

Charlotte Brontë

Hisar Women's League
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Home of Mrs. Michaels

When I was asked to begin this series of the lives of famous women with a talk on Charlotte Brontë, I said to myself that I couldn't bear to go over again that painfully tragic story. And yet the Brontës have been one of my enthusiasms for many years. I cannot remember a time when I did not know their story. My maternal grandmother's people came from Yorkshire and my mother often told me how, when she was a school girl in the south of England, she would spend her Easter and Christmas holidays with her grandfather in the bleak north near Bradford. She described so graphically the cold winds, the dark skies, the gruff ways of Yorkshire that I felt at home when I read about the Brontës. But the story of their lives my mother told me long before I read it myself.

To crown all, I was able to visit Haworth in 1936. It was the fulfillment of a dream. I saw for myself the tiny parsonage at the top of the cobbled road of the village, the church where Charlotte's father and husband preached, the Black Bull, with the same sign swinging over the narrow street, as it did in Branwell Brontë's time, and best of all the moors, which one reaches in five minutes from the center of the village...those wild moors that Emily Brontë immortalized in her poems and in that

fantastic novel of genius, Wuthering Heights.

It is amazing how many people have been fascinated by the story of the Brontë family. Two years after Charlotte died, (which by the way is exactly a hundred years ago ^{last} this year) Mrs. Gaskell, her friend and fellow-novelist, wrote the classic life, but that was only the beginning. A long series of distinguished writers have tried to explain, to describe, to marvel at the extraordinary story of this unique family. Clement Shorter, Augustine Birrell, Abbé Dimmet, May Sinclair, Romer Wilson, Clemence Dane, E.F. Benson, Phyllis Bentley, Elizabeth and Lawrence Hanson, and as late as 1953 Margaret Lane has written a wonderfully interesting re-evaluation of Mrs. Gaskell's Life, filling in with newly discovered material and modern psychological appraisal of the work of the three sisters and brother. This is certainly not the end of the list. Several plays have been written in imitation of the Barretts of Wimpole Street, ..one called the Brontës of Haworth Parsonage... indeed there is no end to the fascination that people have felt for this family.

To talk of Charlotte Brontë, one must talk of her home, of her four sisters and one brother, for never was a family more closely knit, in affection and in intellect than hers. They were thrown together in the greatest intimacy from their earliest years; they had no associates in Haworth and few when they were away at school. They kept their minds burnished by their influence on each other.

Nearly everyone, of course has read Jane Eyre and has felt the tremendous interest of the story, even if many of us read it too early to understand the masterly analysis of love and passion between Jane and Rochester. Many of us have read Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë and felt its amazing power and we know her four wonderful poems, included in the Oxford Book of English Verse: Remembrance, The Prisoner, My Lady's Grave and Last Lines. Charlotte's other novels, Shirley, Villette and The Professor and some of Emily's other poems are very remarkable also, but nothing is more remarkable than their lives and the vivid accounts of themselves and their environment that they left for posterity.

Let me try to give you, as clearly and concisely as I can, that story, ^{the Brontë} ^{that it is a sad & tragic tale in the most part} (even at the risk of telling you much that you already know.) And let me add that I despair of ever doing them justice.

Patrick Brontë, the father of this family was born in 1777. He was Irish and poor, the son of a peasant farmer by name Prunty. But he was aspiring, and although he had very little money and was a member of a large family, he came to England and went to Cambridge University, where he obtained his B.A. degree. Shortly afterwards he changed the spelling of the plebian Prunty to Brontë. He became a curate, first in Essex and then in Yorkshire. While he was

at Hartshead, a village near Halifax, he met and married a lady from Cornwall, called Maria Branwell, who happened to have come from Penzance to Yorkshire on a visit to relatives. She was unused to the rigorous ways of the north but she never returned again to her sunnier and more genial Cornwall.

