

was equally unsuccessful. At length chance threw it in our way, bound up with the "Professor" and including some supplementary selections from the unpublished poems of Emily and Anne, compiled by Charlotte after her sisters' deaths. In the preface she says: "I have then culled from the mass only a little poem here and there. The whole makes but a tiny nosegay, and the color and perfume of the flowers are not such as fit them for festal uses."

The story of the Brontë sisters, these "children of the mist and cloudland," as one reviewer calls them, is familiar now to every reader of modern English literature. The mystery that for a time shrouded the names, the lives, the birthplace, even the sex of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, has been cleared away, the veil has been lifted, the curtain drawn, and we can now look with ever-wondering gaze into the very heart of their home life, can follow them out into the world, can learn of them what is the bitterness of the lot of the English "private governess," "who"—we quote Charlotte's own words—"has no existence, is not considered as a living rational being, except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil."\*

We can cross with them to "sunny climes beyond the sea," to the "strange foreign town, æstir and crowded, where Charlotte and Emily first, and afterwards Charlotte alone, hungering and thirsting for the knowledge that Haworth Parsonage, with its loved but at times irksome seclusion, or the slave-life of the governess could never give, braved with indomitable will the life of

exile from their "beloved home, and the dear moors beyond;" and where, though with Emily, the "same suffering and conflict ensued, heightened by the strong recoil of her upright heretic and English spirit from the gentle Jesuitry of the foreign and Romish system," there were nevertheless compensations for both, and especially for Charlotte, in the congenial round of study, and the highly intellectual method of its pursuit, adopted in their case by M. Héger.

We can return with them to Haworth Parsonage, and behold their "prospects wither and their hopes grow dark," through years of sorrowful endurance, or of wrestling with fate, as Jacob wrestled with the angel! We can see them "bearing all things:" disappointment, the failure of high hopes, domestic affliction, sharpened to agony in minds severely pure as theirs by the consciousness of a brother's shame; the father blind for a time, and threatened with total loss of sight, their poems unsuccessful, their prose works begging at the doors of obdurate publishers, and one of them, Charlotte's "Professor," since published posthumously by Messrs. Smith & Elder, coming back eventually, *refused*. We can see them amid these and other trials exhibiting to our gaze an example of fortitude, of heroism, and of enduring patience that is simply wonderful. Truly there were times when the flesh failed, and mortal weakness succumbed temporarily to the intolerable strain laid upon it, but the "spirit" was always "willing," and again and again unflinching it emerged to the combat, and again and again we behold it triumphing openly. The

"Task that a giant's strength might strain,  
To suffer long and ne'er repine,  
Be calm in frenzy, smile at pain,"

of which Charlotte writes in her poem of *Mementos*, was learned by heart by each one of the three sisters, and acted out in her individual life.

\* We learn that two at least of the employers of the Misses Brontë were honorable exceptions to the tyranny or heartless indifference of their class. Anne in writing home of one of them, expresses herself as very well satisfied, and says that "Mrs.—is extremely kind," and Charlotte in her last situation, "esteemed herself fortunate in becoming a member of a kind-hearted and friendly household." See Mrs. Gaskell.