

***FRANCIS
A. LEYLAND***



***THE BRONTË
FAMILY***

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PREFACE.

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It has long seemed to me that the history of the Brontë family is incomplete, and, in some senses, not well understood. Those who have written upon it—as I shall have occasion to point out in these pages—have had certain objects in view, which have, perhaps necessarily, led them to give undue weight to special points and to overlook others. Thus it happens that, though there are in the hands of the public several able works on the Brontës, there are many circumstances relating to them that are yet in comparative obscurity. Especially has injustice been done to one member of the family—Patrick Branwell Brontë—whose life has several times been treated by those who have had some other object in view; and, through a misunderstanding of the character of the brother, the sisters, Anne in particular, have been put, in some respects, in a false light also. This circumstance, coupled with the fact that I am in possession of much new information, and am able to print here a considerable quantity of unknown poetry from Branwell's hand, has induced me to write this work. Those of his poems which are included in these volumes are placed in dealing with the periods of his life in which they were written, for I felt that, however great might be the advantages of putting them together in a complete form, much more would be lost both to the interest of the poems and the life of their author in doing so. Branwell's poems, more, perhaps, than those of any other writer, are so clearly

expressive of his feelings at the time of their writing, that a correct view of his character is only to be obtained by looking upon them as parts of his life-history, which indeed they are. And, moreover, when we consider the circumstances under which any of these were written, our understanding and appreciation of the subject must necessarily be much fuller and truer. It has not escaped the attention of writers on the Brontë story that Branwell had an important influence on his sisters; and, though I maintain it to have been essentially different from what others allege, it would not be possible to do justice either to him or to them without saying a good deal about his character.

I have felt it right, in these pages, to some extent also, to re-consider the character of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, which has, along with that of his son, suffered unfair treatment in the biographies of his daughters. I have likewise entered upon some account of the local circumstances of art and literature which surrounded the Brontës, an element in their history which has hitherto been unknown, but is especially necessary to a right understanding of the life and work of Branwell Brontë and his sisters. These circumstances, and the altered view I have taken of the tone of the lives of Mr. Brontë and his son, have obliged me to deal more fully than would otherwise have been necessary with the early years of the Brontës, but I venture to hope that this may be atoned for by the new light I have thus been enabled to throw on some important points. There are published here, for the first time, a series of letters which Branwell Brontë addressed to an intimate friend, J. B. Leyland, sculptor, who

died in 1851, and it is with these that a fresh insight is obtained into an interesting period of Branwell's life.

I am largely indebted in some parts of my work, especially those which deal with the lives of the sisters, to Mrs. Gaskell's fascinating 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'; and it is a source of sincere regret to me that I am compelled to differ from that writer on many points. I am likewise indebted in parts to Mr. T. Wemyss Reid's admirable 'Charlotte Brontë: a Monograph,' a work which has corrected several errors and misconceptions into which Mrs. Gaskell had fallen. The reader will perceive that I am obliged in several places to combat the theories and question the statements of Miss A. Mary F. Robinson in her 'Emily Brontë,' a book which, nevertheless, so far as its special subject is concerned, is a worthy contribution to the history of the Brontës.

I have also found of much use, in writing this work, an article entitled 'Branwell Brontë,' which Mr. George Searle Phillips—'January Searle'—published in the 'Mirror' in 1872. The chapter in Mr. Francis H. Grundy's 'Pictures of the Past' on Branwell Brontë, has likewise been of the greatest service to me. Both these gentlemen were Branwell's personal friends, and to them I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness.

Among many other sources of information respecting the Brontës, of which I have availed myself in writing these pages, I may mention *Hours at Home*, 'Unpublished Letters of Charlotte Brontë'; *Scribner*, 'Reminiscences of Charlotte Brontë'; the *Athenæum*, 'Notices and Letters,' by Mr. A. C. Swinburne, and 'One of the Survivors of the Brontë-Branwell

Family.' To this lady I must also express my obligation for her very kind letter to me.

