

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S BIRTH-PLACE.

BY GEORGIANA M. CRAIK.

WE were in the North of Ireland, and about to start for London, in the spring of 1857, when, soon after it was published for the first time, we read Mrs. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Brontë." The book had been eagerly looked for by us, and when it arrived we read it with the deepest interest. It was a biography that took possession of us; for days, as it passed from one of us to another, we talked of little else but the pathetic story of that wonderful household amongst the Yorkshire moors.

One day, at last, one of us said, "Suppose we were to go and see Haworth on our way to London?"

It was a happy proposition, that seemed to fit in with everybody's desire. We seized the idea with delight, and in a very short time we had resolved to make out the little expedition, and had arranged our route. We could only manage to spend one day in the place, and as we all wanted, if possible, to see Mr. Brontë, this single day, we agreed, had better be a Sunday. To enable us to reach Haworth on Saturday evening we therefore set out upon our journey—four of us in number—F., A., M., and I—on a Friday evening (it was the 29th of May, the evening of a glorious summer day), in the steamer to Morecambe from Belfast.

Early on Saturday morning we reached Morecambe, and thence, after a pause of some hours, we went on by Lancaster to Keighley. It was five in the afternoon when we arrived at Keighley, the nearest station to Haworth; and here, after having booked our luggage at the station to await our return next day, we made our way to the best-looking inn that we could find; very tired and hot and hungry, for we had spent a good while in wandering about Lancaster under a burning sun.

We were now between three and four miles from Haworth, and we had to trust to our feet, which were already tolerably weary, for making out the remainder of our journey. In addition to fatigue, also, M. was unfortu-

nately by this time ill with a violent headache, and we were, further, labouring under some half-acknowledged anxiety as to the nature of the accommodation that we might find at Haworth when we finally reached it; for though we were well aware of the existence of an inn in the place—the "Black Bull," poor Branwell Brontë's inn—for anything we knew it might be the smallest of hostelrys, quite incapable of supplying us with the three bedrooms we needed. As we sat in the hotel at Keighley, waiting hungrily and wearily for the meal that was curiously long in coming, anticipations of the manner in which we might be called upon to pass the night began to press rather seriously upon us.

"It is a very wild expedition, I am afraid," F. said, shaking his head with gloomy forebodings; and the other three of us were too ill or too hungry to make any very effective attempt at consolation.

By the time, however, that we had been refreshed by food (and very excellent, when at length it appeared, was the meal that we were given—served to us, too, in a homely, old-fashioned, sunny room, which has left an impression on my memory ever since as of the pleasantest hotel-room I ever saw), our spirits rose once more. The evening was so beautiful that with our hunger appeased, perhaps even the prospect of a night upon the moors did not seem altogether alarming to us. At any rate, at half-past seven o'clock, we started on our walk to Haworth—doubtful though we were as to what was to become of us at the end of it—full of energy and eager anticipation.

From this point I copy from my journal, written at the time.

"It was the walk that the three Brontë girls used to take so often. It is nearly four miles; a road closed in for the most part on the left hand, sometimes by houses or mills, sometimes by high banks or low hills, but on the right open in length and breadth for miles—a long, wide, verdant valley, rising up with a splendid sweep into high moors.