

synagogue of . . . . them of Cilicia," disputed with Stephen; and not even Saul of Tarsus was "able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke"?<sup>1</sup> as they held high converse together during the "many days" that were spent in Philip's house. Philip, who in the infancy of the Church, and while only a deacon, had so far outstripped even Apostles in quick perception of the world-wide grace of the Gospel; who had been the first to preach Christ to the detested Samaritans; who had admitted into the Church the despised child of Ham; who had carried the good tidings of great joy into the alien cities of Philistia: Paul, whose whole soul exulted in the mystery revealed to him, that "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel;"<sup>2</sup> whose whole life was dedicated in willing sacrifice to "preaching unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"<sup>3</sup> who was even now on his way, as the prophecies which went before him in that very house testified, to become "the prisoner of the Lord in behalf of the Gentiles."<sup>4</sup> Truly, within the sacred inclosure of Church fellowship, the communion of saints, there is an inner circle, in which heart meets heart in perfect sympathy and complete accord. There comfort and refreshment fall as the dew of heaven on the parched and weary spirit. There faith and constancy, hope and love, are quickened and increased. Thence the martyr goes forth to win his crown, and the soldier of Christ to deeds of high emprise. Who can doubt that that inner circle was found in Philip's house at Cæsarea?

T. T. PEROWNE.



## ART. VI.—THREE SISTERS.

### PART II.—THEIR WORKS.

**T**HE lives of the Brontës are incomplete from the point of view from which we have seen them. Each one had an outer life for the world; but it was a mere shell, covering feelings and passions which they dreaded intensely to reveal, even to each other. Their books furnish the key to the enigma.

From their earliest days the lonely children had sought refuge from their solitude in the pleasures of composition.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iii. 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 8.

<sup>4</sup> Verse 1, with Acts xxi. 10, 11.

The "plays" started in 1826 were a daily source of interest and discussion. Clustered round the kitchen fire, when Tabby forbade a candle, their imagination peopled the mythical island of their invention with all the heroes of the day. These plays and magazines were a reflection from the political world in which they took so deep an interest. The Duke of Wellington, Marquis of Lorne, Lord Charles Wellesley, are constantly the reputed authors of the papers, or the heroes of the tales. With their high Tory instincts and desperate enthusiasm, "The Duke" was exalted for them into an almost supernatural being.

There is still among Charlotte's papers one entitled "Catalogue of my books . . . up to August 3rd, 1830," making in all twenty-two volumes of minute writing, scarcely legible for smallness, from sixty to a hundred pages each, extending over a period of fifteen months only.

After this comes a blank space, when the sisters were occupied with those things which belong to the outer world and quietly assimilating material for future work.

In 1845 a fresh impetus was given to their instincts of composition by Charlotte's discovery of the poems which Emily had composed in deepest secrecy. "It took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made," Charlotte says. It was a distinct infringement of the law of liberty laid down for herself by Emily. The result was the publication in a small volume of the poetical effusions of all the three sisters. The volume, as might have been expected, never became known to the public. It is, however, to these poems, added to those published after the death of the younger sisters, that we must look for a revelation of Emily.

Emily, as Charlotte rightly judged, was the poet-mind of the trio. Anne's poems lack strength of expression and originality of thought. The religious melancholy, which made her view God as a stern Fate, is expressed in feeble words of complaint. She can nowhere rise to power. Her verses have a quaint far-off feeling like the scent of a withered rose.

Charlotte never errs on those lines. She is vigorous, passionate, with strong ideas strongly expressed, a determined hopefulness. Her poems belong to a period of life when she still felt the world well within her grasp, to be used at will :

I'd die when all the foam is up,  
The bright wine sparkling high ;  
Nor wait till in the exhausted cup  
Life's dull dregs only lie.

Such is her spirit—the same spirit which prompted also the lines :

What though Death at times steps in,  
And calls our best away ?

What though Sorrow seems to win,  
 O'er Hope, a heavy sway?  
 Yet Hope again elastic springs,  
 Unconquered, though she fell;  
 Still buoyant are her golden wings,  
 Still strong to bear us well.  
 Manfully, fearlessly  
 The day of trial bear,  
 For gloriously, victoriously,  
 Can courage quell despair!