In the preparation of my work I have been greatly assisted by the information, and encouraged by the sympathy, of several who had personal knowledge of Patrick Branwell Brontë, and who have supported the view I have taken of his life and character, and also who had like knowledge of the other members of the Brontë family. Among these, I have to express my sincere thanks to Mr. H. Merrall and to Mr. William Wood, who were early acquaintances of Branwell; also to Mr. William Dearden. To Mr. J. H. Thompson and Mrs. Thornton I am greatly indebted for information respecting Branwell's sojourn in Bradford. I have likewise derived much information from the family of the Browns, now all deceased, except Mrs. Brown, to whom I have to express my obligation. I have also gained much reliable information from Nancy Gars, now Mrs. Wainwright, the nurse of the Brontës, and to her I must especially express my thanks. To these, I must not omit to add my deep and sincere thanks to those who will not permit me to mention them by name, for the unwearied assistance, counsel, and literary judgment which they have as cheerfully, as they have ably, rendered.

F. A. L.

Oakwood, Skircoat, Halifax,
October, 1885.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BRONTËS.

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Brontë Genius—Patrick Brontë—His Birthplace—His early Endeavours—Ordained—Presented to Hartshead—High Town—His Courtship and Marriage—Removes to Thornton—His House—Thornton Chapel—Mrs. Brontë's failing Health—Mr. Brontë Accepts the Living of Haworth—Rudeness of the Inhabitants—Local Fights between Haworth and Heptonstall—Description of Haworth—Mrs. Brontë dies.

Not many stories of literary success have attracted so much interest, and are in themselves so curious and enthralling, as that of the Brontë sisters. The question has often been asked how it came about that these children, who were brought up in distant solitude, and cut off, in a manner, from intellectual life, who had but a partial opportunity of studying mankind, and scarcely any knowledge of the ways of the outside world, were enabled, with searching hands, to dissect the finest meshes of the passions, to hold up in the clearest light the springs of human action, and to depict, with nervous power, the most masculine and forcible aspects of character. The solution has been sought in the initiatory strength and inherent mental disposition of the sisters, framed and moulded by the weird and rugged

surroundings of their youth, and tinged with lurid light and vivid feeling by the misfortunes and sins of their unhappy brother. To illustrate these several points, the biographers of Charlotte and Emily Brontë have explained, as the matter admitted of explanation, the intellectual beginnings and capability of the sisters, have painted in sombre colours the story of their friendless childhood, and lastly, with no lack of honest condemnation, have told us as much as they knew of the sad history of Patrick Branwell Brontë, their brother. It is a curious fact that this brother, who was looked upon by his family as its brightest ornament and hope, should be named in these days only in connection with his sisters, and then but with apology, condemnation, or reproach. In the course of this work, in which Branwell Brontë will be traced from his parentage to his death, we shall find the explanation of this circumstance; but we shall find, also, that, despite his failings and his sins, his intellectual gifts, as they are testified by his literary promise and his remains, entitle him to a high place as a worthy member of that extraordinary family. It will be seen, moreover, that his influence upon Charlotte, Emily, and Anne was not what has been generally supposed, and that other circumstances, besides their own domestic troubles, inspired them to write their masterpieces.

The father of these gifted authors, Patrick Brontë, whose life and personal characteristics well deserve study, was a native of the county Down. He was born on St. Patrick's Day, 1777; and, after an infancy passed at the house of his father, Hugh Brontë, or Brunty, at Ahaderg—one of the ten children who made a noisy throng in the home of his

parents—he opened, at the age of sixteen, a village school at Drumgooland, in the same county. In this occupation he continued after he had attained his majority, and was never a tutor, as Mrs. Gaskell supposes; but, being ambitious of a clerical life, through the assistance of his patron, Mr. Tighe, incumbent of Drumgooland and Drumballyroony, in the county of Down, he was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, on the 1st of October in the year 1802, when he had attained his twenty-fifth year. At Cambridge we may infer that he led an active life. It is known that he joined a volunteer corps raised to be in readiness for the French invasion, threatened at the time. After a four years' sojourn at his college, having graduated as a bachelor of arts, in the year 1806, he was ordained, and appointed to a curacy in Essex, where he is said not to have stayed long.

