

The Brontë Th(under)er

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THE TRUTH ABOUT LOWOOD SCHOOL

Chester Porter

I was intrigued by the controversy about the fictitious school in *Jane Eyre* and the real school to which Charlotte Brontë went as a pupil – Cowan Bridge. The fictitious school was financed and controlled by a Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst, whereas the real school was financed and controlled by a Reverend Carus Wilson. His son, also Carus Wilson, in a correspondence set forth in *The Brontë Thunderer* Vol. 10, 2013, and re-enacted in a Brontë Association meeting, claims that the veiled attacks on the real school made in the account of the fictitious school, are unfair and untrue. In the correspondence which followed, Jane Eyre's widower, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, maintains the veracity of the book.

I am, to an extent, qualified to consider the truth behind the controversy. In my practice as a barrister I acted in many cases of alleged misconduct in the schools, both public and private, and I have read many books on the subject of mistreatment of children in schools and institutions. I was particularly impressed by Alan Gill's *Orphans of the Empire*. But also I myself attended boarding schools from the ages of seven to twelve. I received my first six cuts of the cane when I was aged eight years.

In the book Lowood School half-starved its pupils with poor food and clothed them inadequately for the cold winters. The school was for orphans or children with poor parents. It was badly sited and eventually closed down and moved after a typhus epidemic infected forty-five out of eighty girls at one time. At that time, Jane Eyre's friend Helen Burns died of consumption. The health of the children was not improved by having to attend morning and afternoon church services each Sunday, whether or not their sparse clothing and shoes were wet.

At times the school porridge was burnt and inedible. The children suffered from chilblains in the winter. Many of the older girls bullied the younger ones to surrender their sparse portions of food, having the

young children in danger of complete starvation. This conduct apparently occurred on a considerable scale, despite the copious church services, sermons and Bible sessions endured by the pupils.

The Reverend Brocklehurst was in undisputed charge of the school until the typhus epidemic. Then there was massive reform. The school's location was changed, food and clothing were improved, and a management committee ended Mr Brocklehurst's dictatorial powers.

Now in truth in the real school called Cowan Bridge there was a typhus epidemic and it was moved to Casterton. About forty girls were in fact infected by typhus.

There was a cook at Cowan Bridge who on occasion, burnt the porridge, but it is said that this rarely happened and she was dismissed.

Charlotte Brontë maintained that her account of the school was accurate and, if anything, restrained some matters she had not revealed. Carus Wilson Junior maintained that his father conducted a most excellent institution with plenty of good food. He pointed out that Charlotte's sisters Maria and Elizabeth went to the school and their later deaths from inherited consumption were in no way due to neglect at the school.

One must wonder whether the sad deaths of her sisters prejudiced Charlotte Brontë against the school.

Each party to the controversy, which took the form of numerous letters to the press, had one time pupils writing letters of support. If one compares the supporting letters one would think they were two different schools.

It is probably useful to note here that no matter how bad a school or institution might have been, there will be inmates who praise it. Perhaps the converse is true also.

The memories of children may not be reliable. Notable events tend to obscure the memories of other happenings. There seem to be ex-pupils supporting both sides of this particular controversy. It would be interesting to ascertain whether the older girls, who stole from the younger ones, gave the school praise or condemnation.

The interesting part of this controversy is the staff. The head mistress of Jane Eyre's fictitious school was almost angelic. There is no suggestion that the teaching was other than good. One teacher lost

her patience with Helen Burns. Otherwise there is no possible criticism. The only criticism is of the kitchen staff.

I have endured six years of the cheapest watery oatmeal but I never came across burnt porridge, such that it was inedible. Apparently however, there was a cook who was dismissed for incompetence at the real school.

As for the meagre rations, in my experience boarders often complained of inadequate food, and with good reason. There were always those who said how good the food was, usually those who did not have to eat it.

I should think that the food standards were in fact very poor before the school moved from Cowan Bridge to Casterton. Perhaps one's memory of how bad the food shortage was depended upon whether one was a bullying or bullied girl.

The fact that forty pupils fell ill seems to me (as it did to the Reverend Nicholls) to confirm poor dietary and clothing standards.

