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## ART. V.—THREE SISTERS.

### I. THEIR LIFE.

IN the autumn of the year 1847, the literary world was startled by the appearance of a novel called "Jane Eyre," which engaged the immediate attention of thoughtful men. It was followed in quick succession by two more works, presumably from the same pen. "Wuthering Heights" and "Agnes Grey," it is true, bore another name on their title-page; but the sagacious critics shook their heads at the author's cunning, and wrongly ascribed the three books to the same hand, that of Mr. Currer Bell.

Three sisters, from a North-country parsonage, had sent out upon the world the offspring of their imagination, under assumed and sexless names. It was not until two out of the trio were beyond the reach of criticism that their secret was discovered to the world, and Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell stood revealed as Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, daughters of the incumbent of Haworth, a small village in the Yorkshire moors.

Death is the revealer of many secrets, jealously guarded so long as life lasts. Once the brave spirit has migrated from earth, we press in upon the sacred ground, which it has perforce left unwatched, and demand as our right to have its life and working revealed to us. So we catch together the scattered threads and take up the tangled skein, to unravel it as best we can.

Few were admitted to any intimacy with the Brontës during their lifetime. The world at large was not sympathetic to them, nor were they anxious to proclaim aloud the secret of their sex and name. It was something of a revelation, when Mrs. Gaskell showed them to the generation who had read their works, as they were; not authors ambitious of fame, but simple, hard-working, self-denying women, whose lives were wrought out chiefly in the shadow, and bound down to earth by a fast chain of circumstances from which they dared not attempt to escape.

> Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat
> Res angusta domi."

Dark and sullen stand the moors above and around the old rectory at Haworth. Undulating hills stretch away into the distance as far as the eye can reach, height succeeding height in endless range. Here and there, the tall chimneys of factories, and the cottages belonging to the scattered villages, intervene; but they form no relief to the universal purple-gray tint which is the characteristic of the landscape, a tint deepened almost into black at certain times and seasons. "Our hills only confess the coming of summer by growing green with young fern and moss in secret little hollows," Charlotte writes. It is a wild and desolate country, one which bade defiance to the approaches of civilization with its utmost strength, for the people have borrowed from the land some of its primitive roughness and forbidding aspect. They are rough and rude, these Yorkshiremen, free and independent, as becomes their wild moorland home, distrustful of strangers. In the early years of the century, the squire and the cottager were not far removed from each other in churlish suspicion and boorish inhospitality. Living apart from their fellows, their lives hemmed in by the hills, which made of each valley a little kingdom to itself, what wonder if the natives of the soil were narrow, surly, jealous for their absolute freedom of action, slow to consort with the outside world?

There are wild stories of wickedness yet told by the fathers of those hill villages, which scarcely date back beyond the century; weird tales of superstition, mingled with cruelty, and stolid indifference to suffering. Roads were few and bad, communication from without almost impossible. A manufacturing population at war with the manufacturers would go almost any lengths; a parish at war with its minister would profane the church itself, place a drunkard in the pews, harry the clergyman and cause him to consider himself fortunate if he escaped with his life out of their hands. Such was the Haworth of seventy years ago, the home of the Brontës.

In judging alike of their life and their works, we have to take account of several influences which operated most powerfully upon them. The wildness of the country and people, which found its chiefest echo in Emily's breast; the stern personality of their father, which dominated their childhood; the inheritance of strong passion and feeling, shaking their very beings to their centre; and finally, the narrow circumstances which held them fettered to one spot, bound fast by the cords of poverty—all claimed their inalienable part in the lives of the sisters.