Six children were born, all in rapid succession, two at Hartshead and four at Thornton, another Yorkshire parish: Maria 1813, Elizabeth 1815, Charlotte 1816, Patrick Branwell, the only boy 1817, Emily Jane 1818 and Anne 1820.

"And then," as Mr. E.F. Benson says, "came the final ecclesiastical step for Mr. Brontë and on that step he remained without further promotion for forty-one years. On Feb. 25th 1820, he was licensed to the chapelry of Haworth, ten miles from Bradford ^{in Yorkshire} and in the parish of that town...Sometime during the spring the move was made and from thenceforth with one exceedingly important exception, the setting of the Brontë drama was laid at the Parsonage there. Standing at the top of a steep hill, which the village climbs, it faces, across an oblong walled-in garden, the west door of the church..It is girt about with the graveyard; the public house, the Black Bull is neighborly;" a short lone lane" leads to the moors. These four, parsonage, church, public house and moors are the main furnishing of the scene. Of them the church is the least significant and

the moors, the most, for from the moors came Wuthering Heights. "

The village of Haworth straggles along a winding cobbled road to the top of a steep hill, where the parsonage and church stand up against the sky, in the direct path of the fierce winds that blow over the moors. The scene has been described times without number, and bits of it appear again and again in the letters and novels and poems of the sisters. The house itself, built of gray stone and looking out upon a large graveyard, was small for so large a family, but it accommodated them all.

Mrs. Brontë, when they came to Haworth, was already ill and all her life in the parsonage was one of suffering and failing strength. In the autumn of 1821, when her eldest child, Maria, was eight, and Anne, the youngest was a year and a half, she died.

So here were ^{six} ~~three~~ motherless children in charge of ignorant Yorkshire servants and a father, who was notoriously inept at coping with youth, who was a student and rather silent and not too good tempered. He tried to find a second wife, but when he failed, he asked his wife's sister, Miss Elizabeth Branwell, to come from Cornwall to look after his children. She came and stayed with them until they grew up and until her own death. She did her duty sternly with Victorian thoroughness, never becoming reconciled to the Yorkshire climate and forever

comparing it unfavorably with her native county. The children called her Aunt Branwell, never Aunt Elizabeth, which I think is significant. She was a little old spinster who wore a silk gown, a large bonnet trimmed with ruching, and she carried a gold snuff box. The small girls had to do endless sewing, they had to learn to work and do all manner of domestic tasks with care and punctiliousness. They never loved their aunt, though they respected her. The one she showed partiality for was the boy, Branwell, he, who would have done so much better without a doting and too easily forgiving aunt. But how often in life, things arrange themselves like that.

The children, as may be imagined, and as Mrs. Gaskell ascertained from many inhabitants of Haworth, were strange, quiet, unusual little creatures. Their father did not like being disturbed by noise so they early learned the quietest of games. The two eldest took over the responsibility of looking after the youngest ^{over} and none of them, I think, ever really romped or learned how to play as normal children do. They all could read soon and they would discuss the news and politics with their father at a ridiculously early age.

In July 1824 Mr. Brontë took his two elder girls, Maria and Elizabeth, to a school at Cowan Bridge, which had recently been established for the daughters of poor clergymen. It was most inexpensive, the fees being only fourteen pounds a year. In September, Charlotte and Emily also went there. So much controversy has gathered around this

establishment that it has taken years to find out the real truth. The terrible picture which Charlotte drew in Jane Eyre of the Lowood Orphan Asylum branded this clergyman's school for all time. The story in reality is painful enough. Charlotte at the age of nine had etched in her mind the memory of great suffering, not only for herself but for her sisters. In the spring of 1825 a low fever broke out in the school, it was thought because of the poor and insufficient food and rough accommodations. None of the Brontë children caught it, but soon it was apparent that Maria had developed rapid consumption. She was taken home and died in May and no sooner had she gone than Elizabeth showed the same symptoms. She was brought home too and died in June. Mr. Brontë was definitely frightened and he removed Charlotte and Emily from the school.