The intense religious exercises on Sunday which entailed girls in thin wet clothing waiting for a second service have to be judged by the standards of the time. I note that Jane Eyre in the fictitious school developed a very sincere and firm faith, whereas a pupil of today would probably become an enthusiastic atheist with the same treatment. In those days, one hour sermons were common. These days a quarter of an hour is about the limit

The compulsory religion endured by these girls in those days apparently left them afraid of hell and hoping for heaven. I know that compulsory chapel in my later school days seemed to create far more agnostics than Christians. It was a different age. But strong religious faith did not stop the older girls stealing food from the younger ones at Lowood School.

The Reverend Nicholls made the point that the Cowan Bridge School was very different to the much better school at Casterton after the typhus epidemic. Strong endorsements about the school's excellence carried no weight if based upon experience at the later school. I think that most of the Reverend Wilson's letters of endorsement were based upon experience at the later school.

On the whole, I am inclined to the view that the fictitious school was a true reflection of the real school Cowan Bridge. I think Charlotte

Bronte either herself struck, or else heard about the school in its bad days and accurately portrayed it.

I must say that this picture of Lowood with a first class headmistress, good staff and yet starvation rations and poor clothing does not fit the pattern of bad institutions of which I had read, in fact studied. It is quite unique. However, to my mind Charlotte Bronte's account has the ring of truth.

It really reduces to a condemnation of the Reverent Carus Wilson as the cruel hypocrite the Reverent Brocklehurst in the fictitious account. He was dead and could not sue for defamation.

She was a clergyman's daughter, and a religious woman. She knew that eventually the fictitious school in *Jane Eyre* would be recognised as Cowan Bridge School. She would be a first class villain to portray Carus Wilson as the Reverent Brocklehurst unless that was the truth.

To my mind her description of Brocklehurst has the ring of truth. Unlike her sister Emily, Charlotte Bronte's fictitious characters were based upon real people and to my mind, when she describes the Reverent Brocklehurst, she is describing someone she once knew only too well.

So in the end I am of the opinion that Charlotte Brontë's widower the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls was advocating the truth in his support of his late wife's work. As for the Reverend Carus Wilson Senior it is to be remembered that few people are entirely black or entirely white in their characters. Mr Wilson had about eighty young girls subject to his control. Modern experience indicates that few men behave well when given such powers.

In other aspects of his professional life, Mr Wilson might have done better, but I doubt it.

THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Chester Porter

On 1st February it was my privilege to address the Australian Brontë Association on the legal aspects of *Wuthering Heights*. Since my address was without notes, I can only now recall the main features, and at the same time, incorporate assistance given to me later by members.

The book covers the period 1771 to 1803. At that time England had the common law developed by the judges since early medieval days, equity or chancery (after the Lord Chancellor), which limited in some ways the strict common law and created means to avoid common law consequences. The two main inheritance estates (which passed without a will to the successor) were fee simple which required the words “to X and his heirs” and fee tail which required the words to “X and the heirs of his body”. A simple conveyance to X without the vital words gave X only a life estate.

A fee tail could be “to X and the heirs male of his body”, thus excluding female descendants as in the case of Mr Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*.

There was a procedure for “barring the entail” by a fictitious action of recovery whereby fee tail could be converted to fee simple. How easy or how expensive this might have been in Mr Bennett's time one may wonder but he seems to have spent his time in the library and accepted Mr Collins as his successor after his death.

The idea of considering the legal aspects of *Wuthering Heights* came from a paper by C.P. Sanger shown to me by Christopher Cooper. With most of the paper I agree, with some parts I disagree, but one may expect that from two lawyers on some obscure matters.

I found no legal errors in the book, but I felt that Emily Brontë quite deliberately left some facts obscured. For example, Edgar Linton's father's will is never actually quoted in its terms. We only have an imperfect recollection as to what it might be.

The book was described by my late daughter Dorothy as “the most scorching novel in the English language”. Its description of obsession of Heathcliff's mad love for Cathy, which must be expressed

even if it kills Cathy, and condemns Heathcliff to an eternal torture in hell, is a quite amazing piece of writing. This obsession is not exaggerated, even if such extremes are unusual. They do occur. I acted myself for a man who was going to blow up a Qantas plane if his own personal grievance was not properly remedied.

The book is a wonderful exposition of obsession, and as Christine Alexander later reminded me, there was the double obsession, love for Cathy and desire for revenge.

To go to the beginning, Heathcliff was not legally adopted by Mr. Earnshaw. In this regard, English law did not follow the Roman law so prolific in adoptions in late Republican and early Imperial times. Adoptions in England were quite informal and had no legal effect until 1926 when the first Adoption Act was passed, which made the adopted person in most regards the legal child of the adopting parent.

