



The Story of Charlotte Brontë.

BY LIZZIE P. LEWIS.

THE Haworth of to-day is very unlike the Haworth of thirty years ago, the time of which we write, though even now it has its own peculiar characteristics. It is a small manufacturing town, shut in among the hills and moors of Yorkshire, and it is in late summer, when these moors are in bloom, that Haworth is to be seen at its best, a gray hamlet rising out of the heart of an amethyst, fragrant sea.

The father of Charlotte Brontë was minister of this quaint village. He was of humble birth and Irish parentage, his real name being Prunty, which, at the request of the gentleman to whom he was indebted for his education, he changed to the more euphonious one of Brontë. He was a man of rigid character, passionate, self-willed, and habitually cold in manner toward his family. His wife, who was as gentle as he was stern, died in 1821, leaving six little ones, the third of whom was Charlotte, born April 21st, 1816.

After Mrs. Brontë's death, her maiden sister came to take charge of the parsonage and the children, but she had no more sympathy with the feelings and spiritual needs of childhood than the Rev. Patrick Brontë, so, as was to be expected, the children grew up self-contained and old-fashioned, knowing nothing of childish fun or sports. Their great resource in the lonely evening hours was the inventing little plays, taking for their heroes the great political and military characters of the day.

Though mere babes, they took a lively interest in local and foreign politics, reading the newspapers which found their way to the parsonage, with keen avidity.

To show how Charlotte identified herself with what she read, we tell the following story: When but six years old, she read the wonderful allegory of Pilgrim's Progress. It was intensely real to her, and like Christian, she longed to escape from the City of Destruction. The only place of which she had ever heard which seemed to answer the description given of the Celestial City, with its streets of gold, its gates of pearl and its walls of precious stones, was Bradford, whose attractions she had heard the servants discussing in the kitchen. So she set out one morning to seek the Golden City of her dreams. She had scarcely gone a mile, when she came to a part of the road where the overhanging boughs made it so dark, that she fancied it to be the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and afraid to enter, she cowered down by the roadside, where she was shortly after discovered by her nurse.

A school had been started at Cowan's Bridge for the daughters of clergymen of narrow means, and, as the prospectus promised well, thither the two eldest girls, Elizabeth and Maria, were sent. The institution, however, was badly managed, the food insufficient and poor, while many of the rules were most trying to girls of such constitutions as the Brontës, particularly in the half-starved condition in which they were kept during their entire stay. During the latter part of the year, Charlotte and Emily joined their elder sisters at Cowan's Bridge, and the treatment to which Maria Brontë was there subjected entered into Charlotte's soul. Helen Burns in Jane Eyre is an exact transcript of Maria, who, though most lovable in disposition and superior in mind, was constantly in disgrace because of some petty faults, annoying to the teachers in control. In 1825, Maria and Elizabeth died, and Charlotte and Emily were removed from the school because of failing health. In Jane Eyre, we have Charlotte's opinion of this semi-charitable institution, and so graphic was her description of it, that those of its teachers and former pupils who read the novel, instantly identified Lowood with Cowan Bridge.

Soon after her removal from this place, Charlotte was sent to Roehead, a cheerful, roomy, country house, where a school was kept by Miss Wooler. Though not more than twenty miles from Haworth, the country about Roehead, with its softly-curving hills and its warm, green valleys, was as different as if under other skies and in a foreign land. All around Roehead were old manor houses, picturesque, many-gabled, with heavy stone carvings of heraldic legends for ornamentation, once the abode of decayed gentlefolk who had either sold or let them to the prosperous farmers and manufacturers of the district. Each of these houses had its history, sometimes pathetic, more frequently tragic, Roehead itself being able to boast of a ghostly visitant. One of these old dwellings was Oak Hall, the Field Head of Shirley.

At Roehead, Charlotte was as happy as she ever could be away from home, for Miss Wooler's kind nature and the small number of

the pupils made it more like a private family than a boarding school. It was there she formed her close friendship with "Ellen," which ended only with life, and with "Mary and Martha," whom she portrayed afterward as Rose and Jessie York. There too, she found materials which she wove into the story of Shirley, told to her on the very spot where the incidents occurred, and by those who remembered those terrible days of starvation for the poor and insecurity of life and property for mill-owners.

After their education was "finished," the sisters wore away their monotonous life at Haworth, their father so absorbed in his own pursuits as to be unmindful of his children, and their aunt feeling her duty accomplished after seeing they had performed a certain amount of house and needle work. Yet we need not fancy them unhappy. They were accustomed to their father's eccentricities and indifference, and to their aunt's disdain for Yorkshire customs and people. Shy, odd and reserved, they found their pleasure in each other and in their faculty of invention.

Emily, who was next younger than Charlotte, was like her father in character and temperament, but without possessing his *savoir faire*. She had an innate dislike for strangers, and so intense was her reserve, that even in her own family there was something like dread mingled with the affection felt for her. Her great pleasure was to roam over the moors followed by her dogs, to whom she was passionately attached.

Anne, the youngest, was the beauty of the family, and, though intellectually inferior to her sisters, her gentleness won many friends who could not overcome their fear of the forbidding manners of Charlotte and Emily.

The time came when, under the pressure of poverty, Charlotte decided to go out as governess. She was fortunate in her first position, it being with Miss Wooler at Roehead, where she was near her friend "Ellen." But after a while, desiring to establish a school of her own, and knowing how important in such an enterprise was a thorough knowledge of French, she broke away from home and went to Brussels, where she remained two years, first as pupil and afterward as teacher.