The Rev. Patrick Brontë was eminently a self-made man. He had risen from a very humble cottage in the North of Ireland, mainly by his own exertions, to be a clergyman and a gentleman, no mean feat in those days, when a university education was difficult to obtain, and in a family where the necessaries of life were anything but abundant. The young man early changed his father's name of Prunty for the Greek surname of Brontë, by which alone he was afterwards known. He was a man of strong passion and unbending will, no fit husband for the gentle little Maria Branwell, who faded away after nine years of married life and disillusion. In an access of pride he would thrust into the fire the little boots given by others to his children, or cut in pieces the silk dress presented to his wife. His anger vented itself in firing pistol-shots at the wood-house door. Yet with all this he was sternly just, and to those who saw him only in his later years, it seemed scarcely possible that there should be truth in the wild stories told of this courteous, white-haired old man, who took so great a pride in his daughters' fame.

There were six children living in 1821, when their mother died, of whom the eldest was Maria, aged seven, and the youngest Anne, aged under two. Upon Maria fell the motherly care of the little family, and well did she fulfil her task. The gentle delicate child was relied upon by the others as though she were a mother indeed. They spent their days in wandering over the moors in perfect freedom, or closeted in the tiny "children's study," fireless alike in summer and winter, poring over any books they could lay hands upon, eagerly devouring the Leeds *Intelligencer* or *Mercury,* as eagerly discussing the news of the political world. They lived a life of their own, entirely apart from their father, who saw them only in the hours when they repeated their lessons to him, and perhaps at breakfast and at supper time they felt the influence of his dominating spirit, and kept out of his way. Maria, the eldest of the little politicians, was already in these early days able to converse with her father on all the leading topics of the day. The children were staunch Tories, admiring above all living men the Duke of Wellington, who finds a place in all their childish talks, in their novels and magazines.

They had learnt to be eminently quiet children. It was of the first necessity that they should not be heard in the house. They learnt, too, to restrain their impulses, to mask their thoughts in the presence of others. When, a year after their mother's death, her sister, Miss Branwell, came to undertake the care of household and of children, it made very little difference. Something more of restraint, it is true, entered into their lives; they lost a part of their freedom. There was sewing to be done and housework to be learnt. Miss Branwell did not understand the needs of childhood. So they hid away the little plays they wrote in the deepest secrecy, and carried on their plans and political discussions under the wing of Tabby, the sour old faithful servant, by the light of the kitchen-fire.

There were never less childlike children. Of toys they had absolutely none; for them childish games did not exist. No children visited the house, nor did they go to visit any playmates. Their simple meals of potatoes sufficed; they had not yet tasted the pangs of hunger. It was not an unhappy childhood. They had each other, and no shadow had as yet fallen across their lives.

The first great event took place in 1824, when, in July, Maria and Elizabeth, and, in September, Charlotte and Emily, were admitted to the school for clergymen's daughters set up by the charity of Mr. Carus Wilson, at Cowan Bridge, in the spring of that year. For the sum of eighteen pounds the little ones were received and educated—the expenses, necessarily exceeding that sum, being defrayed by the subscriptions of charitable persons. The education was good, the food and lodging execrable. Scanty as were the meals in quantity, and ravenous as were the little scholars, they turned away in disgust from the viands set before them. The house, an old, ill-drained succession of cottages, stretched along the banks of a stream on a cold, dreary site. Fires were scarce; the children must be out in all weathers; sit in their soaked clothes during church; cower in the freezing wind without complaint; walk with feet bleeding from the open chilblains upon them.

Maria it was who suffered most acutely. Little Emily was the pet of the school; Charlotte could hold her own; Elizabeth was never in the wrong. But patient, motherly, thoughtful, untidy, and shiftless Maria was a thorn in the side of "Miss Scatcherd," one of the teachers. From her she endured humiliations and unkindness which daily bore down the sensitive spirit. The child was weakly, but Miss Scatcherd had no pity for her. One morning, when a blister had been applied to relieve the pain of her side, Maria, scarcely strong enough to leave her bed, was slowly and feebly beginning to dress, when "Miss Scatcherd" opened the door of her room, noted her slow movements, seized her by the arm on the side sore from the unhealed blister, and spun her into the middle of the floor, with the usual abuse for her untidiness. The girls murmured indignantly; but what could they do? Complaints brought reproof and the disapproval of the trustee and treasurer. They resigned themselves with the helpless hopelessness of childhood.