Five years followed this episode, when the four children who were left, lived at the parsonage and were taught their lessons by their father and their Aunt Branwell. Abbé Dimnet says: "The children were well and began to live their solitary life with the intensity that always characterized it. Anne was 7, Emily was 9, Branwell 10, and Charlotte 11, and they were all prodigiously intelligent." They saw almost nobody but each other. They were all shy and their shyness was accentuated...all but Branwell who was brilliant, unstable and gregarious. They began to

have elaborate games in which they took fictitious names and which led directly to literary efforts. As Charlotte said "they established plays." They started that game of Gondal Land which in the case of Emily and Anne continued right into their mature years.

Explain the two sagas:

1. Angria... (Charlotte and Branwell)
west of Africa... Hot country
poems, chronicles, pamphlets, Proclamations
C's hero The Duke of Wellington
2. Angora... (Emily and Anne)
inhabited by Gondals... cold country
Emperor Julius
Royalist and Republican wars
histories chronicles and poems

continued until their last years.

They wrote in tiny little note books only a few inches square. They called these volumes and many of them you can see today in the British Museum and at Haworth Parsonage itself. ^{which has now become a museum.} Their writing was microscopic, very fine and neat. As much of it was done by feeble candle light or even by fire light, it is no wonder that Charlotte ruined her eyes and was always very short-sighted, holding her book or her work very near her face. Later she had to wear spectacles.

I must hurry over their next educational steps.

In 1831 Charlotte went to Miss Wooller's School ^{at Ryehead} where she was much happier and where she made two lasting friendships, with Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. Her many

letters to Ellen are a source of a great deal of our knowledge of the life of the family. I might say here that Mr. Benson in his *Life*, gives it as his opinion, that if Charlotte had only her letters to her credit and no novels or poems, her fame would have been established.

She went back to Roehead (Miss Wooler's School) as a teacher and Emily went as a student, but Emily was so shy and so miserable away from the moors that she grew visibly thinner and thinner. Charlotte in alarm sent her home and Anne took her place. Branwell, who had more need of the discipline of school than any of his gentle sisters, was kept at home and taught by his father. But he began at an early age to enjoy the society of occasional travellers who stopped at the Black Bull, where drinks were plentiful and already the seeds of his downfall were sown.

By this time the girls were maturing. They had to think of earning their living, as their father could not support them on his slender stipend. They had great hopes of Branwell, who was very clever at drawing and who had a passionate desire to go to London to study art. He also had literary ambitions and had written a remarkable letter to the Poet Laureate, Southey, enclosing some of his verses. The girls' chief preoccupation had been his advancement. They were sure he was destined to be great. For themselves, however, there was only the possibility of their becoming governesses, which they proceeded to do, coming back at

holiday intervals to Haworth. But before Charlotte started out, she had her first proposal of marriage from Henry Nussey, the brother of her friend, Ellen, but she could not bring herself to accept him. A second proposal came the same year, 1839 from a curate, Mr. Bryce, who had spent one day at the parsonage as a guest. Charlotte was much amused by it and quickly sent her definite refusal.

Anne Brontë had several positions as a governess. Of her miseries one can find abundant testimony in Agnes Grey, her first book. She was unfitted to manage children or to adapt herself to alien homes. Charlotte was equally unsuccessful, underpaid and very unhappy as a governess. The theme of the poor brow-beaten gentlewoman became the central idea of her literary efforts. Emily, who was obviously more unhappy away from home than any of them, stayed a good part of her time at Haworth, working hard about the house, but living, all the time, a luminous, intense spirit life of her own that almost no one shared except occasionally Branwell and Anne.