The perpetual curacy of Hartshead, in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, having become vacant, Mr. Brontë received the appointment, on the presentation of the vicar of Dewsbury.

The church of St. Peter, at Hartshead—which has extensive remains of Norman work, and has recently been restored—is situated on an eminence about a mile from the actual hamlet of that name; and, with its broad, low, and massive tower, and its grim old yew-tree, forms a conspicuous object for miles around, commanding on all sides extensive and magnificent views of the valleys of Calder and Colne, with their wooded slopes, and pleasant farms, and the busy villages nestling in the hollows. At the foot of the hill, the deep and sombre woods of Kirklees hide the almost indistinguishable remains of the convent,

founded by Raynerus Flandrensis, in the reign of Henry II., for nuns of the order of Citeaux.

There are interesting circumstances and evidences concerning Kirklees, its Roman entrenchments being very distinct within the park which overlooks the Calder at this point. The priory, too, has its curious history of the events which attended the cloistered life of Elizabeth de Stainton, one of the prioresses, whose monumental memorial alone remains of all that marked the graves of the religious of that house; and there are stories relating to Robin Hood. Here still exists the chamber in which tradition says the 'noble outlaw' died, and also the grave, at a cross-bow shot from it, where long generations of men have averred his dust reposes. The district of Kirklees had an interest for Charlotte Brontë, and she has celebrated it in 'Shirley,' under the name of Nunnely, with its old church, its forest, its monastic ruins, and 'its man of title—its baronet.' It was to the house of the latter—kind gentleman though he was—that Louis Moore could not go, where he 'would much sooner have made an appointment with the ghost of the Earl of Huntingdon to meet him, and a shadowy ring of his merry men, under the canopy of the thickest, blackest, oldest oak in Nunnely Forest... would rather have appointed tryst with a phantom abbess, or mist-pale nun, among the wet and weedy relics of that ruined sanctuary of theirs, mouldering in the core of the wood.'

Mr. Brontë entered upon his ministrations at Hartshead in the year 1811; and there are entries in the churchwarden's book of Easter-dues paid to him up to 1815. It is curious to

note that, in this early mention of Mr. Brontë, the name is spelled 'Brunty' and 'Bronty.'

Hartshead being destitute of a glebe house, and no suitable residence existing either at this place or at the neighbouring village of Clifton at the time, Mr. Brontë took up his residence at High Town, in a roomy and pleasant house at the top of Clough Lane, near Liversedge in the parish of Birstall, and about a mile from the place of his cure. The house, which commands beautiful views, is entered by a passage of the ordinary width, on the left of which is the drawing-room, having cross-beams ornamented with plaster mouldings, as when first finished. On the right of the passage is the dining-room. The breakfast-room and kitchen are behind them. The house is three stories in height, and stands back about two yards from the road, which points direct to the now populous towns of Liversedge and Cleckheaton, both places of considerable antiquity, whose inhabitants, employed in various manufacturies, were increasing in Mr. Brontë's time.

Finding himself now in possession of a competent income and a goodly residence, he felt relieved from those anxieties which, in all probability, had attended his early struggles; and, resting awhile in his ambition, he turned in peace and contentment to poetical meditation. His first book was called 'Cottage Poems,' on the title-page of which he describes himself as the 'Reverend Patrick Brontë, B.A., minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton.' This book was published at Halifax in the year 1811. The following are a few of its subjects: 'The Happy Cottagers,' 'The Rainbow,' 'Winter Nights' Meditations,' 'Verses sent to a Lady on her Birthday,'

'The Cottage Maid,' and 'The Spider and the Fly.' Mr. Brontë thus speaks of himself and his work: 'When relieved from clerical avocations he was occupied in writing the "Cottage Poems;" from morning till noon, and from noon till night, his employment was full of 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 his eyes closed 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 by His blessing might be rendered useful to some poor soul who cared little about critical niceties.' Throughout he professes to be indifferent to hostile criticism.

