapters were reached, was allowed to give advice, which, however, was not accepted. He wanted the tale to end happily, and Paul Emanuel might, in his judgment, marry Lucy Snowe, but Charlotte Brontë would not agree. She left the conclusion so vague that the readers could decide for themselves what really happened.

In a letter to Mr. W. S. Williams, thanking him for his critique on the first two volumes of *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë gives enough to show herself to be the heroine of the story—Lucy Snowe.

“ November 6th, 1852.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I must not delay thanking you for your kind letter, with its candid and able commentary on *Villette*. With many of your strictures I concur. The third volume, may, perhaps, do away with some of the objections ; others still remain in force. I do not think the interest culminates anywhere to the degree you would wish. What climax there is does not come on till near the conclusion ; and even then, I doubt whether the regular novel-reader will consider the ‘ agony piled sufficiently high ’ (as the Americans say), or the colours dashed on to the canvas with the proper amount of daring. Still, I fear, they must be satisfied with what is offered : my palette affords no brighter tints ; were I to attempt to deepen the reds, or burnish the yellows, I should but botch.

“ Unless I am mistaken, the emotion of the book will be found to be kept throughout in tolerable subjection. As to the name of the heroine, I can hardly express what subtlety of thought made me decide upon giving her a cold name ; but, at first, I called her ‘ Lucy Snowe ’ (spelt with an ‘ e ’) ; which Snowe I afterwards changed to ‘ Frost.’ Subsequently, I rather regretted the change, and wished it ‘ Snowe ’ again. If not too late, I should like the alteration to be made now throughout the MS. A *cold* name she must have ; partly, perhaps on the ‘ *lucus a non lucendo* ’ principle—partly on that of the ‘ fitness of things,’ for she has about her an external coldness.

“ You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she *is* both morbid and weak at times ; her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid. It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance ; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness. If, however, the book does not express all this, there must be a great fault somewhere. I might explain away a few other

points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen.

“Thanking you again for the clearness and fulness with which you have responded to my request for a statement of impressions,

“I am, my dear Sir,

“Yours very sincerely,

“C. BRONTË.”

“I trust the work will be seen in MS. by no one except Mr. Smith and yourself.”

*Villette* was completed on Saturday, 29th Nov., 1852, and the third volume sent off to the publishers. “I said my prayers when I had done it. Whether it is well or ill done, I don’t know. D.V. I will now try and wait the issue quietly.” Miss Wheelwright told me Lucy Snowe was a true portrait of Charlotte Brontë, truer than Jane Eyre.

Charlotte Brontë pleaded to be allowed to publish incognito. “I seem to dread the advertisements—the large-lettered ‘Currer Bell’s new novel,’ or ‘new work, by the author of *Jane Eyre*.’ These, however, are the transcendentalisms of a retired wretch, so you must speak frankly.”

*Villette* was the one book which Charlotte Brontë did not wish to own, because it dealt severely with persons then living. Madame Beck, based undoubtedly on Madame Heger, was probably the character the novelist was most afraid of being identified, and for that reason she got Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. to print on the title page: “The author of this novel reserves the right of translating it,” so that it could not be translated into French for the Heger family, or any of the teachers at the Pensionnat to read. There she betrays herself, but as a matter of fact it had not been published many months before one of her own schoolfellows at Brussels bought a copy, and, although she did not know that Currer Bell was her old school-mate, she recognised the scenes, and knew the author must have been at the Heger pensionnat. I handled that very copy of *Villette* in Brussels some time ago.

Charlotte Brontë was over-sensitive, and on receiving a cheque in payment for *Villette*, without a personal note, she decided to go to London to inquire the reason for the omission.

Evidently the third volume of *Villette* caused some consternation at Cornhill, or at 112 Gloucester Place, for the novelist received one letter after another from Mr Smith, who appears to have constituted himself "reader." There were so many objections to certain characters that Charlotte Brontë lost courage and replied that, whilst she agreed to the criticisms to a certain extent, she could not alter the story. The original manuscript of *Villette* is in the possession of the Smith family, and some years ago it was lent to the Brontë Museum. A sorry spectacle it was ; the name "Frost" is altered throughout to "Snowe," and not only are words and sentences scored out, but whole paragraphs are cut out and numerous alterations are made, for there was no time to re-write it.

Although Charlotte Brontë asked that no one but Mr. Williams and Mr. Smith should see the manuscript, her letters imply that Mrs. Smith must have known something of the contents and consequently she was not too well pleased. Like some of Mrs. Gaskell's relatives in *Cranford*, there was an objection made to persons being put into novels without their permission.

As Mr. Smith refused to answer any more letters about *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë accepted an invitation to Gloucester Terrace, and there she discussed her novel and mutilated it in order to satisfy her publishers.

This visit to London was not so pleasant as the other visits ; a coolness had sprung up between Mrs. Smith and her former protégée, and Charlotte Brontë was gloomy and morose. She refused to meet anyone, preferring to see places rather than people. Mr. Smith seems to have been as assiduous as ever in obtaining permission for her to visit several public institutions, so that in the intervals of correcting proofs she visited Newgate and Pentonville prisons. Whilst in Newgate prison she saw a poor woman prisoner and spoke to her. She would have had quite a long chat with her had not the warder intervened and explained that visitors were not allowed to speak

to the prisoners, which seemed greatly to annoy Charlotte Brontë.

She also visited the Foundling Hospital, and Dr. Forbes—the homœopathic doctor, with whom she still kept up a correspondence—took her through the Bethlehem Hospital; she also went through the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange.

It is very certain that Mrs. and the Misses Smith knew that “Mrs. Bretton” in *Villette* was founded on Mrs. Smith, and this may have affected their attitude towards their guest. Mrs. Gaskell seems to think that the visits to the prisons and hospitals accounted for her change of mood. London had on previous occasions been a very El Dorado to her, and had circumstances been otherwise she would probably have entered into the London life with zest, for she had jokingly likened this London visit to “the best peach” which the schoolboy leaves until the last, for she had planned a visit to Miss Martineau and to Miss Nussey before starting for London.

Since the bulk of the Brontë letters have been published it is evident that Mrs. Gaskell, who had looked through them, put the best possible construction upon all that Charlotte Brontë did. Wherever there is an omission, it is seen to be an advantage in favour of her friend.

Charlotte Brontë seems to have envied Mrs. Gaskell her problem stories, and to have desired to write something purposeful herself. She says—

“*Villette* touches on no matter of public interest. I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is no use trying. Nor can I write a book for its moral. Nor can I take up a philanthropic scheme, though I honour philanthropy; and voluntarily and sincerely veil my face before such a mighty subject as that handled in Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s work, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. To manage these great matters rightly, they must be long and practically studied—their bearings known intimately, and their evils felt genuinely.”

Was it that Charlotte Brontë was tired and utterly weary of creating a story with herself as heroine, and that she meant

if she wrote another novel to try to handle some "philanthropic scheme" or "some topic of the day," and for that reason visited the places in London that would not only inspire her, but give her actual information? Mrs. Gaskell seemed to think so, for she says, "If she had lived, her deep heart would sooner or later have spoken out on these things." Her experience of what she called the decorative side of London life wearied her and she therefore chose the *real*, as she termed it.

It was whilst staying with her publishers that she wrote the generous and magnanimous letter to Mrs. Gaskell with regard to the publication of *Ruth*.

Mrs. Gaskell had been working at *Ruth* during the time that Charlotte Brontë had been engaged on *Villette*, and when she found that *Villette* would be published just at the time that *Ruth* came out, or a little earlier perhaps, she wrote a pitiful letter to Charlotte Brontë, asking if she could get Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. to hold *Villette* back for a little while, and thus give *Ruth* a fair start.

Why Mrs. Gaskell should have done this has always been a subject for comment. She was known, however, to be very keen about the success of her books, both financially and otherwise, and George Eliot is credited with saying to her, "Surely your husband and four daughters give you sufficient interest in life, without writing books." If it was not a question of making *Ruth* a success for her own sake, it was a fear of disappointing her publishers, for she knew that another book by Currer Bell might swamp her problem story, and yet, if *Villette* were delayed, it would not suffer on account of any success that had been achieved by *Ruth*.

It redounds to Mrs. Gaskell's goodness of heart and humility of spirit that she included Charlotte Brontë's letter in the *Life*, without mentioning that she had written asking Charlotte Brontë to get the publication of her novel delayed.

The fate of *Villette* was a source of great anxiety to Charlotte Brontë, and her publishers' criticism made it harder for her, for she had sacrificed so much health and peace of mind in writing it. It was published on 28th January, 1853, "and was received with one burst of acclamation." George Eliot wrote

to her sister, excitedly saying, "Have you read *Villette*, *Villette*?"

The reviews came thick and fast, and Charlotte Brontë got more appreciation than she ever expected. A few days after publication she wrote—

"Feb. 15th, 1853.

"I got a budget of no less than seven papers yesterday and to-day. The import of all the notices is such as to make my heart swell with thankfulness to Him, who takes note both of suffering, and work, and motives. Papa is pleased too. As to friends in general, I believe I can love them still, without expecting them to take any large share in this sort of gratification. The longer I live, the more plainly I see that gentle must be the strain on fragile human nature; it will not bear much."

She would not have been an author, much less a woman-writer, if she had not gloried in the favourable reviews, and twitted Mr. George Smith with his censure and opposition to the last volume of *Villette*. She writes of him as an "amateur critic," and she was relieved that the public was so genuinely pleased with what was alas! her last novel.

Time has not altered the favourable verdict which greeted its appearance, for to-day it is proclaimed by some to be her best novel, and, though not of such absorbing interest as *Jane Eyre*, it reveals greater skill. It is, indeed, a great masterpiece, though it is not without faults. The mysterious nun is too easily traced, and the reader is disappointed to find that there was no ghost at all. At the same time, the story is wonderful in its sustaining interest, and the pensionnat provided material that only a great genius could ever have discovered.

The price paid for the novel was the same as for *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*—£500 for the entire copyright—a sum of money which was not considered sufficient either by Charlotte Brontë or her father. The success of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* gave them good reason to expect half as much again, and certainly the amount received was well deserved, for the sum paid included the American rights also. Altogether the novelist received only £1,500 for her three novels, which are still being printed and sell well. .

Charlotte Brontë writhed under what she felt to be injustice, not only in the *Daily News*' review by Harriet Martineau, but in a private letter which the reviewer felt it her duty to send. Charlotte Brontë marked in red ink the parts to which she objected, and then added the famous paragraph, which has been frequently quoted to show that she had a real attachment, generally attributed to M. Heger—

"I know what *love* is as I understand it, and if man or woman should be ashamed of feeling such love, then is there nothing right, noble, faithful, truthful, unselfish in this earth, as I comprehend rectitude, nobleness, fidelity, truth, and disinterestedness."<sup>1</sup>

She never wrote to Harriet Martineau again, nor did she have any communication whatever with her. Miss Martineau was anxious to heal the breach, but Charlotte Brontë would not yield. Mrs. Gaskell makes matters worse by trying to defend Charlotte Brontë, and she is certainly wrong in her assertions. She records a conversation, during a visit to Briery Close, when the discussion turned on instances of "authoresses who had much outstripped the line, which men felt to be proper in works of this kind," and then she quotes Charlotte Brontë's explanation, "She wondered how far this was a natural consequence of allowing the imagination to work too constantly," closing with the statement, "I trust God will take from me whatever power of invention or expression I may have, before He lets me become blind to the sense of what is fitting or unfitting to be said."

In an unpublished letter written by Mrs. Gaskell, she expresses herself as being quite puzzled at Charlotte Brontë's coarseness and her utter ignorance of the fact. At the same time Mrs. Gaskell admits Charlotte Brontë's genius.