All this time, all the four of them were writing endlessly...plays, poems, stories, chronicles. It was their solace and their escape. After the duties of the day were done, Mr. Brontë read prayers at eight o'clock. An hour later he went up to bed, winding the grandfather's clock on the stairs on his way up. (you can see the clock in the same place at Haworth Parsonage today). Then was the

time of freedom for the three sisters. They retired into Gondal Land. They discussed their writing with each other, pacing round and round the table in their one living-dining room, arms around each other's waists.

By 1841 Charlotte, who from the first took the lead in trying to acquire for her sisters and herself, a measure of independence, conceived the idea of opening a school at the Parsonage. But in order to offer acceptable accomplishments, she thought she ought to have a knowledge of French and German. So, after getting from their aunt an advance of money, Charlotte and Emily started out in February 1842 for the Pensionnat Héger in Brussels. Mr. Brontë went with them as far as London, where they stayed at the Chapter Coffee House, a little old hotel in Paternoster Row, under the shadow of St. Paul's, just as did Charlotte's heroine, Lucy Snowe, in her novel Villette written ten years later. Charlotte was now 26 and Emily 24, and this was their first sight of London.

The adventure of these provincial English girls, shy, clever, calvinistic, in the strange foreign Catholic Pensionnat, makes a most diverting and extraordinary story. They were older than the other pupils, rigid and terribly earnest in their views and appallingly reticent. They were ardent Protestants and had only disapproval and prejudice for Roman Catholic doctrine and ritual. M. and Mme Héger were very kind to them. They worked exceedingly hard and soon gained a very good knowledge

of French. For the first time, Charlotte met a man in M. Héger who was really intellectual, who could lead her to new culture. Her thirsty soul drank it all in. Nearly all of the story of Villette is autobiographical and we have Charlotte's letters and the accounts of M. and Mme. Héger and other pupils in the school to fill out the picture. The girls had been in Brussels only ten months, when news came in November of the illness of their Aunt Branwell. They hastened home at once but found that she had died while they were on their way to England. She left her very tiny fortune to her nieces, so that they were a little better off than they had been. Emily remained at home after this, to look after the house and her father, but Charlotte, at the invitation of M. and Mme. Héger returned to Brussels for another year, as part time teacher and part time student.

This second visit had a profound effect on Charlotte's heart and mind. She remarked in a letter of a later date: "I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what seemed an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a withdrawal for more than two years, of happiness and peace of mind."

This passage and the fact that she grew melancholy and unhappy and was aware that Mme. Héger's attitude towards her had changed and that she was jealous of Charlotte's

interest in M. Héger, led people to believe that Charlotte had fallen in love with him. In 1913 four letters of Charlotte to M. Héger in French written in 1844 and 1845, after she had returned to the Parsonage and was worried and miserable, were published in The Times. These letters had been seen by Mrs. Gaskell, when she visited Brussels in her preparation for her Life of Charlotte. She made only very discreet excerpts from them. Authorities still argue about whether Charlotte was really in love...certainly the letters sound passionate. At first she wrote to M. Héger about her life and her reading. Margaret Lane in her recent book has this to say: " In the course of a few months, separation from him, a mysterious process of mind had taken place in her; her feelings had increased in absence and with vacancy; his image had become more powerful and obsessive than when she had left Brussels."

The tone of these letters is heavy with longing. M. Héger did not reply or at very long intervals in an impersonal letter, ^{sometimes by the letter} dictated ^{it was} to his wife and in her handwriting. He was no doubt embarrassed by Charlotte's ardent admiration. He was the most intellectual and cultivated man she had ever known at all well. The only others had been raw curates in her father's parish, her father, who was dull and pedantic and her weak brother, who already showed signs of never fulfilling the high hopes his sisters had for him.

Let me quote a very little from the letters. see
Lane p. 162+

All this story is treated in detail and in an interesting manner by E.F. Benson ^{in the library here} and Margaret Lane.