Compare with these, a letter written in February, 1862: "Certainly the past winter has been to me a strange time; had I the prospect before me of living it over again, my prayer must necessarily be, 'Let this cup pass from me.'"

But Charlotte's verse lacks the true ring of poetry. It is rugged, inharmonious, unredeemed by snatches of melody. Her powerful thought is cramped and fettered by the bonds of metre, and does not accommodate itself readily to the swing and roll of the lines. She can be poetic enough in her prose; but her poems are after all nothing but her novels translated, and that badly, into lines of a definite length and rhymed ending. They are laboured and heavy.

With Emily the case was different. The fierce proud spirit hidden away in her heart could not always be repressed. There were times when it found vent in burning words which shaped themselves naturally into verse. The spontaneity of thought and feeling, the poetical command of phrase, the boldness which characterizes her poetry, remind us constantly that all of this was intended for herself alone. It was the overflowing of an overwrought soul, the outlet for the fierce, unconquerable spirit. On every page we meet the same power, strong to will and to suffer—above all, strong to withstand:

The world is going; dark world, adieu!  
 Grim world, conceal thee till the day;  
 The heart thou canst not all subdue  
 Must still resist, if thou delay!

There is one poem called "Honour's Martyr," the closing lines of which reveal one of the key-notes of Emily's life:

Let me be false in other's eyes,  
 If faithful in my own,

cried the stern spirit which agonized after truth, which looked for death as the closing of the struggle:

Oh, let me die—that power and will  
 Their cruel strife may close!  
 And conquered good and conquering ill  
 Be lost in one repose!

Emily's was no optimistic mind. She could fight and conquer, she could hold fast her freedom with tenacious

grasp; but the narrowed, bitter circumstances of her life forbade her the brightness of hope, her agony of struggle to reach The Light rendered her impervious to the many side-lights which to most of us help to make life worth living.

Then journey on—if not elate,  
Yet *never* broken-hearted.

This was Emily—joyous she could not be, after the first years of girlhood were over—broken-hearted she disdained to be, with all the force of her proud soul. There is one poem in which the Emily of the year 1845 stands fully revealed to us. She has called it "The Old Stoic":

Riches I hold in light esteem,  
And love I laugh to scorn;  
And lust of fame was but a dream,  
That vanished with the morn.  
And if I pray, the only prayer  
That moves my lips for me  
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear,  
And give me liberty!"  
Yes, as my swift days near their goal,  
'Tis all that I implore;  
In life and death a chainless soul,  
With courage to endure.

Surely that prayer was answered in her life, answered perhaps even more fully in her death. The Light which she sought so long, whose beams never *once* lightened the clouds lowering on her path, shone out for her before she closed with death in the final struggle. These were some of her last lines:

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!

There is not room for Death,  
Nor atom that his might could render void:  
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,  
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.

The constant struggle against that sense of the potency of evil which oppressed her was the parent of "Wuthering Heights," with its weird, wild scenery, its strong repulsive characters, its desperate hopelessness. Two influences combined to create the work. The first was her father's strong and fierce personality—the second Branwell's fall, and his subsequent life at home.

Mr. Brontë's amusement at the breakfast-table was to

have been bitter indeed before she could bring forth out of the travail of her soul such an offspring as this.<sup>1</sup>

Emily's work is singularly impersonal. She seems to wipe self off the tablet; to take the objective view of her characters. Anne, on the contrary, is painfully subjective; she has not the power to get outside herself. "Agnes Grey" is purely Anne Brontë, with her experiences in the varied life of a governess, told as they happened to her. Read in this light, the sad simplicity of the tale is very touching. We resent the coldness and neglect shown towards the "little one," so cherished at home. "Wildfeld Hall" is a mistake from beginning to end. It was intended as a warning that others might take example by the wickedness of the once-beloved Branwell, who had broken her heart. She considered it a sacred duty to write the book. It has simply fallen into oblivion, and that rightly.