By way of explanation as well as defence, Mrs. Gaskell says—

"I do not deny, for myself, the existence of coarseness here and there in her works, otherwise so entirely noble. I only ask those who read them to consider her life—which has been

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Haworth Edition, p. 598.



openly laid bare before them—and to say how it could be otherwise. She saw few men ; and among these few were one or two with whom she had been acquainted since early girlhood—who had shown her much friendliness and kindness—through whose family she had received many pleasures—for whose intellect she had a great respect—but who talked before her, if not to her, with as little reticence as Rochester talked to Jane Eyre. Take this in connection with her poor brother's sad life, and the outspoken people among whom she lived—remember her strong feeling of the duty of representing life as it really is, not as it ought to be—and then do her justice for all that she was, and all that she would have been (had God spared her), rather than censure her because circumstances forced her to touch pitch, as it were, and by it her hand for a moment was defiled. It was but skin deep. Every change in her life was purifying her ; it hardly could raise her. Again I cry, ' If she had but lived.' ”

Haworth has always resented this explanation, and it is certainly not correct ; if the people of Haworth and neighbourhood were outspoken, they never talked as Rochester did to Jane Eyre ; such speech was quite foreign to their nature, and the male members of the two families that Charlotte Brontë was specially intimate with, the Taylors of Gomersal and the Nusseys of Birstall, were highly respected and intellectual people, with not a trace of Rochester in them. Ellen Nussey and Martha Taylor naturally objected to the insinuations conveyed in Mrs. Gaskell's explanation.

Haworth could not have helped in the portraying of a Rochester, who was based on a foreigner, and had travelled and seen much of the world.

Mrs. Gaskell also tries to bring poor Branwell in as being partly responsible for Rochester, but, if addicted to drink, he never talked like Rochester.

The “immoral” French novels, of which Charlotte Brontë had read many from the Taylors of Gomersal, may have had something to do with the sayings of her characters. As a woman she was pure, upright, and religious, and there is no

reason to write of her as "touching pitch and becoming defiled," or of her writing being coarse.

In conclusion Mrs. Gaskell says, "Every change was purifying her," which is quite a gratuitous assumption. Her life was one long sacrifice, and her purity, both of spirit and motive, was beyond reproach.

Mrs. Gaskell and Harriet Martineau became acquainted with Charlotte Brontë at about the same time. Both prided themselves on their domesticity, and Charlotte Brontë found in these two women, so different in temperament, much that was helpful and stimulating. When Harriet Martineau had completed the manuscript of a new novel, *Oliver Weld*, it was submitted to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., through Charlotte Brontë, who was very anxious that it should be accepted. It was, however, refused, and was never published. This must have been a source of great disappointment to the author of *Deerbrook*, who afterwards went so far as to disparage the story herself. She was fourteen years older than Charlotte Brontë, and had been before the public as a writer for thirty years when she met Charlotte Brontë. If *Oliver Weld* had been accepted, it is possible that *Villette* might have fared better in her *Daily News*' review.

Charlotte Brontë was given to impulsive attachments, and she loved literary people. When first she knew Harriet Martineau, she was most enthusiastic in her praise. Miss Wooler, who was puritanical to a degree, advised her to break off this attachment on account of the *Atkinson Letters*, but Charlotte Brontë stuck to her friends.

Miss Martineau admitted that she had not lost a single friend by the *Atkinson Letters*, but had gained in many ways.

When Charlotte Brontë died, it was Harriet Martineau who wrote the most kindly and appreciative obituary notice of her friend in the *Daily News*. She had received no cards at Charlotte Brontë's wedding, the friendship having been severed after the appearance of her review of *Villette*.

*Villette* had caused a ruffle in the smooth waters at Cornhill, but, after it was published and proclaimed a great success, the old kindly relationship was renewed, and Mr. George Smith

sent Charlotte Brontë a framed portrait of Thackeray, engraved from the Laurence portrait, possibly as a peace offering, for he had been very severe about the third volume of *Villette*. When Charlotte Brontë saw the original she exclaimed, "And there came up a Lion out of Judah."

He did not correspond with her after 1851, and when she died he did not even write a line to her husband or her father, although Mrs. Gaskell wrote specially to tell him of the sad occurrence. Mrs. Gaskell was indignant, and wrote to Mr. Brontë, saying she could not understand the absence of a line of condolence from Thackeray to those at the Haworth parsonage. No reason has ever been given for this omission, but it was noticeable that Charlotte Brontë did not send wedding cards to him on her marriage. It was not until 1861 that Thackeray gave to the world an appreciation of Charlotte Brontë, which was worthy of him, and of his subject. This was the beautiful preface to *Emma*, in the *Cornhill Magazine* for 1861.

## CHAPTER XXXI

REV. A. B. NICHOLLS

THE Haworth Curates—Mr. Brontë's partiality for Irish Curates—Rumours of Charlotte Brontë's engagement to Mr. Nicholls—Mr. Brontë refuses his consent—Mr. Nicholls leaves Haworth—Charlotte Brontë visits Mrs. Gaskell—Her shyness with strangers—Ellen Nussey's letters—Mrs. Gaskell pays her first visit to Haworth Vicarage—A break in the Cornhill friendship—Correspondence between Mr. Nicholls and Charlotte Brontë.

THE curates of Haworth and neighbourhood were the only men the Brontë sisters were accustomed to meet in their own home, and the two that found most favour were the Rev. Wm. Weightman, known as Celia Amelia, who flirted with Anne Brontë, and was a general favourite, and the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, who came to Haworth in 1844. His father was a Scot, and his name is said to have been originally Nicoll. It is interesting that a brother Scot, Sir William Robertson Nicoll—a devotee of the Brontës—was the one who was mainly responsible for the revival of the Brontë cult. He it was who persuaded Mr. Clement Shorter to go to Ireland for further information, which led to the discovery of the small memoranda by Emily and Anne Brontë, and ultimately to the publication of the Brontë letters. In Haworth, the Rev. A. B. Nicholls was always looked upon as an Irishman, as he was born in County Antrim, and brought up in Banagher in King's County. Although he looked much older than Charlotte Brontë, he was a year younger.

Mr. Brontë was probably rather partial to one hailing from his own country, his predecessor, the Rev. J. W. Smith, also being an Irishman. Mr. Nicholls went to Haworth before the deaths of Branwell, Emily, and Anne, and he attended the funeral of two of these, and saw Anne just before she left with Charlotte for Scarborough in 1849.

Living at the sexton's house, just across the narrow lane by the old church, he heard much about the parsonage people from



REV. A. B. NICHOLLS  
1854



Martha Brown, the housemaid, and her sisters who were accustomed to help at the Brontë home from time to time. He appears to have been attracted to Charlotte Brontë from the first, for, before he had been at Haworth many months, Ellen Nussey wrote to ask if it was really true that Charlotte Brontë was engaged to Mr. Nicholls. Charlotte replied in the negative, stating that all the curates in the neighbourhood looked upon her as an old maid. This was eight years before Mr. Nicholls proposed to her, and before she had published anything or become known except as a studious parson's daughter, though the kindly reference to Mr. Nicholls in *Shirley* encouraged him.

As the eldest, Charlotte took the head of the table, and made tea for the curates when they visited her father. At home she was not shy and nervous, so that she appeared to much greater advantage than in other people's houses. From this it is easy to understand that Mr. Nicholls was always in love with the woman rather than the authoress. It is possible that he did not look very favourably on her development as a writer, especially when she became famous and was visited by titled people. His small salary of a hundred pounds a year must have appeared quite insignificant, and made it increasingly difficult for him to approach her with any overtures of marriage. He was said to be reserved, brusque, and not too amiable even with the Browns, who, however, always spoke well of him, though they did not favour his marriage with Charlotte Brontë. Martha Brown did not hesitate to go to Ireland with Mr. Nicholls, after his wife's death, and she stayed at his home for many years after his marriage with his cousin, Miss Bell. This is surely a valuable testimony to Mr. Nicholls as a kind master.

It is questionable if he would have declared his passion for Charlotte Brontë at the time, if he had not known what a hard struggle with her health she was having, whilst writing *Villette*, and he seems to have waited until she finished the novel, before he proposed marriage. It is an old story how he called on the vicar, and after leaving him in his study late one evening in December, 1852, he tapped on the parlour door. Charlotte Brontë opened it, and he made her feel what it meant

to propose and fear a refusal. His earnestness appealed to her, but, though a woman of nearly forty, she did not dare to encourage him, without her father's knowledge. She half led him to the door and told him he should have an answer on the following day, which shows she was not reluctant to consider the offer. If her account of the matter is literally true, Mr. Brontë behaved in a most unseemly manner when he heard the news from his daughter. He almost threw himself in a fit; his eyes were bloodshot and he stormed at the very idea of his curate daring to declare love to his daughter. When his own early ministerial life is considered, his poverty and his rebuff on proposing to Mary Burder of Wethersfield, it is impossible to have much sympathy for him. The result of this interview with Charlotte was that she promised to carry out his wishes and refuse the offer which Mr. Nicholls had made. The letter giving Charlotte Brontë's graphic account of Mr. Nicholls' proposal was advertised for sale in London, and a nephew of Miss Wheelwright wrote to Mr. Nicholls who at once purchased it privately, blaming Miss Nussey for her indiscretion in allowing it to become public property, but Ellen Nussey always said that it was Mr. Nicholls who first wrote asking her to lend Charlotte's letters for publication.

More than forty years afterwards, Mr. Nicholls tried to excuse the conduct of his former vicar, on the ground that he was entitled to expect that someone in a wealthier position would have come forward to marry Charlotte Brontë. It is impossible, however, to justify his ungovernable temper and his conduct. Mrs. Gaskell has been blamed for giving to the public some illustrations of his hot temper, but in this matter she dealt very warily with his shortcomings, for she had seen the letters from Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey, which described her father's conduct as unworthy of a man, and much less of a minister. Matters became so strained that Charlotte Brontë went to stay with her friend, Ellen Nussey, at Birstall. She received several unkind letters from her father signed with the dog's name, Flossy.

An attempt has been made to show that this was the only



occasion when Mr. Brontë was angry and lost control of himself. But he was a proud, egotistical man, who would brook no interference with his plans. Charlotte Brontë, quiet and modest as was her manner, never crossed her father, and so she conformed to his wishes and declined the offer of marriage from Mr. Nicholls.

The result was that the rejected curate sent in his resignation, and asked to be released as soon as a successor could be appointed. The Browns shared the vicar's opinion that Miss Brontë, the famous authoress, ought to marry someone in a higher social position than her father's curate. Martha Brown was indignant with the love-sick curate, and John Brown said he would like to shoot him. There was thus, at this time, trouble both at the vicarage and at the sexton's home, where Mr. Nicholls received very little consideration, and he annoyed his landlady by refusing his food.

There was some difficulty in releasing Mr. Nicholls at once, and Charlotte Brontë—anxious to get away from Haworth for a time—suggested to Mr. George Smith that she would be pleased to go to London to correct her proofs of *Villette*. The result was that she went to London and afterwards to Mrs. Gaskell's home.

She could not help feeling a certain amount of pity for Mr. Nicholls, which she expressed in a letter to him, with the result that he wished to withdraw his resignation. This, however, did not remove the strained feeling between the vicar and his curate. Charlotte Brontë returned to Haworth in March, 1853, feeling much better for her visit to London; she was soon busy with the preparations for Easter and a visit from the Bishop of the diocese. In order that Mr. Nicholls should not appear conspicuous by his absence, Mr. Brontë invited him to tea with the other curates to meet the Bishop, but there was some unpleasantness, with the result that Mr. Nicholls obtained an appointment of a curacy at Kirk-Smeaton, and the vicar got a new curate.

Fortunately Charlotte Brontë received an invitation to Plymouth Grove to be Mrs. Gaskell's guest. No home could have been more helpful at this juncture than the ideal home

of the Unitarian minister and his accomplished wife. It gave Charlotte Brontë a glimpse of what a home should be, and it may have helped her unconsciously to consider a union with Mr. Nicholls as by no means unsuitable. She met also Mrs. Gaskell's children, who were, as she called them "little wonders." She found it difficult to realise that they were in no ways different from other children in well-managed, middle-class homes.