It is pleasant to find that Mr. Brontë, although settled in competence in a picturesque part of England, was not forgetful of his parents or of the land of his birth. So long as his mother lived he sent her twenty pounds a year; and, though we have no record of the occasion, we may safely infer that he found opportunity to visit Ireland again. He maintained his connection with the district of his early life; and, in after-years, he appointed a relative of Mr. Tighe to be his own curate. One of his 'Cottage Poems' is entitled 'The Irish Cabin,' a verse or two from which may here be given:—

'Should poverty, modest and clean,
E'er please when presented to view,
Should cabin on brown heath or green,
Disclose aught engaging to you;
Should Erin's wild harp soothe the ear,

When touched by such fingers as mine,
Then kindly attentive draw near,
And candidly ponder each line.'

He describes a winter-scene on the mountains of Morne—a high range of hills in the north of Ireland—and thus alludes to his hospitable reception in the clean and industrious cabin of his verses:—

'Escaped from the pitiless storm,
I entered the humble retreat;
Compact was the building, and warm,
In furniture simple and neat.
And now, gentle reader, approve
The ardour that glowed in each breast,
As kindly our cottagers strove
To cherish and welcome their guest.'

It is unnecessary to give in this place further extracts from this book; suffice it to say that, in all probability, Mr. Brontë lived to see the day when he was pained and surprised that he had ever committed it to the press.

Although the poems of Mr. Brontë are inspired by the love of a peaceful and contented life, free from excitement and care, yet in times of trouble and emergency, such as those of the Luddite riots which occurred during the period of his ministration at Hartshead, he showed again the active and resolute spirit which had prompted and sustained the efforts of his early ambition; and his ardour in helping to suppress the turbulent spirit of the neighbourhood would have made him very unpopular with the disaffected people,

had they not learned to respect the upright and unfailing rectitude of his conduct. In the energetic character of Mr. Brontë's life in these early times, in his persistent ambition, and in the literary pursuits which clearly were dear to him, we may trace those factors of working power and literary aspiration and taste which made up the characteristic intellectual force of his children.

Mrs. Gaskell, in her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' has given some of the particulars of the Reverend Mr. Brontë's courtship and marriage, in which she appears to have taken a lively interest.

Mr. Brontë met his future wife, (Miss Maria Branwell—of whose character I shall speak in the next chapter—the third daughter of Mr. T. Branwell of Penzance, deceased) for the first time about the summer of 1812, when she was on a visit to her uncle, the Rev. John Fennel, a Methodist minister and head-master of the Wesleyan Academy at Woodhouse Grove, near Bradford, but who became later a clergyman of the Establishment, and was made incumbent of Cross-stone, in the parish of Halifax. This meeting was soon followed by an engagement, and, says Mrs. Gaskell, there were plans for happy picnic-parties to Kirkstall Abbey in the glowing September days, when 'Uncle, Aunt, and Cousin Jane'—the last engaged to a Mr. Morgan, another clergyman—were of the party.

In the account which Mr. Brontë gives of the aim and scope of the work from which I have made an extract, and the state of his mind while engaged upon it, we have a retrospect of the inner life of the father of the Brontës, during his sojourn at Hartshead as perpetual curate, prior to

his marriage with Miss Branwell. In this period of his life, he seems to have been perfectly happy, no cloud or anticipation of future sorrow having obscured or diminished the fulness of his peace. The marriage was celebrated on the 29th of December, 1812, at Guiseley, near Bradford, by the Rev. W. Morgan, minister of Bierley, the gentleman engaged to 'Cousin Jane.' It is a very curious circumstance that on the same day, and at the same place, Mr. Brontë performed the marriage ceremony between his wife's cousin, Miss Jane Fennel, only daughter of the Mr. Fennel alluded to above, and the Rev. W. Morgan, who had just been, as described, the officiating clergyman at his own wedding.