Of Charlotte's works, "Jane Eyre" is that which impresses its readers most with the feeling of spontaneousness in creation. Yet it was begun at a dreary time. "The Professor" had just been returned, rejected; her schemes for a school had failed; Branwell was wearing their life out at home; she herself was in Manchester, anxiously waiting the result of the operation for cataract on her father.

"Jane Eyre" is also the most generally known work; and the one by which Charlotte is usually judged—somewhat unfairly. With all its quick spontaneous flow, it still remains the work of youthful genius not yet matured by experience. And yet with all its faults of knowledge, abruptness of style, and here and there its overcolouring, it has placed its author at once in the first rank of authors. As in all her other works, so in this, Charlotte waited for the inspiration without which she was dumb. For weeks, perhaps, the spirit was silent, and she would write nothing. Then again, as when she was evolving Jane's stay at Thornfield, the "possession" was upon her, and the pages grew under her hand with startling rapidity. For three weeks she wrote in every spare moment of time, until Jane had left Thornfield; then the tension was relaxed and the spell was over. "I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours," she said to her sisters—and that heroine was Jane; "but," she goes on, "she is not myself, any further than that."

Certainly "Jane Eyre" is far more the creation of Charlotte's

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<sup>1</sup> "The writer who possesses the creative gift," writes Charlotte, who could not wholly approve her sister's work, "owns something of which he is not always master—something that at times strangely wills and works for itself."

imagination than are the three other published works. "The Professor," written earlier, had been condemned by a publisher as too matter-of-fact, too minutely faithful to everyday occurrence—the public would not be satisfied with such serious food. Then Charlotte sought and found in her imagination the extraordinary story of governess life which has served for model to the countless governess stories which have followed in its wake. The one part of the book which is drawn from life is the account of Jane's first months at Lowood Orphan Asylum, the Cowan Bridge of Charlotte's early years. Twenty-one years had passed since then; but they had graven only more deeply the memory of those hopeless months and of her sisters' early deaths.

"Jane Eyre" has been condemned—unjustly so. Men have read it as the work of an outcast; they read into it their own unclean meanings. "Unto the pure, all things are pure." Rochester is endowed with a strange fascination, Jane is placed in a position of sore temptation. Are we for a moment made to feel that Rochester, with all his deep wrongs, is right? that Jane, with all her trembling after-fears, is wrong? Listen to Rochester in his blindness:

Jane, you think me, I dare say, an irreligious dog; but my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now. He sees not as man sees, but far clearer; judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong. I would have sullied my innocent flower, breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation. Instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. His chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me for ever. . . . Of late, Jane—only—only of late I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance, the wish for reconciliation to my Maker. I began sometimes to pray—very brief prayers they were, but very sincere.

There is their answer. We of the later days have learned a better thing. He who has overcome temptation is a stronger and a better man than he who has never been tempted; and there is a word of the rejoicing of angels greater over the penitent sinner, than over the just man who needs no repentance.

Rochester is a strange type of man—rude, defiant in his strength, commanding—one of those men who sometimes take the world by storm. Just such another, though softened in outline, was Kingsley's Tom Thurnall. Misfortune tamed them both. Is there a sadder page in Charlotte's writings than the picture of Rochester as a fierce, blinded, mutilated wild beast? incapable of helping himself, utterly intolerant of help from others. Withal he is a true man, in all his changes.

With reason has it been said, that Edward Rochester is one of the two only true male figures from a woman's hand.

There is a wide difference between "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley." The first thing that strikes us is, that in the earlier work we can scarcely ever, except in the notorious case of Cowan Bridge, put our finger on an event or a character and say: "This happened—this is a real person." In "Shirley" we are met by character after character from real life, by occurrences drawn from her own knowledge and experience. The central figure in "Shirley," Shirley herself, is the much-loved sister, Emily. Emily, not as she was when life had ground her down, but the bright, daring girl of their early days, full of spirit, reckless of consequences. Emily it was who, when bitten by a mad dog, cauterized the wound herself, and held it a secret from the others. Emily's was the faithful, ugly dog, on whose head her hand must rest when reading, "lest he should groan and be discontented." Emily's was the great heart and generous spirit which Charlotte has striven to show us in Shirley—striven with the chill shadow of death upon her, cramping her energies, with Emily gone and Anne going into the dark valley from whence is no return—striven in the agony of the long nights and days that followed, when the wild west wind which Emily loved was beating against the door, calling up the phantoms of those two who had heard page by page the beginning of that work whose ending they might not see.