During the early part of her stay at the Pensionnat Héger, Charlotte, like other foreigners, attended the great ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church, but she was too acute an observer to be enslaved by sight and sound. After a few months she wrote, "My advice to all Protestants who are tempted to do anything so besotted as turn Catholic, is to walk over the sea to the Continent, attend mass sedulously for a while, and then, if they are still disposed to consider Papistry in any other light than a most feeble piece of humbug, let them turn Papist at once,—that's all! At the same time let me say, there are some Catholics who are as good as any Christians can be to whom the Bible is a sealed book, and much better than many Protestants."

One great consolation to her during her first year was that Emily was with her, and that her friends "Mary" and "Martha" were in Brussels also, so that she could frequently be with them. But the second year, Emily re-



THE ROE HEAD SCHOOL.

turned to Yorkshire, "Martha" died after a brief illness, and "Mary" went home, leaving Charlotte all alone, save for the quiet sleeper in the cemetery just beyond the Porte de Louvain.

Without doubt, her sojourn in Brussels was the turning point in her life. Up to that period, she had been a simple country maid, endowed with wonderful faculties, but hemmed in by narrow experiences and scanty knowledge of life. She learned many things in Brussels, but the greatest lesson of all was that of self-knowledge. Alone that second year, she had to keep all the strongest emotions of nature in her own breast, and in the most vivid passages of Villette we have the revelation of her own heart history, Lucy Snow being, without doubt, the truest picture we possess of the real Charlotte Brontë, some of the strange fortunes which befell this heroine being literal transcripts from the author's own life.

It was a great change from the busy life at Brussels to the colorless life of Haworth Parsonage. But once there, she busied herself with household cares, keeping constantly on the lookout for an opportunity, which never came, of carrying into execution her plan of school-keeping. It was then, when poverty and obscurity seemed her appointed lot, that she took up her pen, and great was her delight when she accidentally discovered that Emily and Anne had been doing the same, in secret.

In 1846, unknown to any friends, the sisters gave to the world a small volume of poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, a book never much read, and now about forgotten. In these poems it is Emily who bears off the palm. Charlotte's verses are poor, and Anne's, though radiant with humility and tenderness, lack the vigor and life which belong to Emily's.

The book was a failure, but undaunted by that, they determined to try prose writing, partly in hopes of gaining money, and partly to relieve their hearts on those topics upon which they had so long brooded in silence. Evening after evening, they sat around the sitting-room table, each working out their own individuality in their weird creations. The stories were finished, *The Professor*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, and sent forth to take their chance in unknown London. The

two latter were accepted and published, the other passed from publisher to publisher, to return at last to the disappointed but not disheartened author.

In this story, not printed till after her death, Charlotte wrote, as she herself said, "*The History of a Man's Life, as Men's Lives Usually Are.*" Her hero was "never to get a shilling he had not earned;" nor was he to marry "a lady of rank or a beautiful girl." As Adam's son, he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment. She was true to these conditions. The story is matter-of-fact and sober, yet it has its beauties and charms. The scene is laid in Brussels; and though quiet and somewhat sad, it has hope and a faith in the final happiness of those who sorrow, shining through its pages, while its end is a scene of rest and peace.

Anne's book was a failure, a mere commonplace story of governess life, uninspired by the passion of artist or creator.

Wuthering Heights, by Emily, is repulsive and ghastly. How a girl of twenty-eight could conceive or write such a book, though proving from first page to last the intellectual force of the author, is passing strange. Although all the characters are powerfully con-

ceived, the one man of force and action, is Heathcliff, who seems only to will to have his decrees executed. Not that he is a great man; he, like the other characters, is actuated by blind fate, and is as helpless and hopeless as the mortals who lie passive in his grasp. The whole gloomy tale is, in its idea, the nearest approach that has been made in our day to the pitiless fatality which is the dominant idea of Greek tragedy.

While the *Professor* was on its journeyings, *Jane Eyre* had been written. In the fall of 1847, it was given to the public, and never was book received with greater admiration or greater censure; though even those who found fault with its free use of great passions and great griefs, had to own themselves enchained by the magician's spell. It was not only its vivid characterization, its startling and brilliant description, its fiery glow and passionate pathos, the novelty of the plot, and the skill of the story; but its profound humanity, its quiet scorn of the conventional accessories of success in fiction, its bold faith in human nature, its perfect freedom from dilettanteism and its tone of religious earnestness, without cant or meanness, which instantly gave *Jane Eyre* that hold of the heart which it would not let go.

No heroine in English fiction, since *Jeannie Deans*, has been so striking; and the great value of the story, in the fiction of the English literature of this century, has been the splendor of its vindication of woman, of woman deprived of all the incidents which generally inveigle interest. The portrait given was of a man's companion, not of a peacock's tail, only fit to be deposited in a corner of his parlor.

There were those, however, who discovered the story to be "improper and immoral, coarse in language, lax in tone;" and one reviewer said, "If we ascribe the book to a woman at all, we have also no alternative, but to ascribe it to one who has for some sufficient cause long forfeited the society of her sex." Think of those words applied to one of the most true, loyal and blameless of women, who from her cradle had led a life of self-forgetfulness and self-abnegation, and of whom Thackeray could



THE "FIELD HEAD" OF SHIRLEY.

say, "A great and holy reverence of right seemed to be with her always."

But the author's sex was unknown even to her publisher, until she heard of a rumor that she had satirized Mr. Thackeray under the character of Rochester, obtruding even on the sorrows of his private life. Then, accompanied by Anne, she hastened to London, where after much difficulty she succeeded in obtaining access to the head of the firm. She was received by him with scant courtesy. "Young woman what can you want with me?"

"Sir, I wrote Jane Eyre!"

"You wrote Jane Eyre!" his annoyance changing suddenly into surprise and overflowing delight.

