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HOME JOURNAL



Life, Literature and Education

CHARLOTTE BRONTE.

Charlotte Bronte's works are the autobiography of an unhappy life whose every element added to the general gloom. Her mother died when Charlotte was five years old leaving six little children; the two oldest girls died of illness brought on at school; the only boy of the family contracted vicious habits, became an opium eater and drunkard and brought no comfort but only shame to his sisters.

With the idea of starting a school of their own, Charlotte and Emily (her sister and a remarkably clever girl in spite of many peculiarities) went to Brussels to perfect their knowledge of languages. They entered a school kept by M. Héger and his wife.

Here occurred the decisive tragedy in a tragic life. The agony of a love unexpressed and unrequited was raised above the constant dull ache of existence. M. Héger with his enthusiasm, his kindliness, his accomplishments, was a type of man never before encountered by Charlotte Bronte, and a steadily increasing affection and admiration for him sprang up in her heart. Friendship, arising from pity for her

protests and won a public which it has never lost.

Miss Bronte had kept her identity a secret from even her publishers and the many conjectures as to the author of the much discussed book were not satisfied until some time after the success of the book was assured. Then the publication of Shirley revealed the secret of the authorship, for in it nearly every character was a Yorkshire friend, Shirley being her sister Emily, and Louis Moore, her former tutor M. Héger. Vilette, her last completed story is a further account of her life in Brussels and the finest of her work. "Its picture of love, its romance, its poetry, its sarcasm, and occasional playfulness captivated the world."

But this constant living among memories in order to stifle the pain of her present surroundings could not but have its effect on her spirits. Her marriage with her father's curate, Mr. Nicholls brought a measure of comfort and peace to her, but the gleam was short-lived dying out with her life in less than a year after their marriage.

RAIN.

This is an autumn evening wet and wild. There is only one cloud in the sky, but it curtains it from pole to pole. The wind cannot rest; it hurries sobbing over hills of sullen outline, colourless with twilight and mist. Rain has beat all day on that church tower: it rises dark from the stony enclosure of its graveyard: the nettles, the long grass, and the tombs all drip with wet. This evening reminds me too forcibly of another evening some years ago: a howling rainy autumn evening too—when certain who had that day performed a pilgrimage to a grave new made in a heretic cemetery, sat near the wood fire on the hearth of a foreign dwelling. They were merry and social but they each knew that a gap never to be filled had been made in their circle. They knew they had lost something whose absence could never be quite atoned for so long as they lived; and they knew that heavy falling rain was soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling and that the sad sighing gale was mourning above her buried head.

—From Shirley.

PRIZE ESSAYS.

The school pupils of Strathcona electoral district awarded prizes in the competition for best essays on the wheat plant are:—

1st Jessie Holbrook, Mill Creek school.
2nd Harkin Govenlock, Oliver school.
3rd Lilian Bishop, East Edmonton school.

STONEV PLAIN.

1st Conrad Spady, Glory Hills school.
2nd Henry Gablehouse, Glory Hills school.

STURGEON.

1st Worthy Putman, Excelsior school.
2nd Grace Bland, Excelsior school.
3rd Edith Frazier, Belmont school.
The sweepstakes prize of a set of books for the best essay in the four electoral districts was won by Miss Jessie Holbrook of Mill Creek school.

The prizes for the best drawings of a stook of wheat were won by the following, in each of the above mentioned electoral districts.

STRATHCONA.

1st Eva Sheppard, East Edmonton.

and Harriet Inkster, East Edmonton.
3rd May Duguid, Clover Bar.

STURGEON.

1st C. Kirkness, Belmont.
2nd W. Gantly, Belmont.
3rd Grace Bland, Excelsior.

The sweepstake prize for the best drawing in all the electoral districts was won by Eva Sheppard, of East Edmonton.

FAITH'S STAIRWAYS.