In January 1844 Charlotte returned from Brussels. Now the sisters were equipped for their project and they wanted to open a school at the Parsonage: They got out little circulars and sent them to the limited number of their friends and acquaintances, but not one application did they have. Charlotte and Emily were at home together, Anne and Branwell being respectively governess and tutor in the Robinson family. Charlotte was depressed and sad. All her projects seemed to have failed. Branwell, too, when he came home, was beginning to drink heavily. To add to anxiety, Mr. Brontë was suffering from cataract and his sight was getting gradually worse. In the summer of 1845 Anne returned home from the Robinsons. She and Emily went off for a short holiday to York and all this time they played at Gondals, impersonating and writing about, and weaving stories around fictitious people. Charlotte visited her friend Ellen at Hathersage. When she returned she found that Branwell had been dismissed from his position with the Robinsons because of a love affair, it was said, with his employer's wife. He was distracted and morose by turns and from now on his decline was rapid. For the next three years he presented the terrible picture of a profligate and drunkard, going to pieces mentally and physically

before the agonized eyes of his sisters.

In this dreary autumn of 1845 however, a wonderful discovery was made.

Quote E.F. Benson p. 159-162

Partly because of their native reticence but also because they wanted to be considered men instead of unknown girls, they took upon themselves pen names...keeping their own initials. Thus Emily was Ellis, Charlotte was Currer, and Anne was Acton..with the surname of Bell.

The poems of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell were published in one small volume by Aylott and Jones of Pater-noster Row in the early summer of 1846. All the merits were for Ellis (Emily) said Charlotte. The book cost the authors nearly fifty pounds and only two copies were sold. Charlotte did all the correspondence concerning this venture.

No one in the family besides the three sisters knew of this publication. Although it was far from successful, they kept on writing. Each continued with a novel: Emily..Wuthering Heights; Anne...Agnes Grey; Charlotte...The Professor. They sent them the weary rounds and for long could not find a publisher. Finally The Professor came back from the publishing firm of Smith Elder with so sympathetic a note, saying that a book with more dramatic quality was needed, that Charlotte then and there began Jane Eyre. As a matter of fact, she was at that moment in Manchester with her father,

having gone there for an operation for his eyes. And such was her courage and determination, that while she waited for the convalescent to recuperate, she sat down to write her most famous novel, without saying a word to anyone. After a year and a half Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey found publishers in Messrs. Newby in one volume..Dec. 1847. Jane Eyre appeared three months earlier with Smith Elder, in October 1847. All the authors kept their masculine pen names.

Jane Eyre was an immediate and immense success.

The other books were not so popular but they too received some notice. The reviewers all thought the authors were men, but some guessed they might be women and much controversy raged in the literary world, while these quiet, shy sisters were immured in their Yorkshire parsonage. But their lives were beginning to expand and Charlotte did a good deal of correspondence with her publishers and others who admired her work.

In July 1848 the publishers found out who these authors really were. Quote E.F. Benson P. 208+

After all this ,the identity of the authors was known only to their publishers.

Brighter days seemed to be dawning for the family and their fortunes should have been in the ascendant as a reward for past sorrow and labor. Charlotte was famous as Currer Bell, the author of Jane Eyre. She began another novel, the heroine of which was to be her sister, Emily, whom she called Shirley. Anne had written a second novel.

They had all their secret lives as well as the beginnings of recognition. But instead of peace, tragedy piled up on them with unbelievable swiftness and cruelty.

By the summer of 1848, not a year after the publication of the three novels, it was evident that Branwell was not only a complete moral wreck, but was stricken with the terrible scourge of the family and the locality, consumption. ^{his behaviour was such that} The sisters were afraid to ask anyone to visit them. Their austere calvinistic upbringing did not help them to sympathize with their brilliant but terribly weak brother. They had seen him gradually declining for three years and finally in September 1848, he died.