But she had now other things to think of than literary triumphs. Her brother, who had so long been a grief and burden, died; and then Emily began to decline. Charlotte said, "She never lingered over any task in her life, and she did not linger now." Yet ill as she was, she refused to admit it even to her sisters. They saw her fading and dying, but dared not offer her the attention they desired, and which most invalids crave. Day after day, she refused to take rest or medicine, forcing her trembling hands to accomplish their usual tasks, bearing up till within two hours of her death, when she laid her head on her pillow and died like the heroine of a Greek tragedy, who willingly approaches the altar when her life is required as a sacrifice to fate. "Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave," we are reminded of her own beautiful lines, which there is no loved one left to repeat over the place of her rest:

"Cold in the earth and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?"

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern leaves cover
Thy noble heart, forever, evermore?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers
From these brown hills have melted into spring:
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers,
After such years of change and suffering."

Scarcely had Emily been laid in the grave, before Anne began to droop. Winter passed, and with the first breath of spring came a glimmer of hope. In May, by her own desire, she and Charlotte went to Scarborough on a search for health; but it was only to die, crying out with her last breath, "Take courage, Charlotte, take courage!"

Can we fancy what a home-coming it was to the solitary sister, leaving one behind in the cemetery at Scarborough, and remembering the other was asleep in the old church at Haworth? Yet there was neither morbid gloom nor bitterness in her heart. Bravely and quietly she set to work to show the world what Emily would have been under more fortunate circumstances. In the very room in which the loving trio had worked a year before, she sat in her loneliness and wrote the brilliant story of Shirley, painting Emily as Shirley, and her friend "Ellen" as Caroline Helstone.

Shirley begins at the time when "Orders in Council," forbidding neutral powers to trade with France, had greatly provoked America, and thus cut off the principal market for the Yorkshire woolen trade, bringing it to the verge of ruin, and causing unspeakable distress among the poor in the north of England. Machinery too, was about being introduced, which, greatly reducing the number of hands necessary to be employed, threw thousands out of work, leaving them without any means of support.

Robert Moore, the hero of the story, was a woolen manufacturer, and we find him in the second chapter awaiting the return of his wagons with certain frames for the mill. Moore was only a half Briton. His mother was a Belgian, and he himself had been born on Flemish soil. Trade was his hereditary calling. Once his family had been wealthy, but disastrous speculations had loosened, by degrees, the foundations of their credit; and at last, in the shock of the French Revolution, it had rushed into total ruin. Robert had come to Yorkshire, hoping in time to restore the faded glories of his paternal house; and though he had done all his limited capital allowed, yet the narrowness of that capital sorely galled his spirit. "Forward!" was the device stamped on his soul, and sometimes he rebelled bitterly against the restraints which held him as in a vise.

His wagons returned but empty, save for a badly written and worse spelled note, saying the frames were destroyed, his men bound hand and foot, were lying in Stillboro' ditch, and closing with the assurance that any future attempt to introduce machinery would end even more disastrously.

Moore's house was kept by his sister, Hortense, a thorough Belgian in heart and habits, whose house was her idol, and whose chief occupation was her wordy battles with her servant Sara, who would not wear the high caps, short petticoats and decent sabots Miss Moore thought the only style of dress proper for her class, and who in turn asserted that the Flemish cooking was not fit for human stomachs, saying that "bouillon was no better than greasy warm water, and choucroute was only pig-wash."

The rector of Briarsfield was the Rev. Matthew Helstone, "a conscientious, hard-headed, hard-hand, brave, stern, implacable, faithful little man; a man almost without sympathy, ungentle, prejudiced, rigid; but a man true to principle, honorable, sagacious and sincere." "At heart he could not abide sense in women; he liked to see them as silly, as light-headed, as vain, as open to ridicule as possible; because they were then, in reality, what he held them to be—inferior—toys to play with—to amuse a vacant hour, and to be thrown away."

At his rectory resided his niece, Caroline Helstone, a far-away cousin of the Moores, and who loved Robert. She was in the habit of going to the cottage to perfect her French, and to be inducted by Hortense into the mysteries of lace-work, knitting and elaborate stocking mending, which is done stitch by stitch, so as to exactly imitate the fabric of the stocking. "a weariful" process, but considered by Hor-

tense Moore and her ancestresses for long generations back, as one of the first duties of woman." Our first glimpse of Caroline is when she is spending an evening at the cottage, to be escorted home afterwards in bliss by Robert. She arose next morning in undiminished gladness, and after breakfast made her way to the cottage for her morning lesson in French, hoping to meet Robert, and longing for another taste of the joy of the previous evening. But Robert's greeting in the morning was brief; "it was cousin-like, brother-like, friend-like, anything but lover-like. Rude disappointment; sharp cross!"

"A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanations, a lover feminine can say nothing; if she did, the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterward by the thunderbolt of self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret. Take the matter as you find it; ask no questions; utter no remonstrances; it is your best wisdom. You expected bread, and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyred; do not doubt that your mental stomach, if you have such a thing, is strong as an ostrich's—the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation; close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. Never mind; in time, after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson how to endure without a sob. For the whole remnant of your life, if you survive the test—some, it is said, die under it—you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive. This you are not aware of, perhaps, at the time, and so cannot borrow courage of that hope. Nature, however, is an excellent friend in such cases; sealing the lips, interdicting utterance, commanding a placid dissimulation; a dissimulation often wearing a gay and easy mien, then passing away and leaving a convenient stoicism, not the less fortifying because half-bitter.

"Half-bitter! Is that wrong? No, it should be bitter; bitterness is strength, it is a tonic. Sweet mild force following acute suffering, you find nowhere; to talk of it is a delusion. There may be apathetic exhaustion after the rack; if energy remains, it will be a dangerous energy, deadly when confronted with injustice."