Mrs. Gaskell records this visit with great minuteness in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

The visit was the second that Charlotte Brontë paid to Mrs. Gaskell, and it was the longest. The first visit was for only two days; the last one for three days. This visit in 1853, lasting as it did for one week, was a real rest and holiday. Mrs. Gaskell's soothing friendship was just what Charlotte Brontë needed at this time, and she was glad to avail herself of it. The neighbours of Mrs. Gaskell—two sisters—who charmed Charlotte Brontë by their Scotch ballads, were probably the Misses Winkworth. The Winkworths were great friends of the Gaskells; one of the daughters had taken lessons in history and chemistry from Mr. Gaskell, and Miss Catherine Winkworth was the translator of the *Lyra Germanica*. She was an accomplished scholar, and Charlotte Brontë was much attracted by her. Emily Winkworth married Mr. William Shaen, a solicitor, who took charge of Mrs. Gaskell's affairs later, when she had trouble with the Robinson family over the Branwell Brontë scandal.

It was during this visit that Charlotte Brontë objected to green tea; she arrived at the Gaskells in the evening and, when asked if she would take tea or coffee, said she preferred tea so long as it did not contain a particle of green tea, which prevented her from sleeping. Mrs. Gaskell knew that her tea was a mixture of black and green, and as there was no means of obtaining a fresh supply she wisely said nothing. Charlotte Brontë partook of the tea, and when asked the next morning how she had slept, replied "Splendidly," which caused a smile to pass round the breakfast-table. This trifling incident was used by Mrs. Gaskell in *Cranford*, where Miss Matty objected to green tea.

Another story which was associated with this visit has been told by Mrs. Gaskell's daughters. Mrs. Sidney Potter, author of *Lancashire Memories*, called at Plymouth Grove during Charlotte Brontë's stay. As she was announced, Mrs. Gaskell rose to welcome her friend, and turned round to the chair near the window to present Miss Brontë. To her astonishment the chair was vacant, and apparently Charlotte Brontë had fled by the door which led to the dining-room. Mrs. Gaskell apologised for her absence, hoping it would only be temporary, but Mrs. Potter left without seeing the famous writer. Immediately Mrs. Gaskell had said "Good-bye" to her visitor, Charlotte Brontë appeared from behind a heavy curtain, which hung from the window. Her explanation was that she was not able to face a stranger.

Mrs. Gaskell was one of those people who are easy to entertain, for the reason that she thought of others rather than herself. Charlotte Brontë was too self-conscious, and without being exactly egotistical she was always troubled by the thought of what strangers would think of her and how they must be disappointed in her. It was unfortunate that she found it difficult to cure herself of the habit as she became older, and got to know more people. Mrs. Gaskell arranged one or two small parties for her, and she was taken to the theatre to see *Twelfth Night*; everything was done to make the visit as pleasant as possible for her. How successful these efforts were may be gathered from Charlotte Brontë's letter, "The week I spent in Manchester has impressed me as the very brightest and healthiest I have known for these five years past."

From Manchester she went to Birstall to stay with Ellen Nussey, and, judging from the letters, she must have had little faith in Mr. Nicholls' regard and affection. After her return to Haworth, she tells of taking the Sacrament at Church. Mr. Nicholls expected that this would be the last occasion on which he would administer the communion in the Haworth Parish Church. His love affair helped to make him popular, for some of the worshippers were quite affected, whilst some of the women sobbed, and Charlotte Brontë herself was unnerved. The Clerk, Joseph Redman, told Mr. Brontë of this sympathetic

feeling for Mr. Nicholls, which greatly annoyed the old vicar, who made disparaging remarks about his curate. A letter, written by Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey, gave a very graphic account of the service, and Mr. Nicholls was very much hurt years afterwards, when he found that Ellen Nussey had sold the letter and allowed it to be made public.

It was apparently Mr. Nicholls' final service in the Haworth Church that opened Charlotte Brontë's eyes to the depth of feeling behind his proposal of marriage, and she began to look upon him more favourably, though she kept silent. The parishioners subscribed for a testimonial, which took the form of a gold watch, and he left Haworth with the good wishes of practically all the people of the village, for they were very sorry for the curate's love affair. On the morning of his departure, he called to say "Good-bye" to the vicar, and looked round for Charlotte Brontë, but not seeing her he went to the gate sobbing. This led her to go to him and speak words of comfort. The people of the village did not fail to express their sympathy for him, and Charlotte Brontë lamented that nobody appeared to have any pity for her; all was reserved for Mr. Nicholls.

After his departure, Mr. Nicholls wrote six times to Charlotte Brontë, and at last she replied in a short letter, which she sent with the intention of comforting him. This, as might be expected, led to a regular correspondence, which continued, unknown to Mr. Brontë, throughout the summer of 1853.

In June she invited Mrs. Gaskell to stay at the vicarage, and, in order that she should not be disappointed with the locality, she drew a rather sombre picture of Haworth and the neighbourhood, comparing it with the backwoods of America, and warning Mrs. Gaskell that she was leaving behind husband, children, and civilisation in exchange for barbarism, loneliness, and liberty. Mrs. Gaskell has been blamed for despising Haworth and Haworth people, but she certainly learned to do that from Charlotte Brontë herself, who had little to say that was good for the district in which she lived for so many years. Emily Brontë differed from her sister in this respect, and found an Eden in Haworth. This visit was deferred for a time—

until the autumn—as Charlotte Brontë was suffering from a cold.

Charlotte Brontë, at this time, visited Scotland with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, relatives of Mary Taylor. When they had reached Kirkcudbright they were forced to return to Yorkshire, owing to the illness of the baby which the Taylors had taken with them. They went from Scotland to Ilkley, which Charlotte Brontë liked very much, but, as she had lost her luggage, she only remained there three days, when she returned home, hoping to visit Ilkley later.

Miss Nussey used to tell of a happy day that she had at Bolton Woods with Charlotte, Emily, and Branwell Brontë, but there is no record of a visit to Ilkley.

Mrs. Gaskell had spent August in Normandy with her husband and two elder daughters, and in September Charlotte Brontë wrote, "Come to Haworth as soon as you can; the heath is in bloom now. I have waited and watched for its purple signal as the forerunner of your coming." Towards the end of September, Mrs. Gaskell paid her only visit to Haworth during Charlotte Brontë's lifetime. Her own account, written whilst staying at the parsonage, gives her first impression of Haworth and the surrounding neighbourhood. If Charlotte Brontë had not painted the village and moorland scenery in such dark colours, it is possible that Mrs. Gaskell might have been more favourably impressed. Even at their first meeting at Briery Close, Windermere, Charlotte Brontë had described "the grey, square, cold, dead coloured parsonage," and the desolate moors, which caused Mrs. Gaskell to write of "poor Miss Brontë, whose books helped her to like her."

It was well that Mrs. Gaskell had this brief holiday at Haworth, or she might not have been able to give so favourable an account of the quiet home life at the vicarage. The reminiscences of her visit have interested many readers, and have helped to solve several questions which had puzzled other people besides Mrs. Gaskell herself.

Although the old vicar was always pleased that his daughters should avail themselves of opportunities for change of scene,

he never seems to have taken a holiday himself. No wonder that he sometimes was irritable; even a day's visit to Thornton caused him to say that he should not go there again because it brought such painful recollections. An occasional walk to see some of his clerical friends seems to have been all the change that he got in his latter years at Haworth. At this time, Mrs. Gaskell appears to have been the only literary person with whom Charlotte Brontë was intimate. There is no correspondence with Thackeray, and even Sir James K. Shuttleworth and his wife do not figure in the letters. London and the Smiths had drifted somewhat from her horizon since the publication of *Villette*, possibly because of the disappointment at the price paid for the copyright, and the cutting of the manuscript, for Charlotte Brontë was very jealous of any tampering with her work. She appears to have clung at this time to her old friends—Ellen Nussey, Miss Wooler, and Miss Lætitia Wheelwright, who are the only correspondents, except one solitary letter to Sydney Dobell on "Balder," and a short, curt note to Mr. W. S. Williams, asking that no more books may be sent as "the courtesies must cease some day." From this period the long literary letters, the best in fact that have been published, ceased to be sent to her publisher's reader.

The correspondence between Mr. Nicholls and Charlotte Brontë after a time became more equal. Ellen Nussey was not very sympathetic to the engagement, although at first she had formed a more favourable opinion of Mr. Nicholls than Charlotte Brontë did. Her letter to Mary Taylor spoke of Charlotte Brontë "bearing her life so long and enduring to the end." Mary Taylor, always blunt and brusque even to a fault, considered that Charlotte Brontë was quite entitled to decide for herself, whatever Ellen Nussey might think.

Miss Wooler was much interested in the matter, and she appears to have encouraged her old pupil to accept Mr. Nicholls, who in addition to writing to Charlotte Brontë had paid several visits to Haworth, from July, 1853, to January, 1854, staying with Mr. Grant, the master of the Haworth Grammar School. Mr. Brontë at length had to yield; he was ill and worried since the new curate, Mr. de Renzi, did not suit him, and at the

suggestion of his daughter he sent for his old curate, Mr. Nicholls, expressed his appreciation of his former services, and his regret for the trouble which had arisen between them. The result was that Mr. Nicholls and Charlotte Brontë, in the New Year of 1854, corresponded quite openly.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S ENGAGEMENT, MARRIAGE, AND DEATH

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S engagement to Mr. Nicholls—Marriage—Honeymoon in Wales and Ireland—Mr. Brontë's strange conduct—Mr. Nicholls is offered the living of Padiham—He remains at Haworth—Charlotte Brontë as a clergyman's wife—Visit to Gawthorpe Hall—Illness and death—Funeral at Haworth Church—Thackeray's appreciation.

WHEN Mrs. Gaskell wrote the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* she knew more than she gave to the world. A long, interesting letter, written by Miss Catherine Winkworth, on Charlotte Brontë's engagement and marriage, proved that she had no great love for Mr. Nicholls. The Dean of Manchester, speaking on "The Brontë Family in relation to Manchester," at the annual meeting of the Brontë Society, during the celebration of the Gaskell Centenary in February, 1910, was permitted by Miss Gaskell to read extracts from several unpublished letters written by Charlotte Brontë to Mrs. Gaskell. One was dated 15th April, 1854, and gave Mrs. Gaskell the interesting information that she was engaged to Mr. Nicholls.

Mrs. Gaskell was always keenly interested in engagements, and some of her unpublished correspondence has led to her being looked upon as "a matchmaker to the core." Charlotte Brontë's letter announcing her engagement to Mr. Nicholls must have been considered very cool; there was no enthusiasm, no looking forward to great happiness, which, perhaps, could scarcely be expected. In the concluding part of the letter, Charlotte Brontë says—

"I could almost cry sometimes that in this important action in my life I cannot better satisfy papa's perhaps natural pride. My destiny will not be brilliant certainly, but Mr. Nicholls is conscientious, affectionate, pure in heart and life. He offers a most constant and tried attachment. I am very grateful to him; I mean to try to make him happy and papa too."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Brontë Transactions*, Part XX. Letter to Mrs. Gaskell.



The other people who received an intimation of Charlotte Brontë's engagement were Mr. George Smith, who had recently married, Miss Wooler, and Ellen Nussey.

Writing to Miss Wooler, Charlotte Brontë conveyed the same impression that she did to Mrs. Gaskell. It seems strange that one who had written novels giving such passionate views of love should, in her turn, enter into her prospects of marriage in such a prosaic and calm manner. There is nothing of "Jane Eyre," "Caroline Helstone," or "Lucy Snowe's" experience. It has the appearance of expediency, in order to convenience her father, and also to save her from a lonely life.

Miss Catherine Winkworth, who was one of Mrs. Gaskell's faithful friends, wrote a letter to her sister on 8th May, 1854, which was not published until 1908, in *Memorials of Two Sisters*, by Margaret J. Shaen, two years after Mr. Nicholls' death. This letter showed quite plainly that Charlotte Brontë had no real love for Mr. Nicholls, and the patronising tone in which she speaks of him is a revelation to those who thought that the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* would never give her hand without her heart. It is pathetic to hear her say, "It has cost me a good deal to come to this," and "I cannot conceal from myself that he is *not* intellectual; there are many places in which he could not follow me intellectually." This is scarcely fair to Mr. Nicholls, who had been educated by his uncle, Mr. Alan Bell, at the Royal High School, King's County, and had afterwards graduated at Trinity College, Dublin. Another remark which she made to her friends was, "He is a Puseyite, and very stiff." Miss Winkworth gives an account of her conversation with Charlotte Brontë, and also Mrs. Gaskell's opinion of Mr. Nicholls, which is all to the good, but the concluding remark shows that those who knew her were not satisfied, and thought of Lucy Snowe. "But I guess the true love was Paul Emanuel, after all, and it is dead; but I don't know, and don't think that Lily (Mrs. Gaskell) knows."