A stern friend arose to put an end to their troubles. Death stepped in and accomplished what could be wrought by no easier means. In the spring of 1825 a low typhus fever broke out, by which the girls were prostrated one after the other. Maria Brontë, too, got slowly worse, the bad food and intense cold attacking her delicate chest. She was fetched away by her father to die at home. Within a few weeks she was followed by Elizabeth. For them, at least, all trouble was over. Discipline was relaxed at Cowan Bridge. Mrs. Harberton, the kindly matron, had enough on her hands with the nursing of the sick; the doctor insisted on better and more nourishing food; the children were allowed to wander at large in the spring sunshine. Reform set in apace. But before the school was removed to Casterton, Charlotte and Emily had fallen ill, and were taken away by their father. Their first experience of life was not a bright augury of the future.

Charlotte, aged nine, was now the head of the little family, and felt her responsibility. Their home-life was monotonous, but quietly happy. First in the morning came the household work, then lessons with Miss Branwell; the afternoon saw them ranging the moors. Then, after supper, came the delightful time when their aunt had retired to rest and they could talk over their plays, the first of which was established in 1826.

In the summer twilight in the parlour, or in winter round the kitchen-fire, the four children would give free vent to their imagination, gaining thus early a fluency in writing which enabled Charlotte in after years to say that she had passed her novitiate long before she wrote the "Professor." All had an equal share in the political tales which formed a great part of the magazines.

The centre of the family was the red-headed Patrick Branwell. Spoilt by his aunt, indulged by his father, admired and loved by his sisters, the head of all the scapegraces in the village, "'t vicar's Patrick" was greatly beloved by his father's parishioners for his brilliancy and wild spirits. Many a traveller stopping at the Black Bull was entertained by his wit. He did nothing, and learnt nothing; but the scapegrace won all hearts, and raised eager expectations of what he should accomplish in later years—expectations doomed to the most bitter disappointment.

The life of these years was silently fashioning the characters of the children, growing into youth. Charlotte was developing outwardly the sturdy common-sense and the strong will which carried her far towards her purpose. Inwardly her passionate feeling was deepening; her love for the younger sisters, but especially for Emily, was growing more intense. As for Emily, she was day by day cherishing the imagination which inspired her poetry, even making in secret her first poetical flights. Year by year her passion for the wild freedom of the moors was growing with her growth, and striking its roots into the very depths of her being. Liberty!—she claimed it as her life, as a part of herself. None might interfere with the independence of her mind; she was a law to herself. In these days, Emily upon the moors was a bright, frolicsome girl, enlivening the rest with her sallies, yet withal reserved; lavishing her wealth of love upon Anne, yet even from her concealing the recesses of her thoughts. Of gentle Anne there is little to say. Patient, sweet, eminently lovable, the "little one" of the family, she was less strong in character than the two remarkable elder sisters, less fitted even than wild, impetuous Emily to cope with the world.

Charlotte's second experience of school-life was a more successful one. She spent a happy time with Miss Wooler, at Roe Head, in the years 1831 and 1832, and returned home to teach her sisters from her little store of knowledge, having formed, for the first time, friendships with girls of her own age. Steadfast Charlotte! these friendships were to last a lifetime.

The rector's household was very poor. Old Tabby, the one servant, was supplemented by the willing work of the girls; the fare was of the plainest, the dresses to match, and not a penny went out that was not carefully looked to. With Branwell at home, doing nothing, as yet, for all his splendid promise; with Emily and Anne's education terribly deficient, despite Charlotte's most earnest efforts—it was clear that something must be done to make a little money. The "something" resulted in Charlotte going as teacher to Miss Wooler, Emily being enabled to accompany her as a pupil. But here Emily's nature, wild and free, asserted itself. She had been used to the life of liberty at home, free and unrestrained. "Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it she perished," says the sister who loved her more than her own life.

> Every morning when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rested on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me. I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken; her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home; and, with this conviction, obtained her recall. She had only been three months at school.