Among the few families with whom Moore had become intimate was that of Mr. Yorke. Mr. Yorke was a thorough Englishman, not a Norman line anywhere. His face was indocile, scornful, sarcastic; that of a man difficult to lead and impossible to drive. His family was one of the first and oldest in the district, his education was good and he was an adept in French and Italian. His manners, when he liked, were those of a finished gentleman of the old school; his conversation, when he pleased, was singularly interesting and original. He liked Moore for several reasons; first, because the young man's foreign English and pure French accent recalled old associa-

tions connected with his traveling days; secondly, because he knew and liked Moore's father, and again, because Moore was a sharp man of business.

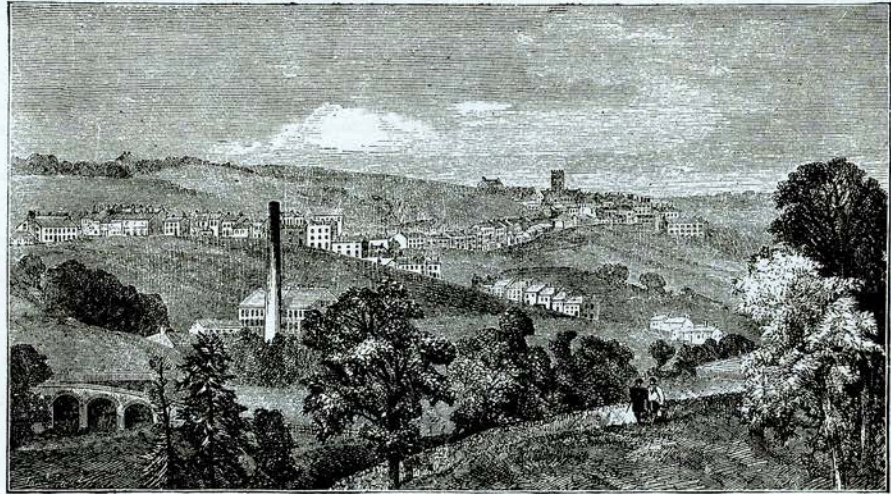
Mrs. Yorke was a good wife, a careful mother, but in her estimation, to be mirthful was to be profane, to be cheerful was to be frivolous. She was a strong-minded woman, who never said a weak or a trite thing, taking stern, democratic views of society, considering herself as right and the rest of the world as wrong. Her main fault was a brooding, eternal suspicion of all men, creeds and parties. This suspicion was a mist before her eyes, a false guide in her paths wherever she looked, wherever she turned.

The children of such a pair could hardly be commonplace beings, nor were they. Rose and Jessie were the girls. Rose was like her father, a granite head copied in ivory, softened in color and line. Her face was not harsh, neither was it pretty; as to the gray eyes, a serious soul lighted them, a spirit which, while partaking of the essence of both father and mother, was one day to be stronger, purer and more aspiring than either. "Rose is a still, sometimes a stubborn girl now" (at twelve years of age); "her mother wants to make of her such a woman as she is herself, a woman of dark and dreary duties, and Rose has a mind full-set, thick sown with the germs of ideas her mother never knew. It is agony to her to have these ideas trampled on and repressed. She has never rebelled yet; but if hard driven, she will rebel one day, and then it will be once for all. Rose loves her father; he does not rule her with a rod of iron; he is good to her. He sometimes fears she will not live, so bright are the sparks of intelligence which at moments glance and gleam in her language. This idea makes him often sadly tender to her.

"He has no idea that little Jessie will die young, she is so gay and chattering—arch, original, even now; passionate when provoked, but most affectionate if caressed; exacting, yet generous, fearless of her mother, for instance, whose irrationally hard and strict rule she has often defied, yet reliant on any who will help her. Jessie, with her little piquant face, is made to be a pet; and her father's pet, accordingly, she is.

"Mr. York, if a magic mirror were now held before you, and if therein were shown you your two daughters, as they will be twenty years from this night, what would you think? The magic mirror is here; you shall learn their destinies—and first, that of your little life, Jessie.

"Do you know this place? No, you never saw it; but do you recognize the nature of these trees, this 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 de-



VILLAGE OF HAWORTH.

fense in many trials; the dying and the watching English girls were alone in a foreign country, and the soil of that country gave Jessy a grave.

Now behold Rose two years later. The crosses and garlands looked strange, but the hills and woods of this landscape look still stranger. This, indeed, is far from England; remote must be the shores which wear that wild, luxuriant aspect. This is some virgin solitude; unknown birds flutter around the skirts of that forest; no European river this, on whose banks Rose sits thinking. The little, quiet Yorkshire girl is a lonely emigrant in some region of the Southern hemisphere."

After a while, Moore and Mr. Helstone had a quarrel over politics, and Mr. Helstone told Caroline she must give up her visits to the cottage, wondering, he remarked, parenthetically, "What noodle first made it the fashion to teach women French; nothing was more improper for them; it was like feeding a rickety child on chalk and water—gruel; Caroline must give it up, and give up her cousins too; they were dangerous people."

Caroline received the order very quietly, partly because nothing met her at the cottage but pain and disappointment, for Robert seemed to have deserted its precincts. Sad now were her days and nights. Her imagination was full of pictures; "scenes where she and Moore had been together; winter fire-side sketches; a glowing landscape of a hot summer afternoon passed with him in the bosom of Nunnely wood; divine vignettes when she had sat at his side in Hollow's copse, listening to the call of the May cuckoo, or sharing the September treasure of nuts and ripe blackberries. But these joys, being hollow, were, ere long, crushed in; the pictures faded, the voice failed, the visionary clasp melted chill from her hand, and where the warm seal of lips had made impress on her forehead, it felt now as if a sleety raindrop had fallen." She exerted herself to help the poor. Yet all her efforts to forget herself in works of mercy and charity brought her neither health of body nor continued peace of mind; with them all she wasted, grew more joyless and wan; her memory kept harping on the name of Robert

Moore; an elegy over the past still rung constantly in her ear; winter seemed conquering her spring; the mind's soil and its treasures were freezing gradually to barren stagnation.