The only suggestion for guessing this, so far as the conversation goes, is that Charlotte Brontë had given a very true account of Mr. Nicholls, of whom she said, "Such a character

would be far less amusing and interesting than a more impulsive and fickle one, it might be dull ! ”

One cannot but pity Charlotte Brontë, shy and sensitive as she was, and anxious not to let even her name be known. Yet more than fifty years after her marriage, not only her letters, but even her private conversation is published, and her most sacred letters are in the British Museum for anyone to see.

Mr. Nicholls was very angry when he knew that Ellen Nussey had shown letters relating to him, but this conversation, carried on in the privacy of the bedroom allotted to Charlotte Brontë at 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester, is more damaging to Mr. Nicholls even than the letters, and the saddest part is that Charlotte Brontë herself shows her poor opinion of him.

It was in April, 1854, that the engagement was announced, and the wedding was fixed for July, in order to convenience old Mr. Brontë, who was ill and very feeble. It is most probable that, if Mr. Nicholls had not promised to return to Haworth, he would not have been allowed to marry Charlotte Brontë. With better prospects elsewhere, he consented to be curate again at Haworth. There was some difficulty with the existing curate, who did not relish the arrangements being made with so little regard to his convenience. So troublesome did he become, that the vicar was glad to let him go before the wedding, Mr. Nicholls providing a substitute until his return from his honeymoon, and he did all he could for his future father-in-law.

Charlotte Brontë spent what little time remained, in altering the rooms, and in making purchases at Leeds for her wedding trousseau, which has given rise to a joke about the woollen city. When two Americans had to change trains at Leeds, one said to the other, “ Leeds ! Leeds ! What is it noted for ? ” “ Oh ! ” was the reply, “ it is the place where Charlotte Brontë bought her trousseau.”

The material for the wedding dress, however, was purchased at Halifax, and the young man who served her was fond of telling how he had sold goods to the great author of *Jane Eyre*.

Although the parsonage was small, Charlotte Brontë had to

contrive to arrange for a separate room as a study for her future husband. The room behind her sitting-room was, in consequence, made ready. It was but small, with a tiny window overlooking the graveyard. It had been used as a store-room, and even at times as a peat-house. For want of a better name, Mrs. Gaskell calls it "a small, flagged, passage room"; it has now reverted to its former use as a store-room, and it is amusing to think it could ever have served the purpose of a study.

Charlotte Brontë did not make extensive preparations for her wedding. She bought a white, embroidered muslin for the ceremony, and a neat, striped silk, dove coloured and brown, for her travelling-dress which, with a cashmere shawl, looked very neat and becoming. Her purchases were not numerous, but everything was of good quality and in perfect taste. Her veil was white embroidered net, and is now in the possession of a member of the family of one of the old servants. A few years ago, it was lent to Messrs, Swan, Edgar & Co., of Regent Street, London, and was exhibited in one of their windows. Only a few months ago Charlotte Brontë's Bible was sold in London by public auction, and some of her letters, her writing-desk, work-box, and other personal effects are exhibited in the Haworth Museum, whilst her own relatives do not possess a single relic.

Instead of the wedding taking place in July, which Charlotte Brontë thought too early, it took place in June to please old Mr. Brontë and her future husband. The only friends invited were Miss Wooler and Ellen Nussey, and the ceremony was conducted in the Haworth Church by the Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden. It was intended to be an exceedingly quiet affair; the Haworth people were not to know until the bride and bridegroom had set out on their honeymoon. It is not a matter of surprise to find that the news leaked out; the arrival of two of Charlotte Brontë's oldest friends, Miss Wooler and Ellen Nussey, in a coach on the afternoon of 28th June set the villagers guessing. The wedding was arranged for 8 o'clock the next morning, and as usual the old vicar conducted family prayer on the previous evening at 9 o'clock, and instead of

retiring to rest he returned to his study. He had evidently become unnerved. Was the sacrifice too great that his daughter was making in marrying the curate in order that the old vicar might have "faithful support," or was it that at the last moment his old pride returned and he regretted having consented to the marriage? No satisfactory reason has ever been given in explanation of the circumstance that, when Charlotte Brontë went to the study to say "Good night" to her father for the last time before her marriage, he astonished her by saying that he did not intend to be present at the wedding on the following morning. Even to the last, Charlotte Brontë was harassed by her old father, who must have known how much it would upset the arrangements when he declined to give his daughter away at the marriage service.

After all the arts of persuasion had been tried without success, the three women consulted the Prayer Book, and finding that it said, "The minister shall receive the woman from her father's or friend's hands," and that the sex of the friend was not mentioned, Charlotte Brontë asked her friend Miss Wooler to give her away, and she readily consented.

Martha Brown, the housemaid at the parsonage, said she was not surprised at the vicar's refusal, for he had got into the habit of speaking against marriages of any kind, and he had probably come to the conclusion that his daughter was not sufficiently strong to bear the burden of married life.

The wedding day, Thursday, 29th June, 1854, is referred to later by Charlotte Brontë as "a dim, quiet June morning." The three women—one on each side of the bride—walked the fifty yards from the parsonage, through the narrow lane to the front entrance of the church. The bride, tiny and neat in her white embroidered muslin, white lace cape, and white chip straw bonnet, with a simple wreath of ivy leaves around the crown, and white silk ribbon strings, was said by one who saw her to look like a snow-drop. Another of the sexton's family, who saw her leave the church, said, "She looked like a girl of sixteen, coming from her first communion service." Mr. Nicholls was not a tall man, but he seemed almost like a giant with the girlish little bride on his arm.

As the little wedding party left the church there was quite a group of the villagers anxious to see the wedding procession, and the remembrance of it was a life-long satisfaction to those privileged to see it. Mr. and Mrs. Grant, from the Haworth Grammar School, joined them at breakfast. There was a party of eight present, including the old vicar. Martha Brown, in a simple black and white cotton gown—a present from her mistress—waited at the table, and her recollection was of a very happy time. Mr. Nicholls and his friends kept the conversation going, and old Mr. Brontë behaved well in his grandiloquent manner, so that there was no hitch, and when the carriage arrived at the parsonage gate the village was all astir to see the bride and bridegroom drive away, amid the good wishes of their friends. They drove the four miles to Keighley Station *en route* for Conway and North Wales, afterwards crossing to Ireland.

The bride's travelling dress was made with a plain skirt and a simple bodice fastened at the back, and trimmed with a narrow galloon trimming, which somewhat spoilt the effect. Having the opportunity some years ago of examining the bodice of the silk dress, then in the possession of a member of the sexton's family, I took the measurements, which were : from neck to waist, 10 in. : round the waist, 24 in. : the sleeve 10 in. long : and the skirt measured 35 in. from the waist.<sup>1</sup>

This gives some idea of the small figure of Charlotte Brontë. She already had a plain grey silk dress, which she had been wearing as a best dress, and she had also a black satin one. She added a plain merino dress and a pink cotton dress, with a pattern of white flowers ; this was simply a house dress for the summer. She had consulted Mrs. Gaskell about her trousseau, and, as an expert in choosing her own and her daughter's dresses, she was of great assistance to Charlotte Brontë, who never enjoyed shopping, or choosing her own clothes. This was the day of cottage bonnets and shawls, as the mid-Victorian pictures prove. She had a fine grey cashmere shawl for going-away, and on Sundays she wore a white one. Her bonnet

<sup>1</sup> Miss Martineau described Charlotte Brontë as the smallest woman she had ever seen out of a fair.

was grey drawn silk, with very small pink roses. She had also a black Spanish lace veil, and she also wore a jet necklace, a gift from her sister Anne, which I obtained from the Browns. As a necktie she wore a length of a beautiful pink gauze ribbon, secured by a small pebble brooch over a fine lawn collar, which Ellen Nussey had given her. She had also dainty white cuffs to match. Those who saw her set off on that June morning have all passed away. Ellen Nussey said that she had a beautiful look, almost childish in its wistfulness, on her wedding morning. Mr. Nicholls appeared to be radiantly happy, and he and his wife drove down the steep hill of Haworth amidst the blessings and good wishes of those who had known Charlotte Brontë since she was a little girl of four, when she first saw Haworth from the farmer's cart, which brought her with her parents, four sisters and a brother, nearly forty years before.

The bride had made a short list of those to whom she wished wedding cards to be sent, and these included her mother's cousin, the Rev. William Morgan; her uncle, Mr. Joseph Branwell, of Launceston, Cornwall; Dr. Wheelwright, of Kensington (the wedding card is still in the family); Mr. George Smith, Mrs. and the Misses Smith, to whom separate cards were sent, in each case directed to 65 Cornhill, which is accounted for by the fact that Mrs. Smith and her daughters had left 112 Gloucester Place, and Mrs. George Smith had retained possession of the house after her son's marriage. Evidently Charlotte Brontë did not know Mrs. Smith's new address.

Mr. W. S. Williams' card was also sent to Cornhill, but, as Charlotte Brontë was accustomed to direct her letters to him to Cornhill, it is not strange that the wedding card was also sent there. Mr. Monckton Milnes also had his name included, although no address was given; he was thus honoured, because he used his influence with Mr. Brontë to sanction his daughter's engagement to Mr. Nicholls. Then came Mrs. Gaskell and the Taylors of Stanbury (Mr. Taylor was a trustee and churchwarden of Haworth); Mr. H. Merrall of Lea Sykes, Haworth; Messrs. Butterfield, Thomas, and Pickles, all well known in Haworth, and last but not least in estimation, the Wooler family and the Nusseys of Brookroyd—eighteen in all. Surely

there never was a smaller wedding list for a great and distinguished authoress.

Mr. Nicholls' list mainly concerned his own family connections and his clerical friends. There were several omissions in the bride's list, which are very noticeable. Thackeray seems to have quite dropped out of Charlotte Brontë's remembrance; her quarrels with him in London seem to have severed the friendship, which on Charlotte Brontë's side, once amounted almost to idolatry. Harriet Martineau also was left out; her review of *Villette* had broken a very charming literary friendship. Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and his wife do not appear in the list, though it is possible Mr. Nicholls included them in his list. Then there is no mention of the Taylors of Gomersal; it is possible that Mary Taylor received a card later in New Zealand, though the Hunsworth Taylors are not mentioned. Altogether, Charlotte Brontë gives sixty as the number of cards, and says, "There is no end to the string of Mr. Nicholls' parson-friends."

The honeymoon was spent in North Wales and Ireland. Charlotte Brontë, or Mrs. Nicholls, as she ought to be called (though her married life was so short that she has always been known as Charlotte Brontë), had once almost accepted a situation in Ireland, and she seems to have somewhat reluctantly given it up. Though all her father's relations were in Ireland, neither he nor his children seem to have had an opportunity of visiting them, and so Ireland was quite unknown to the Brontë sisters of Haworth.

Mr. Nicholls evidently chose Ireland for his honeymoon because his old home was there, and he was anxious to take his bride—the most distinguished authoress of the day—to make the acquaintance of some members of his family. The tour included Conway, where the couple stayed at "a comfortable inn" for the first night, and from which the bride wrote to Ellen Nussey, wishing to know how she and Miss Wooler got home. It was evening when Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls arrived at Conway, and they would not see much of the district except the old castle. Wales was an entirely new country to the bride, and its historic associations were sure to interest her. On the

Friday morning they started for Bangor, and spent the week-end there. Neither Bangor nor Menai was the popular holiday resort each has since become. They were essentially Welsh, and Welsh was the language spoken. This beautiful spot in North Wales must have appealed to Charlotte Brontë, and it is pleasant to think of the novelist having so complete a holiday, for the honeymoon lasted for more than a month.

