

CHARLOTTE BRONTE AND JEAN INGELOW AS NOVELISTS.

A LIFE full of variety and change of scene, though conducive to intellectual vigor, is not wholly necessary thereto. Both Charlotte Bronte and Jean Ingelow passed the greater part of their lives in obscurity, uneventful quiet, perhaps dullness. Charlotte Bronte at least, according to her biographer, Mrs. Gaskell, could not have passed more monotonous days, or a more retired and isolated existence.

But yet both are women of genius, and consequently of power. Charlotte Bronte as a novel writer is probably the most gifted of her age. Her book presents a symmetry of construction, a harmony throughout, a purpose towards which the whole course of the story bends—not a page but means something when viewed in the light of the large plot.

Jean Ingelow's books, from the beginning to the end, are full of interest to the reader: here, appealing to his highest nature; there calling forth his sympathies, and rousing his sensibilities to the utmost. But viewed as an artistic performance how jagged! how lacking in roundness, in perfection. Good in every minutiae, but as a whole falling apart like a rope of sand.

If Charlotte Bronte has a fault in her delineation of character, it is that of dogmatism. She goes to nature for her models, but instead of being scrupulously true to that exemplar, she allows her preconceived ideas to govern too much the reality. Thus, while *Shirley* is almost a girl one might meet, she is a shade too beautiful, a fault too grand, except as she might appear in a lover's eyes. *Robert* and *Louis Moore* are almost too much alike to be two distinct men, even brothers, yet the writer insists on a wide difference between them. *Rochester* cannot be found fault with in this respect; his weakness lies in a taste for the homely, a quality not frequently found in Charlotte Bronte's heroes.

Jean Ingelow's characters, on the contrary, are rather beyond her control. She who created them cannot compass them, does not quite know what to make of them, is never quite sure what they may do, to what lengths they may run, or what extra-

vagance they may commit. *Tom Graham* especially illustrates this vagary in the writer. His childhood and manhood fail to match in the smallest particular. He also presents the anomaly of a man, possessing a mind well furnished, apparently unusually cultivated, and yet remaining low and coarse. The reader receives an impression of the kind of person *Brandon* is rather from acquaintance with admirable qualities in real persons and a suggestion of analogy, than from description or direct revelation by the author. *Doralhea* and *Brandon*, as the reader catches a glimpse of them in "Fated to be Free," have almost become strangers to the writer herself; at least her manner with them is decidedly shy. This indefiniteness, almost mysteriousness, in her writing, constitutes at once its charm and its defect.

In Charlotte Bronte there is the power of conscious possession. In Jean Ingelow the power that lies in a clear sight of what is beyond, and a constant outreaching towards it. Charlotte Bronte stands above and looks down complacently and all comprehendingly on her subjects, as their creator might do. Jean Ingelow writes more as if she herself were in each one the soul, and, soul-like, cannot fathom her own capacity. Charlotte Bronte is art perfected; Jean Ingelow is nature unfettered.

Charlotte Bronte, in her paucity of circumstances and evident limitation of means, reveals the grandeur of making so much interest of so little matter; while Jean Ingelow, out of her wealth of resource, only masters the difficulty of selecting and adjusting. Charlotte Bronte, while true and pure and healthy in her tone, lacks the deeper spiritual vision that Jean Ingelow betrays here and there in her works, though scarcely one sentence might be construed into having a religious bearing.

Such novels have a mission like that of music; they elevate, cultivate and strengthen, while used as a recreation from severe mental or physical toil.

THE total number of the Hebrew race to-day is about what it was in the days of King David, between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000.