Wuthering Heights was a farm producing grain, called corn, but probably wheat in modern terms, milk, wool and beef. There is a reference to Heathcliff collecting rent but that probably refers to when he controlled Thrushcross Grange. There were probably no tenants.

Heathcliff was away for a few years and came back educated to a degree and with money. Nothing is said in the book as to how he got the money except a possible suggestion that he had been a soldier. But Annette Harman pointed out to me that there were no “big money” wars at the time.

Perhaps he was successful as a highwayman and stopped after one or two enterprises. Most gentleman of the road kept on robbing, like Dick Turpin, until they were caught and hanged. With a stake from robbery, Heathcliff might have financed his card playing, at which he apparently excelled.

Now old Mr Earnshaw had mortgaged the property and it was quite heavily indebted. Heathcliff apparently acquired that mortgage and added Hindley Earnshaw's gambling debts. He had a big mortgage debt and a common law mortgage that conveyed Wuthering Heights to him if the debt was not paid.

Gambling debts were probably not enforceable at law unless by deed they were added to the mortgage debt, as seems to have occurred. However, in those days failure to pay a gambling debt meant social

ostracism. Thus one finds in novels of the day, how parents paid the gambling debts of spendthrift sons.

Heathcliff seems to have returned to Wuthering Heights as a guest and remained in control, collecting the profits of the farm. Equity would not permit a mortgagee simply to take the title to the property, in accordance with the mortgage deed. He would need a decree of foreclosure to do that and there was no such equity proceeding. So Heathcliff became the mortgagee in possession accepting the profits of the farm in reduction of the mortgage debt. Hindley, and later his son Hareton, was entitled to the property subject to the mortgagee, called the equity of redemption.

When Heathcliff died without a will or known relatives the Crown took his assets. So Hareton was the owner of Wuthering Heights subject to an obligation to pay the mortgage debt, reduced by the profits received by Heathcliff and increased by the interest occurring on the unpaid mortgage debt.

The book ends before we find out whether the Crown ever tried to recover the debt. As for the Grange, that was the property of Edgar Linton's father who made a will leaving it to Edgar and then to Edgar's heirs. If there were none then to Edgar's sister Isabella.

C.P. Sanger in his paper says there was a fee tail to heirs male to Edgar and in default of heirs male to Isabella, thence to her son Linton. I am not entirely in agreement with this. Nor was Heathcliff. If Sanger is right, there was no need for Heathcliff to secure the marriage of Linton to Catherine, Cathy's daughter and Edgar's granddaughter. Heathcliff risked the law by forcing Catherine to marry Linton.

Now the Ecclesiastical Court's (Dickens' Doctors Commons) which dealt with marriage validity would nullify (a decree of nullity) a marriage where the bride's consent was obtained by force. Of course there is some suggestion of consent and the officiating person would no doubt say there was consent. However, if Catherine contested the marriage she was likely to succeed.

The idea of the marriage was to pass the property in the Grange held by Catherine to her husband Linton. In those days a wife lost all her property to her husband (at common law) once she was married. Thus after Heathcliff's death Catherine had a big interest in nullifying the marriage.

Otherwise she would have trouble with the title to the Grange, except that she and Hareton might succeed the late Linton by intestacy as the nearest relatives.

It may be noted that the common law rule that gave a bride's property to her husband was often avoided by resort to equity. Property would be conveyed to trustees for the wife who were bound in equity to treat the property in accordance with the wife's wishes.

Edgar Linton wanted to create such a trust for Catherine with regard to monies he had saved from rentals. Heathcliff kept the solicitor from him and the deed was never made.

The Grange was an old fashioned manor in which the Lord of the Manor, the squire, received what left-wing persons called the “unearned increment” being the rentals from the tenants. These tenants were probably copyhold, a holding depending on the manor records, being the modern version of old serfs or “villins” who worked for the manor. These copyhold tenancies do not affect the title to the Grange.