In a letter to Ellen Nussey, written on her wedding-day, she mentions that her "cold" is no worse, which suggests that she was not well on the eventful day. Seldom in her letters to Ellen Nussey does she refrain from mentioning her health, not even on her wedding day.

On the following Monday morning the pair started for Holyhead, and then took boat for Dublin, staying long enough in that city to see the sights. Charlotte Brontë would have heard of the interesting places in Dublin from her father, and she would naturally wish to see for herself. Moreover, was not Dublin the birthplace of Charlotte Brontë's first hero, the Duke of Wellington, whom she had seen in London shortly before his death in 1852? Trinity College would be one of the first places visited, for it was Mr. Nicholls' Alma Mater, and it was from Trinity College that he took up his appointment as curate of Haworth.

After seeing the sights of Dublin, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls travelled across the country to the shores of the Atlantic—"such a wild- rock-bound coast, with such an open view as I had not yet seen, and such battling of waves with rocks as I had never imagined." This was probably at Tralee, which was one of the places visited on the west coast of Ireland. Charlotte Brontë tells in her letter to Miss Catherine Winkworth<sup>1</sup> of her "grand doubts about congenital tastes," and how her husband, not being either a poet or a poetical man, would probably think her too emotional when viewing the great Atlantic "coming in all white with foam"; but she asks her husband (as she asked Ellen Nussey at Bridlington years before) to leave her alone whilst she sat and watched the mighty ocean, and took in the scene in her own way, Mr. Nicholls only

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Two Sisters*, edited by M. J. Shaen.



interfering when she went too near the edge of the cliff. The Lakes of Killarney naturally proved to be the place of greatest interest to them in this part of Ireland. The novelist had described it in imagination, and her father, too, had a story connected with this district, entitled "The Maid of Killarney," which was his most ambitious effort in prose.

Beautiful Glengariff, Tralee, Cork, and probably Blarney Castle, were visited, and Charlotte Brontë says, "The scenery in some parts of Ireland exceeded all I had ever imagined." It was whilst visiting Killarney that she had a narrow escape of losing her life—an incident not mentioned by Mrs. Gaskell in the *Life*, either because she decided not to pierce the "sacred doors" after the marriage, or else that Mr. Nicholls did not wish an account of his honeymoon to appear.

Charlotte Brontë tells, in a letter to Miss Winkworth, how they went through the gap of Dunloe, she on horseback. Finding that the horse was nervous and trembled when it came to a dangerous part, her husband asked her to alight, but as she did not feel afraid she declined. Mr. Nicholls was at the horse's head when suddenly it reared and Charlotte Brontë was thrown beneath it. Mr. Nicholls did not see that his wife had fallen off, and the horse kicked and trampled around her. In the few seconds that she was on the ground she says she thought of the consequences to her husband and father if anything should happen to her. When her plight was seen, the horse was let loose and sprang over her. She was neither bruised by the fall, nor touched by the horse's hoofs, and she was grateful for more reasons than one.<sup>1</sup> Whether she decided not to tell the story after her return, even to Ellen Nussey, her life-long friend, is not known. It is probable that, if she had done so, Ellen Nussey would in turn have related it to some of those who interviewed her for stories of the Brontës. Mr. Nicholls had a horror of publicity, and was determined when he married Charlotte Brontë that the curiosity which had followed her since the publication of *Jane Eyre* should cease. He detested the attempts that were made to pry into his private life, and now that Charlotte Brontë was

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Two Sisters*, edited by M. J. Shaen.

his wife he meant to shield her. All efforts to pierce the veil of their married life was thwarted as far as possible, for he had a morbid detestation of any form of notoriety. He even managed to keep his wife from visiting Ellen Nussey, for he did not approve of their *tête-à-tête*, and Mrs. Nicholls never paid a visit to her old friend after her marriage.

The South of Ireland seems to have been an ideal place for the novelist and her husband, but there is no mention of a visit to her father's birthplace in County Down. Only lately a granddaughter of Dr. Gibson, of New York, told me that her grandfather, William Gibson, was a boy at school at the same time as Patrick Brontë and the same good minister, Mr. Harshaw, helped him with his studies. Mr. Gibson went to Edinburgh University, as a medical student when Patrick Brontë went to Cambridge. When he received *Jane Eyre* in 1848 he exclaimed, "To think that that devil of a Pat Brontë should have a girl to write like this."

The last few days of the honeymoon were spent in Mr. Nicholls' old home at Banagher, where his uncle's family had resided for a long time. Banagher appears to be noted for exaggerated reports and tales, which has given rise to the expression, "That beats Banagher, and Banagher beats the devil."

Mr. Nicholls' uncle, Mr. Alan Bell, who had the rearing and early education of Mr. Nicholls, was the head master of The Royal High School at Banagher. Evidently the bride was heartily welcomed into the family, and she was pleased with her husband's people—

"I must say I like my new relations. My dear husband, too, appears in a new light in his own country. More than once I have had deep pleasure in hearing his praises on all sides. Some of the old servants and followers of the family tell me I am a most fortunate person ; for that I have got one of the best gentlemen in the country. . . . I trust I feel thankful to God for having enabled me to make what seems a right choice ; and I pray to be enabled to repay as I ought the affectionate devotion of a truthful, honourable man."



Photo by

REV. A. B. NICHOLLS (on the left)

MARKET SQUARE, BANAGHER

Miss C. White

Condition	10-year-olds (%)	12-year-olds (%)	14-year-olds (%)
1	65	75	75
2	75	80	80
3	80	85	85
4	85	80	80
5	85	80	80

One of the new relations that Charlotte Brontë met was her husband's cousin, Miss Mary Bell. She is still living, and well remembers the interest and excitement of meeting the author of *Jane Eyre* as her cousin Arthur's bride. Little did the bride think that her place was to be taken a few years later by this very lady, for nine years after his first wife's death Mr. Nicholls married his cousin on 25th August, 1864, and the honeymoon was spent in North Wales, where the first part of Charlotte Brontë's honeymoon was spent, and they settled in the very farm at Banagher, where the second Mrs. Nicholls still lives. In her drawing-room may be seen the sketches of Wellington and Thackeray, which were presented to Charlotte Brontë by Mr. George Smith. Many of the Brontë relics were bought by the Brontë Society in 1906 for the Museum at Haworth, but she still has a few mementos of her husband's first wife.

She is an amiable, ladylike woman, and never shows the slightest jealousy of her late husband's first wife, but tells with charming disinterestedness that Mr. Nicholls said that he buried his heart with his first wife, and that he was devotedly attached to her, jealously guarding her fair fame as far as he could.

From Banagher the happy pair (for there seems to be no doubt that Charlotte Brontë was very happy, whilst on her honeymoon) travelled to Dublin, took boat for Holyhead, and then journeyed to Haworth. The novelist tells us more than once that her husband gained more than twelve pounds during the month, and later he began to be alarmed at his increasing proportions.

On their return to Haworth, they found the old vicar far from well, but Mr. Nicholls was soon able to put matters right, by taking the full service on his shoulders. "Papa has taken no service since he returned, and each time I see Mr. Nicholls put on gown and surplice, I feel comforted to think that this marriage has secured papa good aid in his old age."

It is pleasant to remember that she did get real happiness in her marriage, though she found it sometimes difficult to acquiesce in all her husband's arrangements. There were living in Haworth not long ago those who knew Charlotte

Brontë, and who said that she was just a bit afraid of her husband, as she had always been of her father. Her attitude to both was one of submission, which was never a difficult *rôle* for her to accept.

The people of Haworth welcomed in a loyal manner the return of the newly-married couple, and in return Mr. Nicholls and his wife gave a tea and supper to five hundred of the day and Sunday scholars, teachers, bell-ringers, and choristers, etc. This gathering was a great success, and the votes of thanks touched Charlotte Brontë very deeply —

“One of the villagers, in proposing my husband’s health, described him as a ‘consistent Christian, and a kind gentleman.’ I own the words touched me deeply, and I thought . . . that to merit and win such a character was better than to earn either wealth, or fame, or power.”

The curate’s wife had to drop the mantle of a novelist, as she was kept very busy in various ways. Visitors called at the old vicarage, and return calls had to be made. All the clergy in the neighbourhood and their wives made a point of calling and offering their congratulations, and the parsonage put on a new life, for it had been a lonely and desolate place for a long time. Mr. Nicholls was practical and methodical, a lover of fresh air and exercise, and he intended in his masculine way to make his wife as practical and strong as himself. He was a believer in hygiene rather than medicine, and deplored the number of closed windows in Haworth, especially in bedrooms, for fortunately the doors of the houses were often left open. Charlotte Brontë was sensitive to draughts and easily took cold ; indeed, she was seldom without a cold.

Mr. Nicholls’ one ailment was rheumatism, and he set himself to cure it by fresh air and exercise. The village carpenter’s son, William Wood, remembers how he would go out for a sharp walk on the moors in the early mornings, running to get up the circulation, swinging his arms, and in the winter beating them across his chest until he got himself into a glow. Then he would hurry into the schoolroom at 9 o’clock to take the Scripture, and would insist on all the windows being open,

forgetting that the teachers and scholars had not had his experience, and were not in such an excellent condition to stand the draughts and cold morning air. He was a hard worker, and made others work, and for various reasons was never so popular as Mr. Brontë. He was generally considered a hard man, conscientious to a fault, a staunch Churchman, a hater of Dissenters, a regular parochial visitor, but lacking in real sympathy and personal magnetism. All this Charlotte Brontë knew, but she was always certain of his affection for her.

The one visit of importance during her brief married life was from Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and his wife. They never lost their interest in the author of *Jane Eyre*, and were anxious, apparently, to get her away from Haworth. The purpose of their visit was to offer Mr. Nicholls the living of Padiham, near Burnley, where there was a beautiful church, and where a new parsonage was to be built. Sir James K. Shuttleworth had been a doctor, and he recognised how unhealthy the Haworth parsonage was. If he could have persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls to leave Haworth, and could also have got the old vicar to retire (for he was now seventy-seven years of age, nearly blind and quite unfit for his duties) it might possibly have been well, for the Shuttleworths would probably have seen that Charlotte Brontë paid more regard to her health. Mr. Nicholls' promise to remain with Mr. Brontë prevented him accepting the appointment.

As he could not accept the living at Padiham, he tried to secure it for his friend, Mr. Sutcliffe Sowden, and Charlotte Brontë hints at a budding attachment on his part to Ellen Nussey, whom she is anxious to see settled in life.

The ordinary busy life of a clergyman's wife was Charlotte Brontë's lot during the first few months of married life. She assisted her husband in various ways, especially in visiting and providing for the needs of the poorer members of his flock. She also accompanied him in his walks on the moors, and, judging by one letter, she criticised his sermons, describing two, preached on a certain Sunday as "a pair of very sweet sermons indeed, really good and touching the better springs

of our nature. Just before going to church, he menaced me with something worse than the preceding Sunday. I was agreeably surprised."<sup>1</sup> That she should criticise and analyse her husband's sermons is not a matter for surprise ; she was probably trying to broaden his views, for she had admitted that he was very narrow.

Towards the end of November, just five months after her marriage, Charlotte Brontë tells us of a long winter's walk to the waterfall on the moors with her husband—

“ November 29.