At last the life she led reached the point where it seemed she could bear it no longer. She must seek and find a change somehow, or her heart and head would fail under the pressure which strained them. She longed to leave Briarfield, and go to some distant place, and she had a deep, yearning desire to find her mother, though never had she heard that mother praised. Her uncle regarded her with antipathy; an old servant who had lived with her for a short time after her marriage, spoke of her with chilling reserve. But there was one project which seemed likely to bring her a hope of relief, it was to be a governess.

One morning at breakfast, after a restless night, she inquired of Mr. Helstone:

"Have you any objection, uncle, to my inquiring for a situation in a family?"

Her uncle, ignorant as the table supporting his coffee-cup of all his niece had undergone and was undergoing, scarcely believed his ears.

"What whim now?" he asked. "Are you bewitched? What can you mean?"

"I am not well, and need a change," she said.

He examined her. He discovered she had experienced a change at any rate. Without his being aware of it, the rose had dwindled and faded to a mere snowdrop; bloom had vanished, flesh wasted; she sat before him, drooping, colorless and thin. But for the soft expression of her brown eyes, the delicate lines of her features and the flowing abundance of her hair, she would no longer have possessed a claim to the epithet—pretty.

"What on earth is the matter with you? What is wrong? How are you ailing?"

No answer, only the brown eyes filled, the faintly-tinted lips trembled.

"Look out for a situation, indeed! For what situation are you fit? What have you been doing with yourself? You are not well."

"I should be well if I went from home."

"These women are incomprehensible. They have the strangest knack of startling you with

surprises. To-day you see them bouncing, buxom, red as cherries, round as apples; to-morrow they exhibit themselves as dead weeds, blanched and broken down, and the reason of it all? That's the puzzle. She has her meals, her liberty, a good house to live in and good clothes to wear, as usual; a little while since that sufficed to keep her handsome and cheery, and there she sits now, a poor little pale, puling chit enough.

"There are two guineas to buy a new frock. Run away and amuse yourself."

"What with? My doll?" asked Caroline to herself as she quitted the room.

Not very long after this Mr. Helstone called upon Caroline to go with him to pay a visit of welcome to Miss Keeldar, who had just come of age, and entered upon the possession of an estate in the neighborhood. Very reluctantly did Caroline follow Mr. Helstone up the broad, paved approach leading from the gateway of Fieldhead to its porch, and through the porch in the sombre old vestibule beyond.

"Very sombre it was; long, vast and dark. One latticed window lit it but dimly; the wide old chimney contained no fire, but was filled instead with willow boughs. The gallery on high, opposite the entrance, was seen but in outline, so shadowy became this hall toward its ceiling; carved stag's-heads, with real antlers, looked down grotesquely from the walls. This was neither a grand, nor a comfortable house; within, as without, it was antique, rambling and incommensurable."

"Shirley Keeldar was no ugly heiress; she was agreeable to the eye. She was gracefully made; and her face, too, possessed a charm as well described by the word grace as any other. It was pale naturally, but intelligent and of varied expression. She was not a blonde like Caroline; clear and dark were the characteristics of her aspect as to color; her face and brow were clear, her eyes of the darkest gray; transparent, pure, neutral gray; and her hair of the darkest brown. Her features were distinguished, mobile and speaking; but their changes were not to be understood, nor their language interpreted all at once."

A short time only elapses before Shirley and Caroline become intimate, and in one of their afternoon rambles, they discuss, among other topics, that of marriage, when Shirley says, "I don't think we should trust to what they call passion, at all, Caroline. I believe it is a mere fire of dry sticks, blazing up and vanishing; but we watch him and see him kind to animals, to little children, to poor people. He is kind to us likewise—good, considerate; he does not flatter women, but he is patient with them, and he seems to be easy in their presence, and to find their company genial. He likes them not only for vain and selfish reasons, but as *we* like him—because we like him. Then we observe that he is just—that he always speaks the truth—that he is conscientious. We feel joy and peace when he comes into a room; we feel sadness and trouble when he leaves it. We know that this man has been a kind son, that he is a kind brother; will any one dare to tell me that he will not be a kind husband?"

"My uncle would affirm it unhesitatingly. He will be sick of you in a month, he would

say. But do you know what oracles I would consult?"

"Let me hear."

"Neither man nor woman, elderly nor young; the little Irish beggar that comes barefoot to the door; the bird that in frost and snow pecks at my window for a crumb; the dog that licks my hand and sits beside my knee. We have a black cat and an old dog at the rectory. I know somebody to whose knee that black cat loves to climb; against whose shoulder and cheek it likes to purr. The old dog always comes out of his kennel and wags his tail, and whines affectionately when somebody passes."

"And what does that somebody do?"

"He quietly strokes the cat and lets her sit while he conveniently can, and when he must disturb her by rising, he puts her softly down, and never flings her from him roughly; he always whistles to the dog and gives him a caress."

"Does he? It is not Robert?"

"But it is Robert."

"Handsome fellow!" said Shirley with enthusiasm. "When men *are* good they are the lords of creation; they are the sons of God, moulded in their Maker's image; the minutest spark of His spirit lifts them almost above mortality. Indisputably a great, good, handsome man is the first of created things."