The next to go was Emily. The story of her heroic fight against death, of her stalwart spirit, of the fierce reserve of her nature, reads like an epic, like a Greek tragedy. I cannot go into all the painful details of Charlotte's fears and the misery she went through in seeing her sister suffer and not be allowed to help or even to call a doctor. These things you can read for yourselves in her letters and her wondrous tribute to her sister in the second edition of Wuthering Heights, which she wrote two years later. Suffice it to say that three months after Branwell, Emily, who on the very day of her death insisted on getting up and dressing herself and coming downstairs..the gallant and silent Emily died. It was December 19, 1848. She was thirty years old.

You would think that Charlotte's burden was heavy enough, but there was one sister left. I am quite certain and the idea can hardly bear thinking about, that ignorance of the nature of consumption and of its cure by means of sunshine, rest, light, good food and peaceful minds (things unknown at the parsonage) were largely the cause of the successive deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne. Anne became ill the winter of Emily's death. She was gentle and passive, resigned and good. She made no fight as Emily did, but had a doctor soon. He confirmed the worst fears of the sisters. Charlotte took Anne to Scarborough by the sea, in May 1849 and Ellen, her staunch and understanding friend, came with her. But Anne died only a few days after they reached their destination.

Charlotte was in the middle of ^{her novel} Shirley when Emily died. She left it untouched until after Anne had followed her elder sister. And when Charlotte returned from Scarborough to her desolate home, inhabited now by her father alone, she kept her sanity, only by making herself work hard to finish her book. Her eloquent letters at this time bear witness to her marvellous tenacity of purpose, to the depth of her devotion, to the ^{in the} fact that ^{in the} achievements of her mind, she could still find, after all this tragedy, a solace, a comfort, an escape.

In the autumn of the year of Anne's death, 1849, Shirley was published. Charlotte thought that although

her identity was known only to her publishers, she could keep it from the rest of the world. But the setting of Shirley was her own Yorkshire moorlands and the curates, whom she made fun of in her book, were living in and about Haworth. People at last found out that Currer Bell was none other than the small, shy, short-sighted daughter of the incumbent of Haworth village church.

After this, she began to be lionized to a certain extent. She made several trips to London. She met famous literary people but all her social activities were terrible ordeals to her and she was made literally ill with shyness. She met Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Martineau, with both of whom she became good friends. She saw her childhood hero, the Duke of Wellington. She was entertained by Thackeray, whom she had adored at a distance. But her sorrows and her serious-mindedness and the long struggle she had had against adversity, robbed her of the ability to enjoy the legitimate fame that came her way. She made a strange impression on people and not always a happy one. With her publishers she maintained very cordial relations and they sent her regularly boxes of new books in which she revelled. She had many intellectual correspondents and these she thoroughly enjoyed.

Among ^{her publishers} them was a certain very clever little man called James Taylor, reader for the firm of Smith, Elder. In 1851 he proposed to her and she hesitated for a moment, but was never really in love with him and she knew it. Her

father was anxious that she should marry him and perhaps that feeling had something to do with his disapproval of ~~the~~ ^{his} curate, Mr. Arthur Nicholls, who, in 1852 told him he wanted to marry Charlotte.

This brings us to the final act in the drama of Charlotte's life. In 1852 she had written Villette, to a large extent an account of her experiences in Brussels and she had refused Mr. Taylor's offer. She was now 36. Mr. Nicholls had been curate at Haworth for eight years, and had had every opportunity of knowing Charlotte and her family. She was very much surprised when he revealed his feeling for her, but from the first she admired and respected him. Her father, for two years, was violently opposed to the marriage and like a dutiful Victorian daughter, she acquiesced; ~~for a time~~ ^{at first}. But finally she took things into her own hands and winning friends in the town who sympathized with her, she met Mr. Nicholls and corresponded with him, even though he had been banished from the parsonage for a time. The course of this romance is one with the strange, fantastic life on the edge of the moors. They were married on June 29th 1854 and for the next eight months Charlotte knew peace, contentment, real and constant happiness. She was literally surprised at her new joy and could hardly believe she was herself.