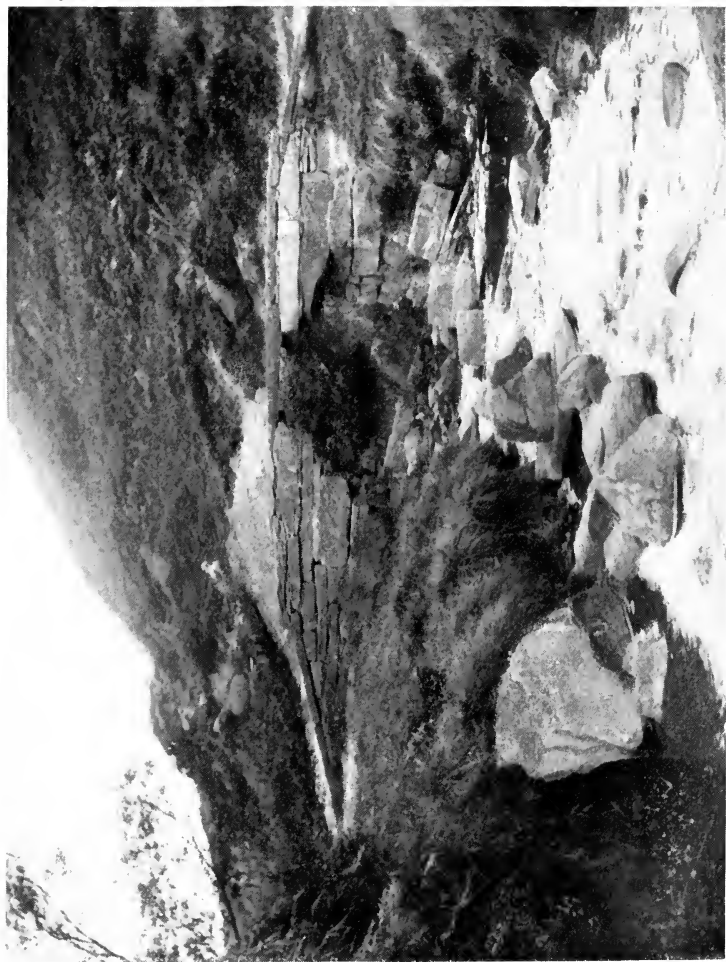
“ I intended to have written a line yesterday, but just as I was sitting down for the purpose, Arthur called to me to take a walk. We set off, not intending to go far ; but, though wild and cloudy, it was fair in the morning ; when we had got about half a mile on the moors, Arthur suggested the idea of the waterfall ; after the melted snow, he said, it would be fine. I had often wished to see it in its winter power—so we walked on. It was fine indeed ; a perfect torrent racing over the rocks, white and beautiful ! It began to rain while we were watching it, and we returned home under a streaming sky. However, I enjoyed the walk inexpressibly, and would not have missed the spectacle on any account.”

Knowing the delicate state of her health at that time, no married woman has ever read that letter without feeling that Mr. Nicholls showed a want of thought. To those who know the long walk to what is now called “ The Brontë Waterfall,” it was a regrettable mistake on the husband's part, for the journey is almost four miles over rough moorland, with no proper road in parts, and no possibility of rest at the end of the journey, unless the weather is fine and warm, when the huge boulders—one now called the “ Brontë chair”—may afford some means of resting for a short time.

This long walk proved to be the forerunner of a severe cold. With more experience of married life, Charlotte Brontë would have returned before the waterfall was reached, and the sight of a rushing stream of water would not have weighed in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontës : Life and Letters*, by Clement K. Shorter.





*Photo by*

THE BRONTË BRIDGE, HAWORTH MOORS

*Percival M. Chadwick*



balance against her own health at such a critical time. No wonder that sore throat and shivering fits developed into a long, lingering "cold," which lasted throughout the winter, though it is very evident that she struggled to throw her illness off.

At Christmas, feeling better, she was out visiting on the moors, dispensing hospitality amongst the poor. Early in the New Year, she and her husband paid a return visit to Sir James Kay Shuttleworth at Gawthorpe Hall, near Burnley. They stayed only two or three days, but on one occasion at least Charlotte Brontë walked on the damp grass when only provided with house shoes, which aggravated her "cold," so that when she returned home she was seriously ill. Shortly afterwards it was necessary to consult a doctor, and he assigned a natural reason for her incessant sickness and nausea. Mrs. Ratcliffe (Tabitha Brown), who saw her at this time, told me that she was so worn and thin that the light showed through her hand when it was held up, and her face was so drawn that she looked like a little old woman. It was pitiful to see her, for food would not stay with her. When her father came into the room, she put forth all her strength and said, "See, papa! I am a little better; don't you think I look better?" The poor old vicar could not agree.

Just before the end she was delirious and craved for food, opening her mouth just like a little throistle for them to put the food in, said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

A specialist was sent for from Bradford, but she had no reserve of strength to battle with her illness, and she gradually got weaker and weaker, although she bravely hoped against hope, actually writing to two of her friends whom she knew to be anxious concerning her. Martha Brown and her sisters did all they could for the invalid, trying to cheer her with the thoughts of the baby that was coming. "I dare say I shall be glad some day," she said, "but oh! I am so ill and tired."

Only the other day a writer, referring to Sir James Simpson and his wonderful discovery of chloroform, wrote, "Oh, that he had discovered it before Charlotte Brontë's illness, as it might have saved her life."

The great difficulty was that she could not take sufficient nourishment to keep up her strength; and her voice was reduced to a whisper. Still she did not forget her friends. Two letters were written to Ellen Nussey and one to Lætitia Wheelwright—

“ I must write one line out of my dreary bed. The news of M——’s probable recovery came like a ray of joy to me. I am not going to talk of my sufferings—it would be useless and painful. I want to give you an assurance, which I know will comfort you—and that is, that I find in my husband the tenderest nurse, the kindest support, the best earthly comfort that ever woman had. His patience never fails, and it is tried by sad days and broken nights. Write and tell me about Mrs. ——’s case; how long was she ill, and in what way? Papa—thank God!—is better. Our poor old Tabby is *dead* and *buried*. Give my kind love to Miss Wooler. May God comfort and help you.

“ C. B. NICHOLLS.”

This letter is now in the Brontë Museum.

The other letter is in faint pencil, and now the words are almost obliterated, but it is treasured by Miss Wheelwright’s niece, and I have handled it as something too sacred almost to touch. This letter was from the dying novelist, in reply to one telling of Dr. Wheelwright’s illness.

“ Feb. 15th.

“ A few lines of acknowledgment your letter *shall* have, whether well or ill. At present I am confined to my bed with illness, and have been so for three weeks. Up to this period, since my marriage, I have had excellent health. My husband and I live at home with my father; of course, I could not leave *him*. He is pretty well, better than last summer. No kinder, better husband than mine, it seems to me, there can be in the world. I do not want now for kind companionship in health and the tenderest nursing in sickness. Deeply I sympathise in all you tell me about Dr. W. and your excellent mother’s anxiety. I trust he will not risk another operation. I cannot



MISS LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT  
1850



*Photo by*  
J. J. Sted  
MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

Figure 1: A schematic diagram of a 2D hexagonal lattice. The top row shows a single layer of atoms (black dots) with nearest-neighbor bonds (solid lines) and next-nearest-neighbor bonds (dashed lines). The bottom row shows a bilayer structure with two layers of atoms. The top layer has nearest-neighbor bonds (solid lines) and next-nearest-neighbor bonds (dashed lines). The bottom layer has nearest-neighbor bonds (solid lines) and next-nearest-neighbor bonds (dashed lines). Inter-layer bonds (solid lines) connect atoms in the top layer to atoms in the bottom layer. The diagram illustrates the geometry of the lattice and the types of bonds used in the model.

write more now ; for I am much reduced and very weak. God bless you all.

“ Yours affectionately,  
“ C. B. NICHOLLS.”

There is one other letter to Ellen Nussey undated, which seems to have been the very last letter penned by the dying genius.

To add to the anxiety of the family, old Tabby, the faithful servant, who had been as one of the family, was very ill, and Martha Brown, feeling the responsibility, got her relatives to take her to their home in Sun Street, almost at the foot of the hill, and there she died on 17th Feb., 1855. The sad news was told to Charlotte Brontë, who would have preferred that Tabby should have ended her days at the parsonage. Her grave is in the churchyard, near the garden wall of the vicarage, and has the inscription “ Tabitha Aykroyd. Age 84.”

Mrs. Gaskell gives an account of the last few days of Charlotte Brontë—

“ Long days and longer nights went by ; still the same relentless nausea and faintness, and still borne on in patient trust. About the third week in March there was a change ; a low wandering delirium came on ; and in it she begged constantly for food and even for stimulants. She swallowed eagerly now ; but it was too late. Wakening for an instant from this stupor of intelligence, she saw her husband’s woe-worn face, and caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her. ‘ Oh ! ’ she whispered forth, ‘ I am not going to die, am I ? He will not separate us, we have been so happy.’ ”

Early on Saturday morning, 31st March, Charlotte Brontë died. The old church bells tolled out the sad news, and there was not a person for miles around who did not sorrow for the loss of so good and brave a woman, for in Haworth it was not the novelist, but the daughter at the parsonage that they revered.

Mr. Nicholls sent the sad news to Ellen Nussey, who had lost a friend, dear to her as a sister. The marriage had, indeed, robbed her of her old schoolfellow, for she only saw her during

one brief visit in October, after her return from the honeymoon. Miss Wooler was also present, and Mrs. Gaskell had been invited, but she did not go, much to her regret afterwards. She says that she let some trifling obstacle prevent her, to her lasting regret.

On Easter Sunday, 1st April, 1855, many people walked over the Haworth moors to the church to obtain particulars of the sad death of one who had become so widely known. The whole district mourned for the old vicar's last daughter, who, like her sister Anne, had longed to live in order to accomplish a larger task. The old Haworth custom of "bidding" a large number of people to the funeral was adopted. The custom still obtains of issuing invitations to the funeral to an equal number of householders on each side of the home where the death has occurred. In Charlotte Brontë's case, almost every family in the village had one member "bidden," and there was a very large funeral procession, in this respect unlike Emily's and Anne's, which were only attended by members of the family.

It was not until Charlotte Brontë's death that it was possible to gauge the extent of the feeling and respect for her. Many had the impression that "Currer Bell" was making a fortune with her books, and that she was hoarding her money, giving all her time and strength to literature. Her death revealed how kind and truly good she had been to the poor, especially to those who had been unfortunate. A village girl, who had been betrayed, found a good friend in her, and a poor, blind girl begged to be taken to her funeral, for she had received much needed help in the shape of a small annuity.

A letter which Miss Gaskell permitted to be read at the centenary of her mother's birth, when the Brontë Society held its annual meeting in Manchester in February, 1910, gives a beautiful illustration of Charlotte Brontë's goodness of heart. It was this letter, written to Mrs. Gaskell, which furnished her with some details which she gave in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

Mary Taylor, writing to Mrs. Gaskell, says—

"She thought much of her duty, and had loftier and clearer notions of it than most people, and held fast to them with more



success. It was done, it seems to me, with much more difficulty than people have of stronger nerves, and better fortunes. All her life was but labour and pain ; and she never threw down the burden for the sake of present pleasure. I don't know what use you can make of all I have said. I have written it with the strong desire to obtain appreciation for her. Yet, what does it matter ? She herself appealed to the world's judgment for her use of some of the faculties she had—not the best—but still the only ones she could turn to strangers' benefit. They heartily, greedily enjoyed the fruits of her labours, and then found out she was much to be blamed for possessing such faculties. Why ask for a judgment on her from such a world ? ”

Outside the small family circle, none felt Charlotte Brontë's sudden death more than Mrs. Gaskell, who wrote a kind letter to the poor, stricken father, and also to the bereaved husband.

Kingsley could speak of Charlotte Brontë as being “ a whole heaven above him,” after reading her *Life*.

Mr. George Smith had got possession of *A Fragment of a Story*, written by Charlotte Brontë, which had been forwarded by Mr. Nicholls. It was intended to publish this in *The Cornhill*, and Thackeray wrote a beautiful preface to this “ Last Sketch,” which did credit to his great heart.

“ I can only say of this lady, *vidi tantum*. I saw her first just as I rose out of an illness from which I had never thought to recover. I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterise the woman. Twice I recollect she took me to task for what she held to be errors in doctrine. Once about Fielding we had a disputation. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly to conclusions. (I have smiled at one or two passages in the ‘ Biography,’ in which my own disposition or behaviour forms the subject of talk.) She formed conclusions that might be wrong, and built up whole theories of character upon them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent, indomitable spirit of her own ; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance or affectation, with extraordinary keenness of vision.