"Above us?"

"I would scorn to contend for empire with him. I would scorn it. Shall my left hand dispute for precedence with my right? Shall my heart quarrel with my pulse? Shall my veins be jealous of the blood which fills them?"

Living with Shirley was a lady who had been her governess. This lady, Mrs. Pryor, was as much disposed to cultivate Caroline's acquaintance as was Shirley. Nothing could be less demonstrative than Mrs. Pryor's friendship; but also nothing could be more vigilant, assiduous and untiring. She was peculiar, and in nothing was her peculiarity more shown than in the nature of the interest she evinced for Caroline. She watched her movements—it seemed as if she would have guarded all her steps; it gave her pleasure to be applied to by Miss Helstone for advice and assistance; and when asked she yielded her aid with such evident enjoyment, that Caroline ere long took delight in depending on her.

The time came when the starving people rose en masse, and went to Moore's mill one dark night, intending to destroy it. But Robert had been forewarned, and was ready to receive them, with the aid of the rector, who had been reconciled to him, the curate and a half dozen soldiers. Moore came off victor in the fight, but deeper feelings of enmity were excited against him. His activity and resolution were shown in the defense of the mill, but he showed still more in the relentless assiduity with which he pursued the leaders of the riot. The mob he let alone; an innate sense of justice told him that men, misled by false counsels and goaded by privation, are not fit objects for vengeance; and that he who would visit on men violent act, on the bent head of suffering, is a tyrant and not a judge. He kept busy, riding hard, and often

in his search for justice, knowing there was constant risk of being shot, yet too phlegmatic to fear.

Meanwhile Shirley had an inroad of visitors; her uncle, aunt, and cousin Sympson, accompanied by Louis Moore, their son's tutor, and brother of Robert and Hortense Moore. Separated somewhat from Miss Keeldar by her fine relatives, Caroline was once more limited to the gray rectory, the solitary morning walk, the long lonely afternoon in the quiet parlor or the garden alcove, where the sun shone bright, yet sad, on the ripening currants and the monthly roses. There she read or sat and mused over the few chances which women had for happiness and profit. Sons in a family are either "in business or professions, they have something to do; their sisters have no earthly employment but housework and sewing; no earthly pleasures but unprofitable visiting; and no hope, in all their life to come, of anything better. This stagnant state of things makes them decline in health; they are never well; and their minds and views shrink to wonderful narrowness. Fathers of England! keep your girls' minds narrow and fettered—they will still be a plague and a care, sometimes a disgrace to you; cultivate them—give them scope and work, and they will be your gayest companions in health; your tenderest nurses in sickness, your most faithful prop in old age."

Toward the middle of the summer, Caroline became really ill. Mrs. Pryor visited her daily, until one morning, finding Caroline visibly worse, she went into the rector's study, where, after being closeted with him a long time, she returned to the sick room, took off her hat and announced her intention of remaining, yet, despite her care, the sick girl grew no better. She wasted like a snow wreath in thaw, like a flower in draught until Miss Keeldar expressed herself to Mr. Helstone with so much energy as to frighten him into sending for a physician, who "delivered a dark saying, of which the future was to solve the mystery, wrote a prescription, pocketed his fee and rode away."

One evening Mrs. Pryor sat by the bed weeping. "I hope it is not for me you weep," said Caroline. "Do you not think I shall get better? I do not feel *very* ill, only weak."

"But your mind Caroline is so crushed; you have been left so desolate."

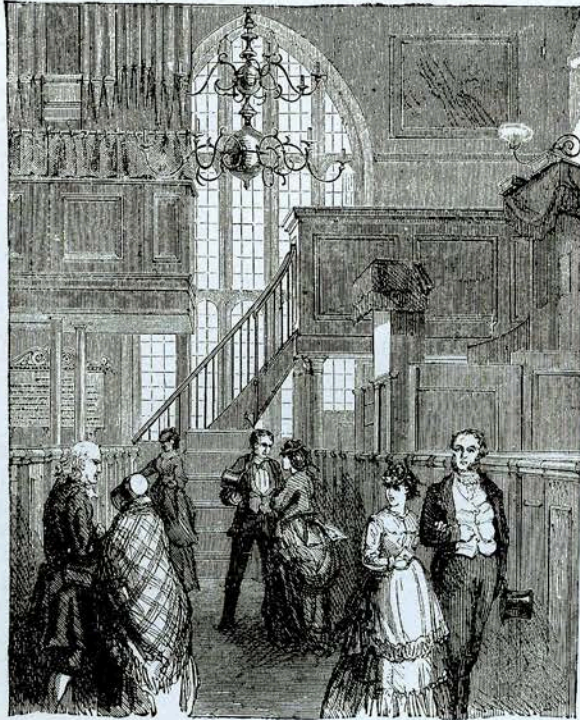
"I believe grief is, and always has been, my worst ailment. I sometimes think, if an abundant gush of happiness came to me, I could revive yet."

"You love me, Caroline?"

"Very much; inexpressibly sometimes; just now I feel as if I could almost grow to your heart."

"Then if you love me," said Mrs. Pryor, speaking quickly, with an altered voice; "if you feel, as if, to use your own words, you could grow to my heart, it will be neither shock nor pain for you to know that *that* heart is the source whence yours was filled; that from *my* veins issued the tide which flows in *yours*; that you are *mine*, my own daughter, my child!"

Explanations ensue, and the mother cradled her long lost child in her arms, rocking her



HAWORTH CHURCH.

softly as if lulling a babe to sleep. "My mother! My own mother!" "The offspring nestled to the parent; that parent feeling the endearment and hearing the appeal, gathered her closer still. She covered her with noiseless kisses and murmured love over her, like a cushat fostering her young."