Everywhere we meet with old friends and scenes. The three curates were well known in the neighbourhood of Haworth, and easily recognised their own portraits. Mrs. Pryor was another neighbour. Mr. Yorke was no other than Mr. Taylor, her friend's father. Jessy and Rose were his children, one of whom died abroad, and was buried in the little Protestant cemetery at Brussels :

Do you know this place? No; you never saw it; but you recognise the nature of these trees, their foliage—the cypress, the willow, the yew. Stone crosses like these are not unfamiliar to you, nor are these dim garlands of everlasting flowers. Here is the place: green sod and a gray marble headstone. Jessy sleeps below. She lived through an April day; much loved was she, much loving. She often in her brief life shed tears; she had frequent sorrows; she smiled between, gladdening whatever saw her. Her death was tranquil and happy in Rose's guardian arms, for Rose had been her stay and defence through many trials. The dying and the watching English girls were at that hour alone in a foreign country, and the soil of that country gave Jessy a grave.

Mr. Helstone, too, was not unknown to Haworth. Caroline was the dear friend, Ellen Nussey. So it is, too, with the places and events. Fieldhead is Oakwell Hall, close to Roe Head, Miss Wooler's school. The attack on the mill was suggested

by Miss Wooler's stories of the Luddite riots. The mill itself was Rawfolds, close to Roe Head, and its owner Mr. Cartwright, half a foreigner, was the origin of Robert Moore.

But to see Charlotte's masterpiece, we must turn to "Villette"—"Villette," human with an intensity of truth, where suffering vouches for sincerity—"Villette," where in her simplicity she has laid bare her heart—"Villette," pregnant with a philosophy born of pain, the truest philosophy of experience. It is a very simple tale in itself—the tale of Lucy Snowe, the friendless governess in a *pension* in Belgium. But simple as it is, it took the world by storm. Written in a period of great depression and constant illness, it is the recollection of the great crisis of her life, the recalling of memories almost wholly sorrowful. The crisis through which Charlotte passed at Brussels is not dimly shadowed forth in this book, where, like Emily, she deemed herself safe from detection.

"She was one who had to guard and not be guarded," is M. de Bassompierre's criticism of Lucy Snowe; and this is how she worked out her lesson:

I did long achingly then, and for four-and-twenty hours afterwards, for something to fetch me out of my present existence and lead me upwards and onwards. This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head, which I did figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die. They were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench. Then did the temples bleed and the brain thrill to its core.

My heart almost died within me. Miserable longings strained its chords. How long were the September days! how silent, how lifeless! . . . Looking forward at the commencement of those eight weeks, I hardly knew how I was to live to the end. . . . Even to look forward was not to hope. The dumb future spoke no comfort, offered no promise, gave no inducement to bear present evil in reliance on future good. . . . Alas! when I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert—tawny sands, with no green field, no palm-tree, no well in view.

What was her hope in this time of need? Hear her again:

Certainly, at some hour, though perhaps not *your* hour, the waiting waters will stir; in *some* shape, though perhaps not the shape you dreamed, which your heart loved, and for which it bled, the healing herald will descend. . . . Herald, come quickly! Thousands lie round the pool, weeping and despairing to see it, through slow years, stagnant. Long are the "times" of heaven. . . . To how many maimed and mourning millions is the first and sole angel visitant him Easterns call Azrael!