She was angry with her favourites if their conduct or conversation fell below her ideal. Often she seemed to me to be judging the London folk prematurely : but perhaps the city is rather angry at being judged. I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us, and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always. Such, in our brief interview, she appeared to me. As one thinks of that life so noble, so lonely—of that passion for truth—of those nights and nights of eager study, swarming fancies, invention, depression, elation, prayer ; as one reads the necessarily incomplete, though most touching and admirable history of the heart that throbbed in this one little frame—of this one amongst the myriads of souls that have lived and died on this great earth—this great earth ?—this little speck in the infinite universe of God—with what wonder do we think of to-day, with what awe await to-morrow, when that which is now but darkly seen shall be clear.”

Thackeray died nine years afterwards. He had met Mrs. Gaskell during the last year of his life, and most likely she had given him further information concerning Charlotte Brontë ; and when the opportunity came he made amends for omitting to send a letter of condolence to her father. That Charlotte Brontë found her hero somewhat different from what she expected is certain, but the gracious and kindly tribute which she made to him in her dedication in *Jane Eyre* was only equalled by Thackeray's appreciation after her death. This eulogium was published a few months before Mr. Brontë's death, and it is very certain that Mr. Nicholls would get a copy, and that the old vicar, who was eighty-three years of age, would delight in reading, or having read to him, this touching tribute to his famous daughter.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### MEMORIALS

MEMORIAL tablets in Haworth Church—Mrs. Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë—Memorial tablet at Thornton—The Brontë Museum at Haworth—The Brontë Falls—Memorial tablet in Dewsbury Parish Church—Portrait in the National Portrait Gallery—The Brontë Society.

AFTER the death of Charlotte Brontë, the old father and his curate lived on in the now dreary and desolate parsonage. The short few months of brightness that the old home had witnessed were now gone. Martha Brown, the faithful servant, who was a woman of twenty-six, remained with the two mourners, and her sisters Eliza and Tabitha helped her, whilst Mary Brown became a teacher.

Martha remembered old Mr. Brontë going into the kitchen when the specialist had said there was no hope of recovery for his daughter, and saying, "I told you, Martha, that there was no sense in Charlotte marrying at all, for she was not strong enough for marriage"; and later, when his daughter had passed away, one of the Browns opened the door of one of the rooms and found the old vicar kneeling by the bed and moaning, "My poor Charlotte! my poor Charlotte!" The servant had thought him hard when, as the last breath left the body of his only remaining daughter, he had been able to control his emotion and quickly walk out of the room, but when Martha's sister found him bowed with grief she admitted that she understood him better.

The old Brontë mural tablet in the Haworth Church, on the right-hand side of the communion-table, containing the names of the mother, four daughters and one son, was so crowded that there was no room for Charlotte's name, and another tablet had to be prepared, on which was inscribed—

"ADJOINING LIE THE REMAINS OF

CHARLOTTE, WIFE

OF THE

REV. ARTHUR BELL NICHOLLS, A.B.,

AND DAUGHTER OF THE REV. P. BRONTË, A.B., INCUMBENT.

SHE DIED MARCH 31ST, 1855, IN THE 39TH

YEAR OF HER AGE."

She was buried as Charlotte Nicholls, a name that seems never to have belonged to her.

The first and greatest memorial to Charlotte Brontë (for as such she was memorialized) was her biography, written by Mrs. Gaskell. Great and lasting as that biography is, it must always be remembered that the greater and more interesting part of the *Life* was written by Charlotte Brontë herself. Take away her own letters, her critiques, and her conversations with different people, and how little there is left. With over five hundred letters in Charlotte Brontë's own handwriting, with her relatives and friends eager and willing to give information, Mrs. Gaskell found not only a congenial, but a simple and easy task, though she had peculiar people to deal with. Whatever she wished to know, she had friends of the Brontës at hand to give the necessary information, and, beyond reading the letters willingly lent to her by Ellen Nussey, she had practically little research to do. Her chief task was to plot out the book as she would a novel, and that is why the *Life* reads like a Greek tragedy, to quote M. Ampère. All the necessary dates were to hand and, except the visits for the purpose of interviewing people in the various places where Charlotte Brontë had stayed, Mrs. Gaskell had few, if any, obstacles put in her way.

It is true that she said she was afraid of interviewing the old vicar and his curate, but it is equally true that they were afraid of Mrs. Gaskell. They had given her a free hand, and it is probable that they did not at first recognise what that involved. They wished her to see Charlotte Brontë's letters, in order that she might get an insight into her life during her earlier days. Neither Mr. Brontë nor Mr. Nicholls interfered in any way, nor even asked to read the proof sheets of the biography.

In many ways it was regrettable that Mrs. Gaskell was a novelist before she was a biographer, for she studied more than was necessary to get a dark background, in order to throw out in bold relief the life of her friend. Hence Haworth was a barbarous, uncivilised place; the people were coarse and rough; the home was dark and desolate; no happiness ever entered after Charlotte Brontë was a little girl of nine; the

father was a bad-tempered, ferocious man ; the only brother was bad, and his wickedness was the result of a married woman's intrigue ; Charlotte Brontë had no pleasure in life ; all was drab and sombre. The background was dark enough. It was this impression which actuated Ellen Nussey to ask Mr. Wemyss Reid to write another biography of her friend, showing that her life was not nearly so miserable as Mrs. Gaskell had depicted it. But who reads Wemyss Reid's biography now ? On the other hand, Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* is in thousands of homes, and succeeding generations read it with increasing interest.

Mrs. Gaskell had not written *Mary Barton* and *Ruth* without knowing how to reach the public. "You are treating your heroine too well," said a well-known editor to one of his contributors, who replied that she had put many difficulties in her way. "She must suffer," he replied with emphasis. "You've got to make your woman readers cry. The girl must go through it." There was no need to make Charlotte Brontë suffer, but Mrs. Gaskell put all the suffering so plainly before her readers, that women the world over have wept at the story of Charlotte Brontë's life.

Yet Charlotte Brontë herself set the pace, for, when Mrs. Gaskell first met her great contemporary at Briery Close, she listened to the pitiful story of Charlotte Brontë's loneliness, which caused her great heart to go out to "poor Miss Brontë," and as she got to know her better, she pitied her more and more.

Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* has gripped its readers as few books are able to do. Sir Wemyss Reid, Mr. Augustine Birrell, Mr. Clement Shorter, and others have added to the Brontë story, but, if Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* had not first been issued, it is questionable if they would have ever been anxious to write on the subject at all. It was Mrs. Gaskell's genius that grasped the facts of the Brontë family in such a way that, once she had written her biography, there was no getting away from the grim realities.

There is not the slightest doubt that, if Charlotte Brontë could have had any voice in the matter, she would have strenuously opposed her life being written, and certainly she would

have withheld her letters with as much tenacity as the executors of Mrs. Gaskell have withheld hers. Mrs. Gaskell dropped her *nom de guerre* immediately after *Mary Barton* was published. Indeed, so little did she use it, that very few people ever knew that she wrote under the absurd name of "Cotton Mather Mills, Esq." Yet Charlotte Brontë stuck to "Currer Bell" as long as she could, and even when she was well known she wished to publish *Villette* under another *nom de guerre*.

There were times when Mrs. Gaskell felt that Charlotte Brontë would have resented her life being laid bare, and now, when the very letters are published in their entirety, it can be seen how carefully Mrs. Gaskell left out the parts that told against her friend, or which were too sacred to be made public. She accepted the rôle of biographer as a sacred duty and, whilst conscious of a true writer's mission to interest her readers, she found her position difficult with regard to telling the truth as it was presented to her. It has been proved abundantly that Mrs. Gaskell was not wholly to blame for the errors she committed. A letter published in *The Brontës : Life and Letters*, and written by Charlotte Brontë herself, is far more damaging to the character of Mrs. Robinson, of Thorpe Green, than anything that Mrs. Gaskell wrote of her. It is important to remember that Mrs. Gaskell had read and handled that very letter, which she did *not* publish, knowing how it would rebound, but she drew her own conclusions, and in order to save the memory of Charlotte Brontë she took the blame of censuring Mrs. Robinson on her own shoulders, with the result that she had publicly to apologise through her solicitor in *The Times*, and the obnoxious parts of the book had to be deleted in the third edition, though now the original edition is published for all the world to read. Whatever may be said to the contrary, Mrs. Robinson was greatly to blame, and Mrs. Gaskell had independent proof of this.

In one of Mr. Brontë's unpublished letters to Mrs. Gaskell he tells her that both he and Mr. Nicholls often wonder how she is getting on with the *Life*. When it was issued he acknowledged the copy sent by Mrs. Gaskell in a most friendly letter, not even resenting anything said concerning himself, except

that he objected to the statement that he restricted his children in the matter of food.

“The principal mistake in the Memoir which I wish to mention is that which states that I laid my daughters under restrictions with regard to their diet; obliging them to live chiefly on vegetable food. This I never did. After their aunt’s death, with regard to housekeeping affairs, they had all their own way. Thinking their constitutions to be delicate, the advice I repeatedly gave them was that they should wear flannel, eat as much wholesome animal food as they could digest, take air and exercise in moderation, and not devote too much time and attention to study and composition.”

In later years, however, he stated that he did not know he had an enemy in the world until Mrs. Gaskell’s *Life* of his daughter was published. It was Mr. Brontë’s wish that Charlotte Brontë’s life should be written, and Mr. Nicholls acquiesced, though reluctantly. Mrs. Gaskell was approached by them, so that she had full authority. The old vicar was anxious that the world should know the truth concerning his clever daughter, but he was not prepared that his own life story should be published, and he once remarked, “Mrs. Gaskell has made us all appear as bad as she possibly could.” Nevertheless his wish was gratified, and his daughter immortalised.

#### THORNTON AND COWAN BRIDGE

It is only within recent years that the birthplace of Charlotte Brontë has been commemorated by the placing of a tablet on the old Thornton parsonage. In the new Church of St. James, at Thornton, is a fine organ, known as the Brontë organ.

The Committee of the Brontë Society has also fixed a commemorative tablet on the gable end of the row of cottages at Cowan Bridge, which is immortalised as Lowood in *Jane Eyre*.

It is surely the irony of fate that Charlotte Brontë, who branded the school as a Dotheboys Hall, should have been considered the one to honour it by having her name carved on the wall. But for this, the old school might have passed into oblivion.

## HAWORTH

"Haworth, the home of the Brontës," is now a familiar and well-recognised description of the little moorland village in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Here everything of importance appropriates the name of Brontë. The parsonage is always an object of interest, though it is by no means so desolate and bare as in the Brontë days. Brontë pilgrims may often be seen in the churchyard, looking over the low wall which separates it from the vicarage garden, but in summer the leafy trees act as a screen to the parsonage. The church naturally claims much attention, though the tower is the only part of the old church which remains. When the church was pulled down in 1879, Mr. Wade, the Incumbent, was very careful that the Brontë grave should not be disturbed, and since the new church was built in 1881 a brass plate has been fixed over the grave, with the simple inscription—

" IN MEMORY OF  
EMILY AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË."

The plate was placed in its present position by someone who wished to remain unknown, but on excellent authority it was *not* Mr. Nicholls who wished to mark the spot where the Brontë family rests. No memorial has been erected by him.

The last time the present writer visited the grave there was a wreath of laurels tied with ribbon, to which was attached a card bearing the words, "With grateful homage from Canon Wilberforce and Mrs. Wilberforce."

Thousands of pilgrims visit this grave every year, and flowers are often laid on it. The stone tablet put up to replace the old one in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Brontë and their six children attracts much attention—

" IN MEMORY OF  
MARIA, WIFE OF THE REVD. P. BRONTË, A.B., MINISTER OF  
HAWORTH; SHE DIED SEPT. 15TH, 1821, IN THE 39TH YEAR  
OF HER AGE.  
ALSO OF MARIA, THEIR DAUGHTER, WHO DIED MAY 6TH, 1825, IN  
THE 12TH YEAR OF HER AGE.  
ALSO OF ELIZABETH, THEIR DAUGHTER, WHO DIED JUNE 15TH, 1825,  
IN THE 11TH YEAR OF HER AGE.