But a Nemesis followed the Brontes. In February of the following year, she was taken ill. She was with child, and felt weak and miserable and unable to eat. Again one feels

if only her doctors had known more, they could have helped her. They were not really alarmed until it was too late. On March 30th 1855, she died. Her father survived her six years. Her husband, after her father's death, left Haworth for good and settled in Ireland.

Here then, very briefly is the tragic story of the Brontë family. Though it is a tale of defeat and death in many of its aspects, it has about it a victorious quality, which is difficult to describe, but which anyone familiar with the works of these wonderful sisters cannot fail to feel deeply.

Though I have spoken necessarily of all the Brontës, it is Charlotte who is the subject of this talk and it is her personality that I would like to touch upon. Of all the family, she was the one with the highest ambitions, the firmest will to escape from the confines of the village, the greatest ability to make lasting friends of people outside her immediate circle. Anne was pious and pliant. Emily was a solitary and never wanted to be away from her beloved moors, her pets, and the rugged shelter of home. But Charlotte was different..it was her idea to start a school and it was she who opened negotiations for the publication of the first book of poems and later for the novels that she and her sisters wrote. In fact it was she who wrote the first novel.

Let me take up very briefly the writings of Charlotte Brontë. Her poems are conventional, imitative and commonplace. She knew that her sister Emily was a much more gifted poet. *But her novels made her fame. There were four of them.*

1. The Professor...her first novel..posthumously published. A mild description of episodes in Brussels. I re-read it and found it charming.
2. Jane Eyre..Old-fashioned now..Heroine is plain and poor, ~~not~~ rich and beautiful..a fantastic tale..A Cinderella story, but full of excitement and imagination. Jane confesses her love for Rochester before he declares himself. This was revolutionary in 1847
autobiographical as nearly all novels
St. John Rivers...Henry Nussey
Lowood Orphan Asylum...Cowan Bridge
3. Shirley..Less form than Jane The moorland.. beginnings of the industrial revolution... breaking up of machinery...shows the effect of her pause between beginning and finishing the work. *huddles. Shirley well pronounced.*
4. Villette...almost completely autobiographical Brussels...~~M. and Mme Beck are the Hégers.~~ *uneven in quality. May Sinclair considers it her best novel. Constantin Paul Emmanuel is M. Héger the hero of the novel.*

Full aspects of government of class distinctions -

These were her novels. They had many faults. She lacked a sense of humor and her overseriousness made her inclined to preach. Her plots were not well planned.. She was not a true stylist and her grammar was often at fault. Sometimes coincidences are stretched to unbelievable length.

But her excellencies far outweigh her faults. Else why do we better to read her life? Why do we re-read Jane Eyre and Villette and find them interesting and

exciting? She had the gift of a born story teller. She had charm and supreme imagination and she possessed in her small, frail, body a fiery and passionate soul.

We remember certain great scenes in her novels... When Rochester tells Jane he loves her (how unique and unconventional was this courtship); when Lucy Snowe enters the Roman Catholic Church of Ste Gudule to make a confession (an event out of her own experience); when she tells of the miseries Jane suffered in her abominable Lowood Orphanage.

There is a greatdeal I have left out. I could have told you much more about Patrick Brontë ,the father of this remarkable family; about Tabitha,their wonderful Yorkshire servant,who was with them for 20 years and whom they loved; about Arthur Nicholls ,the strange curate whom Charlotte married; about the literary people Charlotte met in London and their own impressions of the author of Jane Eyre...a hundred other details.

But I must content myself by leaving with you instead a picture of Charlotte as the intrepid leader of that wonderful Haworth family. She overcame with courage poverty, obscurity and ^{tragedy} tragedy. She insisted on freedom for the enjoyment of intellectual things. She faced lifewith incomparable fortitude. And while her story is almost unbearably sad, we feel, even after a hundred years,that her books are alive with her unconquerable personality.

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