Alas, strong-willed Emily! not even her iron determination, which could uphold her at her work with unshrinking firmness through her last illness, could avail her now. Only those who know the glories of the moors and hills, their subtle changes, their sweet wild fragrance; who can enter into their varied moods of sweeping storm and almost perfect peace; who have known the unutterable longing amongst other scenes for one breath of moorland air, one glimpse of the heather—can grasp what it was that sapped the strength from Emily's frame and the joy from her heart at Roe Head. The lark dies in captivity. "My sister Emily loved the moors;" and with Emily love was a passion in which her nature poured itself out generously. It emptied itself on the beloved object.

Emily went home to bake and iron, and her place was taken by Anne. The pittance earned by Charlotte was just sufficient to clothe herself and no more; and the girls turned their thoughts seriously to increasing these slender earnings. Already they were familiar with the art of composition, and with trembling hope, Charlotte wrote to Southey to ask his advice. The answer dealt a blow to their aspirations. It was discouraging in the extreme; and for the time all thoughts of writing were put aside.

Then Anne grew delicate. The school had moved to a more open situation on Dewsbury Moor. With the recollection of her sisters' fate burnt in upon her heart, Charlotte took alarm, dreaded the too-bracing air, and procured Anne's recall. She herself struggled on as best she might alone. Fits of despondency came upon her when all looked black; her health failed; she was getting past her prime, she said; she grew nervous; dark thoughts invaded her mind. "If Christian perfection be necessary to salvation, I shall never be saved," she wrote to her dear friend, Ellen Nussey. Hope failed her, too. "I never dare reckon on the enjoyment of a pleasure again," she wrote. Then Tabby had an accident, and the girls insisted on nursing her themselves during the holidays, doing all the housework into the bargain. They "struck" eating until the permission to do it was obtained. But Emily, who had forced herself to take a situation at Halifax, came home worn out with overwork and home-sickness for the Moors. Branwell's plan of working at the Royal Academy had failed. Charlotte *must* struggle on. She did, and broke down. "My health and spirits utterly failed me," she writes, "and the medical man whom I consulted enjoined me, as I valued my life, to go home." Home she went, to receive her first proposal of marriage—and to set it aside.

A great deal of what we know concerning the home-life of the Brontës is gathered from Charlotte's correspondence with her friend Ellen, and from that friend herself. The three girls were as shy as the moor birds, opening out only among those whom they knew most intimately. A strange face would turn them from laughing, joyous creatures, into shrinking, awkward girls, on their guard against the intruder, painfully proud and reserved. Round Haworth they were simply unknown. Even in the village they knew only their special friends among the poor. The curates, young, illiberal, intensely narrow-minded, were no resource. They only drew down upon themselves the indignant sallies of Charlotte, or found Emily skilfully fencing off their proposals from the elder sister.

Yet some of these years must have been the happiest the sisters knew. Emily, timid and shrinking abroad, at home was merry enough—the jester of the family. Clever Branwell, though they half-suspected that he was wild, was still the admired darling. They were inexperienced, they knew little of real life. Secluded from the world, they were happy in their solitude—for, after all, they had each other and the moors.

The little party broke up again. Charlotte and Anne left home to go out as governesses. They were not fortunate. Their attainments were few, their experience small. The governess has a difficult position to fill in any household, one which presupposes tact on her part, with a knowledge of child-life. The Brontës had never been children themselves; they did not understand their little charges. Intensely shy, they resented their dependence, yet could make no effort to improve it. It was a loveless work to them. Charlotte, at least, chafed bitterly against the slights to which she was exposed; Anne accepted them as inevitable. Both were unhappy among strangers and away from home; but poverty demands her sacrifices.