Caroline wishes her uncle called in, and when he came, she said, "Is it true? Is she really my mother?"

"You won't cry, or turn hysterical, if I say yes?"

"Cry! I'd cry, if you said, No! But give her a name—how do you call her?"

"I call this stout lady in a quaint black dress, who looks young enough to wear much smarter raiment, if she would—I call her Agnes Helstone. She married my brother James, and is his widow."

"And my mother?"

"What a little sceptic it is! She had the trouble of bringing you into the world, at any rate; mind you show your duty to her by quickly getting well and repairing the waste of these cheeks."

"If wishing to get well will help me, I shall not be long sick. This morning I had no reason, and no strength to wish it. Uncle, if you please, you may send me a little bit of supper; anything you like, from your own plate. That is wiser than going into hysterics, is it not?"

"It is spoken like a sage. When women are sensible—and above all, intelligible, I can get on with them. It is only the vague superfine sensations and extremely wire-drawn notions, that put me about. Let a woman ask me to get her an edible, or a wearable—be the same a roc's egg or the breast-plate of Aaron, a share of St. John's locusts and honey, or the leathern girdle about his loins—I can, at least, understand the demand; but when they pine

for they know not what—sympathy, sentiment—some of these indefinite abstractions, I can't do it; I don't know it; I haven't got it." Mr. Helstone went to his supper, but soon returned, bringing a plate in his own consecrated hand. "This is chicken," he said, "but we'll have partridge to-morrow. Lift her up, and put a shawl around her. On my word, I understand nursing. Now, here is the very same little silver fork you used when you first came to the rectory; that strikes me as being what you may call a happy thought, a delicate attention. Take it Cary, and munch away cleverly." Cary did her best. Her uncle frowned to see her powers were so limited; he prophesied, however, great things for the future; and as she praised the morsel he had brought, and smiled gratefully in his face, he stooped over her pillow, kissed her, and said with a broken, rugged

accent: "Good night, bairnie! God bless thee!"

Caroline's youth was of some avail now, as so was her mother's care, and soon the emaciated outlines of her face began to fill, and its color to return. Shirley had been passing some time at the seashore, but when told the news upon her return, she evinced no surprise, saying, indeed, she had long since guessed the truth.

When Caroline was well enough to visit Fieldhead, she was surprised and concerned to see the indifference with which Shirley treated Louis Moore, and to observe that to her he appeared as much a mere teacher, as little a gentleman, as to the Misses Sympton. As to Louis Moore himself, he had the air of

a man used to this life, and who had made up his mind to bear it for a while. One living thing only, besides his crippled pupil, he fondled, and that was the ruffianly Tartar (Shirley's dog), who, sullen to all others, acquired a singular partiality for him; a partiality so marked that, sometimes, when Moore entered the room and sat down to the table unwelcomed, Tartar would rise from his lair at Shirley's feet and betake himself to the taciturn tutor. Once—but once—she noticed the desertion, and holding out her white hand and speaking softly, tried to coax him back. The dog looked, stared and sighed, but disregarded the invitation, settling himself by Moore's side. That gentleman drew the dog's big black-muzzled head on his knee, and smiled to himself.

And now comes the blow so long expected.

Robert Moore is shot one night and taken to Mr. Yorke's house; which was near by. The sight of the fine head prostrate in the dust, was the circumstance to win Mr. Yorke's liveliest sympathy. So, too, the incident was quite to Mrs. Yorke's taste, for she was just the woman who, while rendering miserable the drudging life of a maid-servant, would nurse like a heroine a hospital full of plague patients. She allowed Hortense to stay with him, for they possessed an endless theme of conversation and sympathy in the corrupt propensities of servants.

MacTwok, the surgeon, wished to place a nurse in charge of the patient, but so faithfully did Mrs. Yorke promise to obey his injunctions that he gave in. But one day something went wrong, the bandages were displaced, and loss of blood ensued, so that all night long Death and the surgeons fought for the exhausted frame on the bed. When morning broke, he installed his head nurse, Mrs. Horsfall as chief in the room, before whom Mrs. Yorke and Hortense retreated. At first Moore used to resist her; he hated the sight of her rough bulk, and dreaded the touch of her hard hands. She made no account of his six feet, she turned him in bed as another woman would have turned a babe in



THE PARSONAGE HAWORTH.

the cradle. When he was good she called him, "my dear," and "honey," and when he was bad, she shook him.

Mrs. Pryor and Caroline called to see him, but were rudely repulsed by Mrs. Yorke. One winter afternoon, Martin Yorke was on his way home from school, when a young woman approached him. "You are Martin Yorke, I think?"

"I am Martin."

"Are your father and mother well? (It was lucky she did not say *papa* and *mamma*) and Rose and Jessie?"

"I suppose so."

"My cousin Hortense is still at Briarmins?"

"Oh, yes."

"Does your mother like her?"

"They suit so well about the servants, they can't help liking each other."

"Martin, how is Mr. Moore?"

Martin had heard certain rumors; it struck him it might be amusing to make an experiment.

"Going to die! Nothing can save him. All hope flung overboard."

She put her veil aside. She looked into his eyes, and said: "To die!"

"To die! All along of the women, my mother and the rest; they did something about his bandages that finished everything. They should be arrested, cribbed, tried and brought in for Botany Bay at the least."

The questioner stood motionless, and then moved forward without another word. This was not what Martin had expected, for it was hardly amusing to frighten the girl, if she did not entertain him afterward by some dramatic show of emotion. "He called, Miss Helstone! Are you uneasy about what I said?"

"You know nothing about death, Martin; you are too young for me to talk to concerning such a thing."