Mr. Fennel would naturally have performed the ceremony for his niece and Mr. Brontë, had it not fallen to his lot to give the lady away.

When Mr. Brontë found himself settled in married life at Hartshead, and with the probability of a young family rising around him, he felt pleasure in the contemplation of the future. Mrs. Brontë, ever gentle and affectionate in her household ways, comforted and encouraged him in his literary pursuits, and, by her acute observation and accurate judgment, directed and aided his own. It was at this time that Mr. Brontë wrote a book, entitled 'The Rural Ministry,' which was published at Halifax, in 1813. The work consisted of a miscellany of descriptive poems, with the following titles: 'The Sabbath Bells,' 'Kirkstall Abbey,' 'Extempore Verses,' 'Lines to a Lady on her Birthday,' 'An Elegy,' 'Reflections by Moonlight,' 'Winter,' 'Rural Happiness,' 'The Distress and Relief,' 'The Christian's

Farewell,' 'The Harper of Erin.' It cannot be doubted that, in consequence of his two publications while he was at Hartshead, Mr. Brontë became known in the surrounding districts as an aspiring man, and one of literary culture and ability.

Mr. Brontë had taken his bride to his house at High Town, and it was there that his daughters Maria and Elizabeth were born. Maria was baptized on April the 23rd, 1814, and is entered in the register as the 'daughter of Patrick Brontë and Maria his wife.' The Rev. Mr. Morgan was the officiating minister. There is no such entry there relating to Elizabeth, for she was baptized at Thornton with the other children.

Mr. Brontë, after having been nearly five years minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, resigned the benefice, and accepted, from the vicar of Bradford, the incumbency of Thornton, a perpetual curacy in that parish. This, probably, on the suggestion of Mr. Morgan, who was then incumbent of Christ's Church at Bradford.

Thornton is beautifully situated on the northern slope of a valley. Green and fertile pastures spread over the adjacent hills, and wooded dells with shady walks beautify and enrich the district. 'The neighbourhood,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'is desolate and wild; great tracts of bleak land, enclosed by stone dykes, sweeping up Clayton Heights.' This disagreeable picture of the place, painted by the biographer of Charlotte, is scarcely justified by the actual appearance of the district. The soil is naturally fertile, and the inhabitants are notable for industry and enterprise. Hence no barren land, within the wide range of hill and vale, is now seen obtruding on the cultivated sweep.

The town is somewhat regularly built. In the main street is situated the house where Mr. Brontë took up his abode during his stay at Thornton. The hall door was reached by several steps. There was a dining-room on one side of the hall, and a drawing-room on the other. Over the passage to the front was a dressing-room, at the window of which the neighbours often saw Mr. Brontë at his toilet. Above the door of the house, on a stone slab, there are still visible the letters:

A.
J. S.
1802

These are the initials of John and Sarah Ashworth, former inhabitants of Thornton; and this residence remained as the parsonage until another was built below, nearer to the chapel, by the successor of Mr. Brontë.

The chapel of Thornton is a narrow, contracted, and unsightly building. The north side is lighted by two rows of square cottage windows—on the south side, five late perpendicular pointed windows permit the sun to relieve the gloom of the interior.

The diminutive communion-table is lighted by a four-mullioned window, above which, externally, in the wall, appears the date 1620. The interior is blocked, on the ground floor, with high-backed, unpainted deal pews. Two galleries hide the windows almost from view, and cast a gloom over the interior of the edifice. The area under the pews, and in the aisles, is paved with gravestones, and a fetid, musty smell floats through the damp and mouldering interior. In this chapel, Mr. Brontë preached and ministered,

and from the pulpit, placed high above the curate and clerk, whence he delivered his sermons, he could see his wife and children in a pew just below him.

The new incumbent of Thornton seems to have taken active interest in his chapel; for in the western screen, which divides a kind of lobby from the nave, is painted, on a wooden tablet, an inscription recording that in the year 1818 this chapel was 'Repaired and Beautified,' the Rev. Patrick Brontë, B.A., being then minister.