It is the wrestling of a strong soul in agony. We bow before it and are still—waiting to judge, if we ever dare to judge, until we have proved ourselves as worthy. God forgive us if we cannot respect the anguish He saw fit to send, and



remember that the *de profundis* has been true of living and suffering humanity since the days of Him Who, hallowed more especially since the days of Him Who, suffering too, cried with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.*"

We leave the period of *Sturm und Drang* in which Charlotte learned to recognise the limitations of her life, but also to feel her power, and pass on to Paul Emanuel, the choleric little master, and Modeste Maria Beck the scheming but withal kindly mistress. Again the portraits are taken from the life. In all her works no character is more attractive than that of the little Professor. She has seized his likeness with power, and with a subtlety born of careful observation. "*Villette*" is long, yet it never palls. The characters are various, but none yields to the other in clearness, in sharpness of definition. Here, too, we feel, as we feel in all her works, that "thus it must have been." The ending is left undecided, because her father would have it so; but we gather her meaning—Lucy Snowe was not made for happiness.

"The Professor," her earliest and least known, though last published work, has suffered from the use which she has made of the same material in "*Villette.*" Yet it is not altogether similar to her later book. There is much that is original in "*The Professor*" which was not reproduced in "*Villette.*" It might have been wiser to leave it in obscurity, simply because so much of what she had said in it, she had said over again later on, never expecting that it would be posthumously brought to light.

It is impossible to hide from ourselves that her marriage with Mr. Nicholls cramped her literary power. He had loved her as a woman, not as an author. He did not care for her literary fame, preferring that she should cease entirely from composition. Had she lived, she could not have endured the strain. She herself always felt as though she had in some way transgressed the canons laid down for women, by giving way to the impulse which forced her to write. She desired always to be judged in her writings not as a woman, but as an author, while she felt bitterly the humiliation inflicted on her by those who could suspect her works of coarseness. Charles Kingsley was not ashamed to confess that he had misjudged her utterly, and repented himself.

Charlotte was, so to speak, an involuntary writer, working on no definite lines, and belonging to no corner of the literary life of her century. It is true also of Emily and Anne. They were brought in contact with the realities of life, and they painted things as they were, not as they wished them to be. The gift of inspiration animated two of the trio, conscientiousness upheld the third. Their lives were not faultless, their

works are in many directions imperfect; but Charlotte and Emily stand, nevertheless, two among the greatest writers not of their century alone, but of the world. A French essayist has rendered them this tribute: "C'était une famille qui, possédant le plus bel attribut de la nature, la passion, avait su le soumettre au plus bel attribut de l'âme, la conscience."

"At the end of all," as Charlotte writes of the sisters who had passed from her ken, "exists the great Hope—Eternal Life is theirs for ever."

I have found it so impossible to analyze the religious beliefs of the three sisters, that I have abstained from the attempt. Anne's was distinctly the most naturally pious mind. She died with the earnest words of faith and hope upon her lips: "Soon all will be well through the merits of our Redeemer," but the melancholy of her religious life was unfortunate. Charlotte, through seasons of despair, clung to her faith with characteristic tenacity; but her changing moods render futile any attempt accurately to gauge her position. We only know that she looked and trusted to God through all. Emily was and remains a very Sphinx. She sought God diligently; we can judge of the result only by her last verses, which are capable of very various interpretations. I have therefore purposely avoided the dilemma, recollecting the merciful injunction, "Judge not that ye be not judged."

ALBINA BRODRICK.

## Short Notices.

*The English Church in the Eighteenth Century.* By C. J. ABBEY and JOHN H. OVERTON. A new edition, revised and abridged. Pp. 495. Longmans, Green and Co.

This valuable work was reviewed in *THE CHURCHMAN* by Canon Garbett as soon as it was published. We have pleasure in inviting attention to the edition now before us, judiciously condensed, and cheap. It ought to have a large circulation, for it is very readable and very full. We may add that it is a handy volume, pleasing as to cover, paper, and type.

*Charge delivered to the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of Winchester.* By the Venerable GEORGE HENRY SUMNER, D.D., Archdeacon and Canon of Winchester, and Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury. Winchester: Jacob and Johnson.

Several Charges lie before us, and each has an interest of its own. But at present we can only give a line of notice to Dr. Sumner's, a Charge which we can easily understand was "published by request."