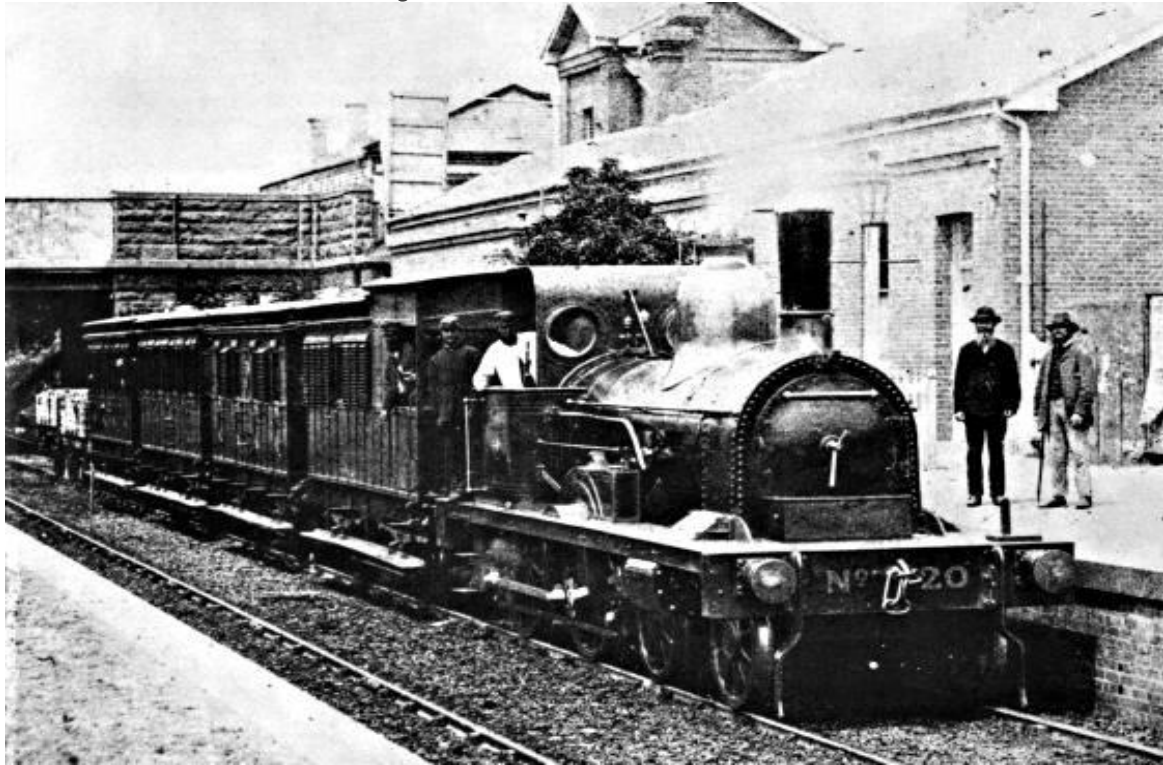
This book has a marvellous description of the servant Joseph “the wearisomest, self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to take the promises to himself, and fling the curses on his neighbours”. That must be what Mr Whitlam meant when he described the then Premier of Queensland as “a Bible bashing bastard”.

To conclude, I found no legal errors in the book. At the end it leaves Catherine and Hareton with a lot of problems, but the book ends before anyone tries to sort these out. Perhaps the local solicitor, who had been on Heathcliff's side, decided to help them.

In my practice in criminal law I constantly came upon obsession in its many forms. How I regret now that I was content to judge *Wuthering Heights* from films. Only when one reads the text, preferably at least twice, does one realise that this book contains a remarkable detailed account of obsession. How did Emily know? How did she manage to write what might well be a textbook for psychiatrists and criminal lawyers? Of course, this is only one aspect of a quite unique and remarkable book.

BRANWELL'S RAILWAY DAYS

by Sarah Burns



It has been said that the railways were England's gift to the world. They originated from experiments in the best method of moving coal from the pit-head in the vast quantities required for smelting and manufacture as well as for domestic use. In the 1820's there had been much controversy as to the rival merits of drawing coal along wooden or rail horses, or by stationary engines, or by George Stephenson's "locomotive". The triumph of the latter led to not only the carriage of goods but also became a new method of transport for passengers. The days of canals and stage-coaches were doomed. Short local lines laid down in the coal districts were developed in the 1830's and 40's into a national system for the whole of Great Britain, as a result of two distinct periods of railway investment and speculation: 1836-7 and 1844-48. In the 1840's "railway mania" broke out. In 1843 there had been about 2,000 miles of railway in Great Britain; in 1848 there were 5,000. Thereafter, the normal way of transporting heavy goods and travelling long distance was by rail.

Turner's painting "Rail, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway", exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844, was a tribute to the Great Western Railway crossing the Thames at Maidenhead and was his last exhibited picture of the English landscape.