While at Thornton Mr. Brontë steadily pursued his literary avocations, one of his books being a small volume entitled, 'The Cottage in the Wood, or the Art of becoming Rich and Happy.' This is an account of a pious family, consisting of an aged couple and a virtuous child, whose appearance and education qualify her for a higher position in the world than that of a cottager's daughter. Accident brings to their door a young man in a state of almost helpless drunkenness, whose habits are the most profligate and dissolute, as the sequel discloses; and the object of the book is to show the dire consequences of continued intemperance. The story is told in prose, but Mr. Brontë gives a poetical version of one event in the narrative. It is entitled, 'The Nightly Revel,' and possesses a dignity of its own. The following extract shows considerable improvement, in diction and verse, upon the style of his small volume published at Halifax, in 1811. For this reason it is well worth reproducing.

'Around the table polish'd goblets shine,
Fill'd with brown ale, or crown'd with ruddy wine;
Each quaffs his glass, and, thirsty, calls for more,
Till maddening mirth, and song, and wild uproar,

And idly fierce dispute, and brutal fight
Break the soft slumbers of the peaceful night.

'Without, within, above, beneath, around,
Ungodly jests and deep-mouthed oaths resound;
Pale Reason, trembling, leaves her reeling throne,
Truth, Honour, Virtue, Justice, all are flown;
The sly, dark-glancing harlot's fatal breath
Allures to sin and sorrow, shame and death.
The gaming-table, too, that fatal snare,
Beset with fiercest passions fell is there;
Remorse, despair, revenge, and deadly hate,
With dark design, in bitter durance wait,
Till Scarlet Murder waves his bloody hand,
Gives in sepulchral tone the dread command;
Then forth they rush, and from the secret sheath
Draw the keen blade and do the work of death.'

Mr. Brontë also, in 1818, before his appointment to Haworth, published his 'Maid of Killarney.' He had not been long at Thornton, where he went about the year 1815, when a considerable increase in his family added to his parental responsibilities.

On his acceptance of the living, he probably enjoyed a larger stipend than at Hartshead, but the demands of a young family, perhaps, on the whole, made him a poorer man. There Charlotte Brontë was born in April, 1816; Patrick Branwell Brontë in 1817; Emily Jane Brontë in 1818; and Anne Brontë probably just before Mr. Brontë's removal to Haworth, which was on February 25th, 1820, as we are told by Mrs. Gaskell.

Of the life of the Brontës at Thornton we know little. But there were causes of anxiety pressing on Mr. Brontë at the time. The state of his wife's health was a real sorrow, and although he derived solace from his literary pursuits and the society of his clerical friends, his spirits were damped by the contemplation of the season of bereavement and affliction that assuredly threatened him at no distant date.

With six young children, who might soon become motherless, Mr. Brontë's future was dark and discouraging, and he entertained the idea of resigning, at no distant day, the then place of his cure. Here, living within a reasonable distance of Bradford, he had an opportunity of moving in a larger circle of friends than at Hartshead, and it was here that his children received their earliest impressions of local life and character. Old inhabitants of Thornton remembered them playing in the space opposite their father's residence, in the village street, and had often seen them carried, or their parents lead them by the hand, in the lanes of the neighbourhood. They were children only when they left Thornton; yet, on many grounds, the inhabitants of that village may feel privileged that it was the birthplace of the authors of 'Jane Eyre,' 'Wuthering Heights,' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'

Shortly an opportunity presented itself to Mr. Brontë for leaving Thornton, a vacancy having taken place at Haworth through the death of the curate, Mr. Charnock. The situation of this chapelry was blessed with a more bracing air, and the curate had a somewhat better stipend than Thornton allowed, and so Mr. Brontë accepted the presentation from the patron. We are informed, however, that, on visiting the

place of his intended ministrations, he was told that while to him personally the parishioners had no objection, yet, as the nominee of the vicar of Bradford, he would not be received. He had no idea that the inhabitants had a veto in the appointment.