It was in 1839 that an idea, which had been fermenting in Charlotte's mind—Charlotte's was the practical mind of the family—began to take shape. Why not unite forces, stay at home, and set up a school? Here was the turning-point of Charlotte's life. She had come to realize very acutely the confined space in which she lived and breathed. She was ambitious; she saw the urgent necessity of making more than it was possible to do under present circumstances. Plans were canvassed by letter and in the holidays, eagerly, hopefully. What alterations would be needed at Haworth? How much would the starting of the school require? Would Miss Branwell lend the money? How would it be to take the goodwill of the school at Dewsbury Moor, from which Miss Wooler was retiring? For two years the scheme was revolved and viewed from all sides. It would not do to embark the money, lent by their aunt, upon an unsuccessful undertaking. Charlotte decided that they were not yet sufficiently learned themselves to be able to offer adequate advantages to others. The wild bird, too, was longing to set off, to try her wings, to make a longer flight than had yet been possible. So it was settled that she and Emily should go to school at Brussels, recalling Anne from her situation to take charge of the home. It was a time of hope. The world lay before them; and Branwell, after beginning life as a portrait-painter and an usher, had settled down as station-master on the Leeds and Manchester railway. There was much to encourage them.

The life on which they had entered was a strange one for girls of their stamp. Alone in Brussels, without friends, except for two English girls, Mary and Martha Taylor, who were old schoolfellows, they were still, at the ages of twenty-five and twenty-three respectively, in a state of pupilage. Always sternly Protestant, not in religion alone, they clung to each other and stood apart from the mutinous band of foreigners, opposed to them alike in faith and in character. They had come to Brussels to learn, and learn they would with might and main. M. Héger, their master, recognised that, in dealing with these English girls, he was dealing with something different from the ordinary class of his Belgian pupils, whose learning was a matter of difficulty, entailing the least possible exercise of intellect on the part of the pupil, and the greatest exertions on the part of the master.

Emily, M. Héger judged to be the stronger mind of the sisters. She had a power of logic unusual in a woman, a strong will to carry her through all obstacles—the mind of an historian, with the deductive reasoning of a great navigator. Those who saw her and Charlotte in those days, passed by the unselfish, yielding elder sister, willing to be taught, eager to obey; and took note rather of the tall, self-willed genius, who stood out in stern protest against the evils of Romanism, who rebelled against her master, who emphasized in every way the difference between herself and those around her. Upon Emily, the year passed at Brussels made virtually no impression. She had come there to learn, and she slaved at her learning; otherwise, the year might have been a blank, so far as she was concerned. All the receptive faculties of her nature were closed, observation was suspended. The everyday life which Charlotte noted and treasured was as nothing to her; she passed it proudly by, suffering intensely from it while she despised it. Her powers were taxed to their utmost in all directions. She was an insatiable learner, she gave lessons herself; and the deadly home-sickness was tugging day by day at her heart-strings. It was kept down resolutely by the iron will which scorned to give way a second time; but it left its traces indelibly scored on the strong heart.

The sisters were recalled suddenly by news of Miss Branwell's serious illness, and arrived at Haworth only to find that all was over, and their father and Anne sitting in the desolate house, after the funeral. Emily stayed at home, Anne sought another situation, and Charlotte returned to Brussels, no more as a pupil but as a teacher, with a salary of £16 per annum.

In returning to Brussels, Charlotte constantly reproached herself with having yielded to a great temptation and failed grievously in her duty. The bird had found its wings and would try another flight. Her horizon had widened; she thirsted for the fruits of knowledge which a longer stay in Brussels would secure to her. French had been mastered, German must be mastered too.

The temptation was yielded to, the retribution followed close upon the fault. Brussels was now a very different place to her. Emily was no longer at hand to share her every thought, Mary Taylor had left the town, Martha slept in the little cemetery without the walls. She was to feel, as she had never felt it before, the full meaning of the word "loneliness." Ill health assailed her, solitude in the crowd preyed upon her spirits, the long holidays spent alone in the deserted house unnerved her. In the day she haunted the streets, striving to escape from herself. By night, dark thoughts of evil at home oppressed her. When school re-opened she tendered her resignation. It was not accepted. M. Héger, the despotic master, would not hear of it; the disinterested friend disapproved. She took up her burden once more, and worked on. But not for long. She no longer got on well with Madame Héger; there was trouble at Haworth; Branwell was unsatisfactory; her father's sight was failing. She came home.