In the BBC adaptation of three of Mrs Gaskell's stories, *Cranford* is shaken with the news that a railway line from Manchester is coming to town. There is much objection and despite the best efforts of Captain Brown to bring the modern age right to the heart of the town, the railway has stopped five miles outside Cranford. However, life never stands still for long in Cranford!

As seen in the last scene of Part One of *Return to Cranford*, early passengers were often unnerved by this new experience.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first travelled by train in 1842. In his documentary series *The Victorians*, Jeremy Paxman reports that while we don't know what the Queen made of it, Prince Albert's reaction is recorded: "Not so fast next time Mr Conductor, if you please".

Patrick Branwell Brontë's railway days began on 31 August 1840 when, at the age of 23, he was engaged as Assistant Clerk in Charge at



The Calder Valley with Sowerby Bridge lying in the centre

Sowerby Bridge Railway Station in the Calder Valley, on the new Leeds and Manchester Railway.

The BBC series *Happy Valley*, currently screening on the ABC, is set in Calderdale, Yorkshire. Locations used in the area include Huddersfield, Halifax, Todmorton, Luddenden, Mytholmroyd, Bradford, Keighley, Sowerby Bridge, Hebden Bridge and Heptonstall. The name “Happy Valley” is what local police in Calderdale call the area because of its drug problem.

As the only son, Branwell held a special place in the family. His father, aunt and sisters believed he had great intellectual and artistic ability. However, he was arrogant and lacked application and with these weaknesses of character and temperament and the trials of life, he fell prey to drug and alcohol addiction which led to his early death.

After attempts at being a writer, portrait painter and tutor had failed, Branwell found employment in a totally new field when he obtained a position at Sowerby Bridge Station, a small textile town four miles outside Halifax. Juliet Barker notes that Branwell had “apparently been taking a great interest in the construction of the railway and leapt at the opportunity to work on it”. He received a salary of £75 a year in comparison to the £16 Charlotte was paid as a governess at the same time.

Charlotte, referring to her brother by the nickname “Boanerges” (meaning sons of Thunder; Brontë meaning Thunder in Greek), informed Ellen Nussey of his appointment:

A distant relation of mine, one Patrick Boanerges, has set off to seek his fortune in the wild, wandering, adventurous, romantic, knight-errant-like capacity of clerk in the Leeds and Manchester Railroad. Leeds and Manchester, where are they? Cities in a wilderness – like Tadmor, alias Palmyra – are they not?

In her biography *The Brontës*, Juliet Barker provides details of the development of the Leeds and Manchester Railway with Branwell being in his post for the official grand opening on 5 October 1840. Thousands of spectators lined the tracks waiting for a view of the first train. The crowds waved flags and banners, and bunting decorated the new stations. Many people congregated at Sowerby Bridge, the second last station on the line at that time.

After the excitement of the grand opening, things quietened down. Only three trains ran daily each way along the line at first but by 1 March 1841, when the Summit Tunnel was open and people no longer had to travel part of the journey by bus, this had increased to 12 trains each way, a total of 24 trains passing through Sowerby Bridge every day. It became a busy junction with trains running east and west.

The clerk and his assistant were kept busy logging the trains and their cargoes, organising and co-ordinating the loading and unloading of wagons and supervising the safety of passengers.

When he was off duty and the weather was good, he would walk along the tow path by the canal, or climb from the valley to the moors, or visit his friends in Halifax, Joseph and Francis Leyland, who were prominent in literary and fine arts circles. His circle of artistic friends also included the artist John Wilson Anderson, the poets William Deardon, John Nicholson and William Heaton – the self-taught poet/weaver. The writers in this group met regularly at various hotels and inns to read their manuscripts aloud to one another for criticism.

Francis Leyland, in his biography *The Brontë Family with Special Reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë*, describes his first impressions of his brother's friend:



The young railway clerk was of gentleman-like appearance, and seemed to be qualified for a much better position than the one he had chosen. In stature he was a little below the middle height, not “almost insignificantly small”, as Mr Grundy states, nor had he a “downcast look”; neither was he a “plain specimen of humanity”. He was slim and agile in figure, yet of well-formed outline. His complexion was clear and ruddy, and the expression of his face, at the time, lightsome and cheerful. His voice had a ringing sweetness, and the utterance and use of his English were perfect. Branwell appeared to be in excellent spirits, and showed none of those traces of intemperance with which writers have unjustly credited him about this period of his life. My brother had often spoken to me of Branwell's poetical abilities, his conversational powers, and the polish of his education; and, on a personal acquaintance, I found nothing to question in this estimate of his mental gifts, and of his literary attainments.