On Mr. Brontë declaring that, if he had not the good-will of the inhabitants, his ministrations would be useless, the place was presented to Mr. Redhead by the patron, and the village seems to have become the scene of extraordinary proceedings. It appears that, after the Reformation, the presentation to the curacy of Haworth, which had been from time immemorial vested in the vicar of Bradford, had become subject to the control of the freeholders, and of certain trustees who held possession of the principal funds from which the stipend of the curate proceeded, which they could withhold, by virtue of an authority they appear to have been empowered with. In effect, they could at any time disallow or render void an appointment, if disagreeable to themselves, by keeping back the stipend. Mr. Brontë, writing later of Mr. Redhead, says of this: 'My predecessor took the living with the consent of the vicar of Bradford and certain trustees, in consequence of which he was so opposed that, after only three weeks' possession, he was compelled to resign.' What this opposition and its immediate effects were, we learn from the pages of Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' and they may be mentioned here as illustrative of the pre-eminent resolution and force of character which ever distinguish the inhabitants of the West-Riding and the dwellers on these rough-hewn and storm-beaten elevations.

During the long illness which preceded the death of Mr. Charnock, incumbent of Haworth, his assistant curate, Mr. Redhead, had supplied his place; who, on Mr. Brontë's withdrawal, was presented, as is stated above, to the vacant living by the patron, and he seems to have been determined to hold the chapelry, *vi et armis*, in defiance of the inhabitants. But the freeholders, conceiving they had been deprived of their long established prerogative, or an attempt was being made to interfere with it, protested against Mr. Redhead's appointment. On the first occasion of this gentleman's preaching in the church, it was crowded not by worshippers, but by a multitude of people bent on mischief. These resolved the service should not proceed, or that it should be rendered inaudible. To secure this object they had put on the heavy wooden clogs they daily wore, except on Sundays, and, while the surpliced minister was reading the opening service, the stamping and clattering of the clogs drowned his voice, and the people left the church, making all the noise and uproar that was in their power, which was by no means feeble. The following Sunday witnessed proceedings still more disgraceful. We are told that at the commencement of the service, a man rode up the nave of the church on an ass, with his face to the tail, and with a number of old hats piled on his head. On urging his beast forward, the screams of delight, the roars of laughter, and the shouts of the approving conspirators completely drowned the clergyman's voice; and he left the chapel, but not yet discomfited.

Mr. Redhead, on the third Sunday, resolved to make a strenuous and final effort to keep the ecclesiastical citadel

of which he had been formally put in possession. For this purpose he brought with him a body of cavalry, composed of a number of sympathising gentlemen, with their horses; and the curate, thus accompanied by his supporters, ascended the village street and put up at the 'Bull.' But the enemy had been on the alert: the people were exasperated, and followed the new-comers to the church, accompanied by a chimney-sweep who had, not long before, finished his labours at some adjacent chimneys, and whom they had made half drunk. Him they placed right before the reading-desk, which Mr. Redhead had already reached, and the drunken, black-faced sweep nodded assent to the measured utterances of the minister. 'At last,' it is said, 'either prompted by some mischief-maker, or from some tipsy impulse, he clambered up the pulpit stairs, and attempted to embrace Mr. Redhead. Then the fun grew fast and furious. Some of the more riotous pushed the soot-covered chimney-sweeper against Mr. Redhead, as he tried to escape. They threw both him and his tormentor down on the ground in the churchyard where the soot-bag had been emptied, and though, at last, Mr. Redhead escaped into the "Black Bull," the doors of which were immediately barred, the people raged without, threatening to stone him and his friends.'^[1] They escaped from the place, and Mr. Redhead, completely vanquished, retired from the curacy of Haworth.

Mr. Brontë, who had made a favourable impression on the inhabitants, was now accepted by them, and the natural kindness of his disposition and the urbanity of his manners, secured peace and contentment in the village.