Her life had begun in good earnest. Brussels, the experiences, the daily round, the suffering, the loneliness, had formed the woman's character. She had longed to know something of life, that bright happy thing which loomed out in a long vista before her, behind a closed door. The door had been flung wide, she had entered. Disillusion and disappointment had met her on every side:

> Something in me, which used to be enthusiasm, is tamed down and broken. I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion —a stake in life. Haworth seems such a lonely, quiet spot, buried away from the world. I no longer regard myself as young—indeed, I shall soon be twenty-eight.

Active exertion—they attempted it; issued prospectuses for their school; prepared for scholars. Nothing came of it, and it was well. The clouds were gathering fast; Branwell was growing worse and worse. He had been dismissed from his situation on the railway for gross negligence and intemperance. He had found another in the house where gentle Anne was teaching. Day by day she suffered, as suspicions horrible to her pure soul were forced upon her. Matters culminated at last. Branwell was driven forth by the employer he had grossly wronged, to embitter the home-life of the sisters who had cherished him so fondly. They were thankful that the project of a school had failed now. How could young girls be brought into the house while Branwell was a tenant of it? He sought refuge from the passions which tormented him now in opium, now in drink. He had broken Anne's heart, and crushed her life. He returned to wear out Emily's strength, and blast their hopeful prospects.

Charlotte met him with all her love turned into disgust; Emily, with the strong, patient affection which belongs rather to a mother than a sister. Their days were painful, their nights a terror. The wretched drunkard must be rescued from the fire his candle had caused; or the sisters would start up in the night listening for the pistol-shot which they feared must end their father's life, in whose room Branwell slept. Added to it all, Mr. Brontë was rapidly becoming blind.

What could be done? The sisters published a volume of poems, which was a failure. They each wrote a novel; their novels were rejected. Charlotte took her father to Manchester to undergo an operation, the whole responsibility resting on her shoulders. It was successful. They returned to their miserable home. Emily and Anne's novels were published, and fell to the ground. Charlotte must make a fresh effort. "Jane Eyre" was written, sent up to London, accepted, brought out, and succeeded. A glimmer of light showed through the clouds. Charlotte and Anne made a journey to London to establish the fact that the three Bells were not one and the same person. They saw something of the life in the great city. Charlotte began a fresh novel. Something in the midst of their shame and distress was yet left to work for.

Branwell's health declined rapidly. His constitution, shattered by excess, gave way. He died on the 24th of September, 1848, standing erect to meet the enemy. "Till the last hour comes," writes Charlotte, "we never know how much we can forgive, pity, regret a near relative. All his vices were and are nothing now. We remember only his woes." The strain on the little household was relaxed, yet they were filled with bitter regret. The idol had long ago fallen from his pedestal; yet they loved him still. Emily, the patient watcher, the strong controller, failed when the tension slackened. She never left the house after Branwell's death. Day by day the sisters, who loved her with an intensity of love, watched her sinking, yet dared not stretch out a finger to help. Such was Emily's will. "The awful point was, that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hand, the unnerved limbs, the fading eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health." No; she would rule herself to the last, be strong, self-reliant to the end. No doctor should come near her. No one should assist her. She rose and dressed herself on a Tuesday in December, slowly and painfully; she toiled relentlessly at her sewing. In two hours she had passed away. Alas for brave, impetuous Emily! "She died in a time of promise;" but she died a failure. None mourned her more faithfully than the fierce old mastiff whom her iron will had mastered.

Anne, on whom Emily's great love had been poured out, sickened in her turn. Hoping against hope, this last dearly-loved sister was taken to Scarborough; anything to keep the last one, the little one. But she was beyond help. Gently, resignedly, fearlessly, she met death. "I am not afraid to die," she said. On May 28th, 1849, her gentle soul passed into God's hands. The world had been too hard for her.