ALSO OF PATRICK BRANWELL, THEIR SON, WHO DIED SEPTR. 24TH, 1848, AGED 31 YEARS.

ALSO OF EMILY JANE, THEIR DAUGHTER, WHO DIED DECR. 19TH, 1848, AGED 30 YEARS.

ALSO OF ANNE, THEIR DAUGHTER, WHO DIED MAY 28TH, 1849, AGED 29 YEARS; SHE WAS BURIED AT THE OLD CHURCH, SCARBOROUGH.

ALSO OF CHARLOTTE, THEIR DAUGHTER, WIFE OF THE REVD. A. B. NICHOLLS, B.A.; SHE DIED MARCH 31ST, 1855, IN THE 39TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

ALSO OF THE AFORENAMED REVD. P. BRONTË, A.B., WHO DIED JUNE 7TH, 1861, IN THE 85TH YEAR OF HIS AGE, HAVING BEEN INCUMBENT OF HAWORTH FOR UPWARDS OF 41 YEARS.

‘The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law, but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’—1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.”

Another Memorial is the stained-glass window of six lights, illustrating the text Matt. xxv. 35. As the pictures are arranged, the passages of Scripture are in the following order—

“I was a stranger, and ye took me in :  
I was sick, and ye visited me :  
I was in prison, and ye came unto me :  
I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat  
I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink :  
Naked, and ye clothed me :”

The window is dedicated—

“TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE PLEASANT  
MEMORY OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË BY AN  
AMERICAN CITIZEN.”

For years no one but the late Vicar, the Rev. John Wade, knew the name of the donor, but it is now an open secret that its cost was defrayed by Mr. Childs, of America, who, on hearing that the church contained no window to the memory of the Brontës, wrote to the Haworth Church Trustees, offering to bear the expense of one, an offer which was gladly accepted. The Register of Marriages is now kept under lock and key, as so many visitors fingered the page on which Charlotte Brontë wrote her maiden name for the last time.

The Brontë Museum was opened on 18th May, 1895, in the upper floor of the Haworth Mechanics' Institution. It is

probably the greatest attraction, because it contains numerous relics of the Brontë family. Altogether there are some three hundred exhibits, and a number of letters and manuscripts written by Charlotte and Branwell Brontë. There is a copy and translation of the letter written by M. Heger to Mr. Brontë in 1842 (someone had evidently copied it and given it to Ellen Nussey, as it was purchased at the Nussey Sale), and one from Mrs. Gaskell to Martha Brown. A specimen of almost every article of dress worn by Charlotte Brontë is also exhibited, including her boots and house shoes, as well as many relics of other members of the family.

There is Ellen Nussey's copy of the privately printed book made up of the letters from Charlotte Brontë to her, which Mr. Horsfall Turner compiled, and there are also some early editions of the Brontë novels and poems, which have been presented to the Society. In addition are many sketches made by Charlotte, Branwell, and Emily Brontë; even the old leather trunks used by the family have a place there, as well as a saddle bag used by old Mr. Brontë. Thackeray's statuette is in the window-sill, facing visitors as they enter the main room, and from its prominent position it is the first object to be seen from the street. The Haworth moors are frequently referred to as the Brontë moors, and the falls at Harbour Springs are now known as the Brontë Falls. A stone at these falls, on which Charlotte and Emily Brontë used to rest and write their novels, is now known as the "Brontë Chair," and has become quite worn by the thousands who have since sat on it. Even the glorious purple heather, which grows so profusely on those extensive moors, is gathered by Americans, and sent to their homes on the other side of the Atlantic. One enterprising American made quite a large sum by selling "Brontë heather."

In the village is a Brontë Café, and one of the little streets is called Bronte Street, the name being written without the dots, and the name pronounced in one syllable, as it was by the villagers years ago and is by the old inhabitants still. One short street by the side of the church is known as Shirley Street. The shops exhibit prominently the portraits of

Charlotte Brontë and her father, as well as pictures of the old church. It is quite impossible to be in Haworth many minutes without being conscious of the Brontë spirit which pervades everything.

In the parish church at Dewsbury is a brass memorial-plate to the memory of Patrick Brontë, who was curate there in 1809–1811. At Hartshead, a few miles away, is a framed portrait of Patrick Brontë in the vestry, but, strange to say, there is no memorial, although it was his first church, and two of his children were baptized there.

#### LONDON

In the National Portrait Gallery is the portrait of Charlotte Brontë, which was drawn by George Richmond, R.A., in 1850, and which Mr. George Smith presented to Mr. Brontë. It became the property of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery in 1906, on the death of Mr. A. B. Nicholls, in whose keeping it had been since his first wife's death.

A portrait of Charlotte Brontë, now in the Brontë Museum, which was begun by Patrick Branwell Brontë, and afterwards finished by Thompson, of Bradford (with whom Patrick Branwell Brontë worked in his studio in Fountain Street, Bradford), was said by those who knew Charlotte Brontë to be much more like her than the Richmond portrait. Ellen Nussey said it looked just like Charlotte Brontë on her wedding morning.

The *faked* water-colour portrait of Charlotte, acquired by the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery in 1907, which has previously been referred to, hangs near the Richmond portrait, and, as it is no longer assumed to be a portrait of Charlotte Brontë, it will probably be withdrawn.

#### THE BRONTË SOCIETY

The Brontë Society was founded on 16th Dec., 1893, by a few Brontë enthusiasts, including Mr. Butler Wood of Bradford, the bibliographical secretary of the Society, Mr. J. J. Yates of Dewsbury, and Mr. Horsfall Turner of Idle, Bradford, the first secretary of the Society. The first meeting of the Society was

held in Bradford, and at first it was doubtful whether Bradford or Haworth was to be the home of the Brontë Museum, but the vote was in favour of Haworth. Mr. W. T. Field is the indefatigable secretary and Mrs. Humphry Ward is the president.

Before the Society was founded and incorporated there was a decided Brontë Cult, and devotees could be found all over the world. The Society has done much to foster the devotion to the Brontës, and the annual meetings, which have been held in all the principal towns in Yorkshire, as well as in Manchester, have added much to the Brontë literature. The lecturers include Sir Sidney Lee, D.Litt., G. K. Chesterton, Edmund Gosse, the Right Hon. R. B. Haldane, K.C., and Sir Wemyss Reid.

Each year the Society arranges a picnic for its members to one of the Brontë shrines, but so far these have been restricted to Yorkshire, in what may be termed the Brontë Homeland. Most of the members are drawn from Yorkshire, but there are in addition some who reside in London, and several of the chief English towns. Several members of the Brontë Society live in America.

The Brontë devotees are divided into those who love their books and those who revel in their homes and haunts. The Brontë Society tries to satisfy both sections and, whilst in summer they visit the Brontë shrines, in winter they have their annual meeting, when part of the proceedings consists of a lecture on some phase of the Brontës. By these means they have kept up the interest in the Society itself, and have also been of great assistance to all who wish to make a serious study of Brontë literature.

To within the last few years the greater part of the homage paid to the Brontës has been reserved for Charlotte. Since Swinburne's eulogy in 1894, the tribute of praise for Emily Brontë has gained in force, and now, much as Charlotte's genius is admired, Emily is taking the premier place: her genius ranks higher, and as a woman she excelled Charlotte; her poetry is in advance of her sisters', and the recently published *Complete Poems of Emily Brontë* has placed her in the



*Photo by*

*J. J. Stead*

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

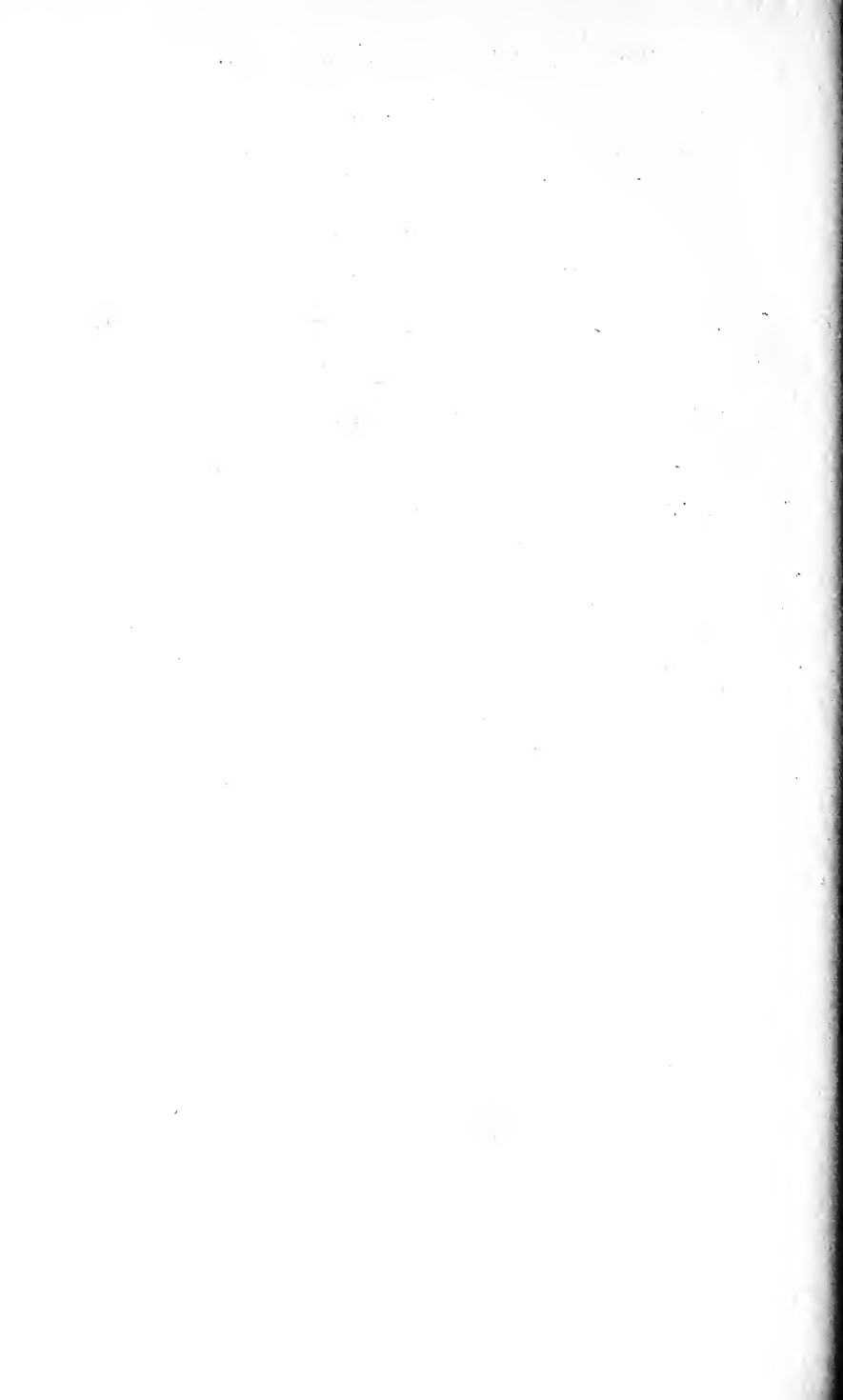
*From a painting by J. H. Thompson in the Brontë Museum*



front rank among poets of the nineteenth century. Her one great novel together with her poems proves her to have been the greatest woman writer of her time,

“ Whose soul  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died.”

Except that Emily Brontë's name appears on the brass tablet over the grave, in Haworth Church, and is included in the memorial tablet on the hall, there is no monument to her. Anne has the simple tombstone in Scarborough Churchyard, which attracts many visitors. Swinburne has written of the twin-born genius of the sisters “ who left with us for ever the legacies of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and “ whose names make up with Mrs. Browning's the perfect trinity for England of highest female fame.” The torrent of praise for the “ fiery vestal of Haworth,” and “ the sphinx of literature,” still rushes on. These two moorland maids struck a new note in literature, which still vibrates wherever the English tongue is spoken. Both novelists wrote in advance of their time, and the appreciation which they have received can never be really estimated, for they live in the hearts of those who love great literature, and their names are immortalized.





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