Long years ago, on a day of thick fog and pouring rain, I ascended a mountain by an old bridle-path over the slippery rocks. A weary, disappointed company we were when we reached the cabin on the summit. But towards evening a mighty wind swept away the bank of mist, the body of the blue heavens stood out in its clearness, and before us was revealed the magnificent landscape stretching away to the sea. That scene was at the time, and has been since, a sermon to my soul. It taught me that faith's stairways are ever steep and slippery rocks, often through blinding storms; but God never loses His hold on us, and if we can endure to the end, he will yet bring us out into the clear shining after rain. So it's better to hope, though the clouds

run low,
And to keep the eye still lifted;
For the clear blue sky will soon peep through
When the thunder cloud is rifted.

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

CAN WE BE SURE OF GOD?

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him; If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—St. John viii.; 31, 32.

"They must upward still and onward, Who would keep abreast of Truth."

"What is truth?" said Pilate, and that is the question men are everywhere asking to-day. Someone has declared that the symbol of this age is an interrogation point. It is not enough to tell intelligent men and women that the Bible says so-and-so, for the Bible itself is on trial; it is being tested and minutely examined, weighed in the balances by learned scholars—will it stand the ordeal? Shall we join the ranks of those who say that God's Word is above man's criticism? Are we afraid that it will not come out of the furnace as gold tried in the fire, but will be destroyed as chaff that is burnt with fire? Let us venture to look this burning question of the present day squarely in the face, it will surely force itself on our attention before long. Anything that is true will bear the closest scrutiny; in fact it courts inquiry, and the more light that can be brought to bear on it the better. Anything that is not true will surely be exposed sooner or later—the sooner the better. Let us never fear to bring our faith to the light; if we shrink from the light, then it is very plain that we have little faith in the truth of the faith we profess. It is well that we should know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed. In these days it is not enough to say, "The Bible must be true because my mother taught me to believe in it." A child naturally accepts his mother's statements confiding-

ly, but a man must have stronger grounds for his faith than that. It is folly to shut one's eyes to the results of modern Biblical research, to say obstinately, "I will not listen to a word the higher critics are saying; I will hold the opinions I have always held without examining them at all." That was the plan adopted by Saul of Tarsus, when he zealously and conscientiously tried to crush out what he considered to be a heresy, without taking any trouble to examine its claims. Though he acted conscientiously, his position was a very narrow and mistaken one.

Now I don't profess to believe in the higher criticism, but neither do I venture to condemn a movement which has enlisted on its side so many good and learned men. Let them find out all they can about the Bible, and the world will be enriched by their hard study and patient researches. But let us not fear that the ark of God can be shaken.

"The Scripture cannot be broken," says our Lord and it has already endured many dangers and weathered many storms. Gamaliel's advice is, I think, very sensible: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

We say that the Bible is the "inspired Word of God," but do we all mean the same thing by that statement? One man says: "I believe that the Bible is an infallible book, and that every word in it is absolutely true." One might think that the sixty or more books which we find bound together for our convenience had dropped down from heaven, ready printed for our benefit in the English language. But, as a matter of fact, we have more than one English version—I have two at my own elbow now, with a third version of the Psalms. These differ considerably, and they have been translated from old MSS. which differ even more. If we can only believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God by accepting the literal inspiration of each word, then which of these many versions are we to believe word for word?

Is our faith in the inspired record of the Creation any less strong because the rocks, which do not lie, have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the world was not created in six of our short days? If we could go back to that belief, how cramped and poor it would be, as compared with the grand sweep of God's Great Days. So also we may accept the deep spiritual reality of the story of the Fall, without feeling quite sure that Eve talked to a literal serpent or picked fruit off a literal tree. In fact, it comes home to us with far more force, if accepted spiritually, for we know the sad consequences of listening to the old Serpent's subtle temptations, and plucking the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We too, can understand that the punishment for sin is banishment from a happy Garden of Eden, a garden of innocent pleasure from which sin shuts us out.

If not from our own experience, at least we have the overwhelming testimony of a great multitude, which no man can number, that the Bible has proved itself, and is continually proving itself, the "Word of God." This it does



CHARLOTTE BRONTE.