"Take courage, Charlotte; take courage," were Anne's dying words of comfort, sorely needed in the years to come by the lonely sister. She had seen those whom she loved most pass out of reach. She returned to a lonely home crowded with the ghosts of thoughts and hopes now past, to crush down as best she might the memories which must rush ever in upon her solitary life.

> My life is what I expected it to be. Sometimes when I wake in the morning and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing are to be almost my sole companions all day through, that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will long keep me sleepless, that next morning I shall wake to them again—sometimes I have a heavy heart of it.

Old Mr. Brontë needed constant and sometimes wearying care. He demanded much. Yet he was no comfort to his daughter. She dared not confide to him her weakness, her failing strength, her nervousness, for he easily took alarm, and by his over-anxiety intensified her suffering. Her solitude at home was complete. The postman's advent was the one event of her monotonous day. This was the one thread which bound her to the outer world and the active life for which she had so ardently longed, but which she must do without. "*Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren,*" was written across that dreary round of monotony which drove her down ever deeper, as her physical strength flagged and her brave spirit failed. Weak eyesight was added to her other troubles. The fear struck home that she might become "a stern, hard, selfish woman" in her desolation.

During these dark days she struggled through her books "Shirley" and "Villette." Some brightness was not wanting. There were happier times, when her friend came to cheer her; there was the excitement of her visits to London, where, when her personality became known, she made the acquaintance of such men and women as Thackeray, Sir David Brewster, Miss Martineau, and Mrs. Gaskell. An opening had come to her at last, too late. At rare intervals she would visit her friends.

A sudden sense of joys yet possible in the future broke upon her in the year 1852. Mr. Nicholls, her father's curate, who had for years cherished a deep love for her, declared his love. But Mr. Brontë would have none of it. Mr. Nicholls was driven from the parish, and Charlotte, for a time, from her home, through the insults heaped upon this noble heart by her father in his passion. She returned with a promise that her father should stand first with her, and took up again, uncomplainingly, the duties of her dreary life. Selfish as he was, Mr. Brontë could not but see for himself that this trouble was wearing Charlotte's spirit and sapping her strength. He yielded. Mr. Nicholls was recalled. They were married on the 29th of June, 1854.

She was admitted for the first time in her life to taste the full cup of happiness, after the struggles of thirty-eight years had proved her worthy. Then, a nine-months' wife, she died —the last of the sisters.

England and America mourned a great genius departed. But in Haworth Parsonage sat two desolate men, weeping the loss of a tender wife and a devoted daughter, who, through health and sickness, in trial and in sunshine, had ministered faithfully in the narrow world around her. For them, not Currer Bell but Charlotte Brontë had passed away, the womanly woman in whose life theirs was bound up—who had striven through years of sadness, and a life of many shadows, simply to do her duty and trust God for the rest.

ALBINIA BRODRICK.

## ART. VI.—NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT COMMEMORATED.—SILAS.

THE history of Silas, so far as it is recorded, is comprised in a small compass. It lies chiefly within the limits of St. Paul's second missionary journey. Silas, or Silvanus as he is sometimes called,[1] is first mentioned as one of those who were chosen by the Church at Jerusalem to convey to Antioch its decision on the question, which had been referred to it, as to the necessity of circumcising Gentile converts. He is then spoken of as a "chief man among the brethren;"[2] and is described as a "prophet," or inspired teacher, who in the exercise of his gift of prophecy would be able,[3] as, indeed, he proved to be,[4] to explain

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[1] Silas always in the Acts; Silvanus in the Epistles; 2 Cor. i. 19; 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; 1 Peter v. 12. That they are two forms of the same name is generally admitted.

[2] Acts xv. 22. Dean Alford points out that this expression, which it is impossible for so modest a man as the writer of the Acts to have used of himself, is of itself sufficient to disprove the identity of Silas and Luke.

[3] Ver. 27.

[4] Ver. 32.