His responsibilities as a pastor were not light, though the new scene of his labours, in moral condition, was, perhaps, no worse than the generality of similar villages in the north of England. The special chroniclers of Haworth speak of the population of the barren mountains west of York as 'rude and arrogant, after the manner of their wild country.' This is the testimony of James Rither, a Yorkshire esquire. The celebrated Oliver Haywood, preaching at the house of Jonas Foster, at Haworth, on June 13th, 1672, broke out into lamentations about the immorality, corruption, and profanity of the place. Mr. Grimshaw, in the last century, while curate there, had a conviction that the majority of the people were going to hell with their eyes open! Mrs. Gaskell informs us that at Haworth, 'drinking without the head being affected was considered a manly accomplishment.' A remarkable instance of the loss of reverence and the increase of profanity, in those days, is found in the observance of Palm Sunday at Heptonstall, a neighbouring village, and at Haworth itself this feast was pre-eminently distinguished in ancient times by the out-door processions of people going from the church and returning to it, bearing palm branches and singing the psalms and hymns appointed for the special festival.

It is known, indeed, that this feast was attended by the inhabitants of the surrounding hills and valleys in those times; and, at the period of which I speak, the attendance of the people was not diminished, but increased, though they came for another object. It is a singular fact that local feuds, if we may call them such, were kept up between the villages of the West Riding. And thus challenges were given

alternately by Haworth to Heptonstall, and by Heptonstall to Haworth, for struggles between the champions of the respective villages, to be fought out on Palm Sunday. The inhabitants of these places, therefore, met to pound and pummel each other without any civil or religious cause to give bitterness to the fray: greed of triumph and brutal indifference to injuries inflicted characterized these hostile meetings. On such occasions, at Heptonstall, amidst great drunkenness and rioting, there were 'stand-up' fights from the church-gates to the 'Buttress,' a steep part of the road, near the bridge which crosses the river at the foot of Heptonstall Bank—nearly a mile in extent. On one of these feasts, a Haworth belligerent, unwilling to return home, although night was drawing on, and looking extremely dissatisfied, when asked by his wife what ailed him, answered, 'Aw 'annot fawhten wi' onny body yet, an' aw'll nut gooa whom till aw dun summat.' His affectionate spouse replied, 'Then gooa, an' get fawhten' an' ha' done wi' it, for we mun gooa.' The West-Riding police, on their institution, put an end to these disgraceful proceedings.

Haworth, the new place of Mr. Brontë's incumbency, which has been well and very fully described by many writers, is situated on the western confines of the parish of Bradford, and stands on a somewhat lofty eminence. It is, however, protected in great measure from the western storms by still higher ground, which consists of irreclaimable moors and morasses.

The church in which he, for the remainder of his life, performed his religious services, and in which his more gifted children repose, after their brief but memorable lives,

was of ancient date. A chantry was founded there at the beginning of the reign of Edward III., where a priest celebrated daily for the repose of the soul of Adam de Battley, and for the souls of his ancestors, and for all the faithful departed. The church, which is dedicated to the glory of God, in honour of St. Michael the archangel, has been recently, to a great extent, re-edified. The old structure retained traces of one still older, of the early English style. Invested as it was with the evidences of the periods of taste good and bad through which it had passed, and with the associations which attach to old and familiar internal arrangements, it was endeared to the inhabitants. Of such associations the present church—though an architectural gain upon its predecessor—is necessarily destitute, and the world-wide interest with which the former structure was invested through the genius of the Brontës has been almost destroyed by the substitution of an edifice in which they never prayed, and which they never saw; though their remains repose, it is true, under its pavement, as is indicated by memorial tablets.

During the existence of the old church, Haworth was visited by continuous streams of people; but, on its removal, little was left to attract pilgrims from afar, and there was a manifest diminution of visitors to the village.

In the recent alterations, the parsonage also, in which the children of the Rev. Patrick Brontë lived and won for themselves enduring fame in the path of literature, has undergone considerable changes. It has been found necessary to add a new wing to the house, in order to obtain larger accommodation, and, to beautify the