"Did you believe me? It's all flummery! Moore eats like three men. They are always making sago or tapioca, or something good for him. I never go into the kitchen but there is a sauceman on the fire, cooking him some dainty."

"Martin! Martin! It is exceedingly wrong of you. You have almost killed me." She stopped, leaned against a tree, trembling, shuddering, and pale as death.

Martin contemplated her with inexpressible curiosity. In one sense, it was as he would have expressed it, "nuts" to him to see this; it told him so much, and he was beginning to have great relish for discovering secrets. In another sense, it reminded him of what he had felt once when he heard a blackbird lamenting for her nestlings which Matthew had crushed with a stone, and that was not a pleasant feeling. Before they separate, however, he convinces her that Moore is really better, and she goes away relieved. When Martin reached home he went into the dining-room where he contemplated a picture of a female head, lovely, but forlorn and desperate.

"She looked like *that*," he said gazing on the sketch, "when she sobbed, turned white, and leaned against the tree. I suppose she

is what they call 'in love!' Yes, in love with that long thing in the next room. Whist! Is that Horsfall clattering him? I wonder he does not yell out! * * * It's queer. Zillah Horsfall is a woman and Caroline Helstone is a woman: individuals of the same species, but not much alike."

Moore now began to regain his strength, amazing Mrs. Horsfall with some fresh act of contumacy every morning, till he sent her away altogether. Then he returned to the cottage, though greatly against Mrs. Yorke's wishes.

December came, and the Symptons were about to leave Fieldhead. The day before their departure, Shirley and Louis Moore were together, when he, after some conversation, said: "We have had a long conversation this morning, but the last word is not yet spoken. * * * Am I to die without you, or live for you?"

"Do as you please; far be it from me to dictate your choice."

"You shall tell me with your own lips whether you will doom me to exile, or call me to hope."

"Die without me if you will. Live for me if you dare."

"I am not afraid of you, my leopardess. I dare live for and with you from this hour till my death."

* * * "Dear Louis, be faithful to me; never leave me. I don't care for life, unless I may pass it at your side." * * *

Shortly after this, Orders in Council were revoked, blockaded forts thrown open, warehouses were lightened, work abounded, and wages rose. Louis and Shirley were to be married, and Caroline was to have been bridesmaid; but fate destined her for another part, for in the marriage notices in the local paper, after that of the heiress of Fieldhead, was an announcement of that of "Robert Gerard Moore and Caroline, niece of Rev. Matthewson Helstone, M.A., rector of Briarfield."

In the autumn of 1851, Vilette was commenced. In this novel, scene after scene is drawn from her own life. Those who knew her well tell us, that "every sentence was wrung from her as though it had been a drop of blood; and it was built up, bit by bit, amid paroxysms of positive anguish, occasioned in part by her own physical weakness and suffering, but still more by the torture through which her mind passed as she depicted scene after scene from the darkest chapter in her own life.

The work dragged slowly on amid sickness of body and weariness of mind, till in October, 1852, she wrote, "It is finished!" Her publishers did not receive Vilette as she had hoped they would; but though she was troubled at finding herself and her work misunderstood, still she neither could nor would alter the story to suit others. Happily, the reading world saw instantly that out of the dull records of humble woes, such a heart history had been created as remains to this day, without a peer in the school of English fiction.

When ending the story of Lucy Snow in

doubt and gloom, Charlotte thought it was not unlike what the close of her own life should be—all hopes withered, all sunshine clouded, all happiness swept away by the bitter blast of Death. But God who is never unmindful of "His own," sent her light and peace at eventide.

In the closing chapter of Shirley we find a reference to a Mr. McCarthy, who had taken the place of the curate Malone. His original was Mr. Nichols, who living for several years at Haworth, had formed a strong attachment to Miss Brontë. When it was made known to her, her heart disposed her to give a favorable answer; but her father, very angry, and unreasonable in his anger, insisted upon a refusal. Mr. Nichols immediately resigned his curacy, at which Mr. Brontë openly exulted, while Charlotte, though believing it her duty to remain with her father, felt her heart racked with pity for the man who loved her.

Mr. Nichols left, and through the autumn and winter, Charlotte kept up bravely, though her father, who watched her with keen eyes, could see how her health and spirits were drooping. Quite suddenly he put aside his objections and became as eager to hasten the marriage, as he had at once been determined to prevent it.

On the 29th of June, 1854, the wedding took place, a neighboring clergyman reading the service, "Ellen" being bridesmaid, and Miss Wooler giving the bride away. Mr. Brontë refusing to go to church at the last moment. After a short bridal tour they returned to Haworth, and it seemed as if joy had come at last as a substantial reality, that painful sense of isolation which had so long oppressed her being utterly absorbed in the sweet sense of dependence on the strong, upright nature of a good man.

Always accustomed to think of others before herself, Charlotte now made her husband her chief thought, giving up to him the hours she had once devoted to reading, study and writing. Mr. Nichols had never had any sympathy with her literary efforts, and felt, indeed, he would rather she should lay aside her pen entirely. To this she submitted with her usual patience, endeavoring to repress for his sake the gift which had been her comfort in her many and deep sorrows.

Before many months she began to sicken. Friends hoped it would not be for long; but as the illness increased, and she daily grew weaker, a deadly fear crept into the hearts of husband and father.

Easter-day, 1855, dawned bleak and cold over the Yorkshire hills to find that the beautiful spirit which had so faithfully served her Lord for thirty-nine years, had that day risen with Him, to keep the holy festival in the Golden City, of which, as a child, she had dreamed.

From the Greek.

If we reach not the height we seek,
We need not blame our fortune dear,
For to our own small selves belongs
The blame of our small sphere.