After six months, he was promoted and on 1 April 1841 moved to the next station up the line, Luddenden Foot, as Clerk in Charge of the station, his salary increasing to £130. When Ellen offered congratulations on Branwell's promotion, Charlotte replied: "It is hoped that his removal to another station will turn out for the best ... It *looks* like getting on at any rate."

His new position gave him plenty of time to write poetry and Francis Leyland helped him to get some of his poems printed in the *Halifax Guardian* on 5 June 1841, making him the first of the Brontë siblings to become a published author.

It was at Luddenden Foot that Branwell met Francis Grundy, a railway engineer, who like the Leylands would become a lifelong friend and also wrote a biography of him and recalls:

When I first met him, he was a station-master at a small roadside place on the Manchester and Leeds Railway, Luddendenfoot by name. The line was only just opened. This station was a rude wooden hut, and there was no village near at hand. Had a position been chosen for this strange creature for the express purpose of driving him several steps to the bad, this must have been it. Alone in the wilds of Yorkshire, with few books, little to do, no prospects, and wretched pay, with no society congenial to his better tastes, but plenty of wild, rollicking, hard-headed, half-educated manufacturers, who would welcome him to their houses, and drink with him as often as he chose to come, - what was this morbid man, who couldn't bear to be alone, to do?

Grundy's recollections were written some 40 years after the events and have been questioned by later biographers. As Juliet Barker informs us, it is not true that no village was near to hand. The village of Luddenden, about half a mile from the station, was "a thriving centre of the textile trade where stuff-weaving was still carried on in the tall, many-windowed houses and in the larger premises of the new mills."

Nor did he have "no prospects and wretched pay". As a railway employee Branwell was allowed to travel free of charge and his promotion within six months of commencing with the railway showed that he could rise rapidly if his work was satisfactory and his salary was better than anything he had earned before.

Whilst he was his own boss, he shared his duties with the ticket collector, a Mr Woolven whom he had first met six years earlier at the Castle Tavern in Holborn, London, on his way to the Royal Academy.

Unlike Sowerby Bridge, Luddenden Foot was not a junction. The duties were not arduous and the trains were few. Branwell and Grundy would walk the country-side leaving Woolven in charge of the station.

It was further from Halifax but close to the canal that runs from Littleborough to Todmorton, through Sowerby, Luddenden Foot and Hebden Bridge. This canal was used to help construct the railway at Hebden Bridge and Todmorton. The canal had a “basin” at Luddenden Foot where the barges were moored.

He would have mixed with the boaties who stayed at the local inns and fell in with a set of young mill owners, including George and William Thompson and James Titterington, with whom he drank and quarrelled. He was an enthusiastic member of the Luddenden Reading Society, which met at the Lord Nelson Inn. Other members included: *Timothy Wormald*, the landlord of the Lord Nelson and clerk to the adjacent St Mary’s Church

John Whitworth, a mill owner at Longbottom on the canal

John Garnett, a manufacturer of Holm House

Francis Grundy, a railway engineer

William Heaton, a handloom weaver of Luddenden

Francis Leyton, a printer

William Wolven, a ticket collector

George Thompson, a corn merchant

John Murgatroyd, a wealthy woollen manufacturer of Oats Royd, Luddenden

George Richardson, the wharfinger of Sowerby Bridge (controlled the warehouses and the wharves)

It was at one of these meetings that Branwell is said to have read what appears to have been a scene from *Wuthering Heights*. Whether Emily had shared the story with her siblings as she was working on it, or Branwell mistakenly took her notes for his own, we will never know but such reports led to rumours that Branwell rather than Emily had written this novel.

The 1634 date stone over the door of the Lord Nelson Inn recalls its origin as a private house, known as Newhouse. It did not become an

alehouse until the middle of the 18th century when it was called the White Swan. In 1776 one of the district's first libraries was set up in the pub which was an added attraction to local literary regulars including the poet William Dearden and, of course, Branwell Brontë. It was renamed the Lord Nelson after the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.



Hanging in the front bar of the Lord Nelson today is a floodlit photograph of the pub with a caption which reads: “I would rather give my right hand than undergo again the malignant yet cold debauchery which too often marked my conduct there”, a now infamous quote from a letter Branwell wrote to Grundy on 22 May 1842.

On 31 March 1842 Branwell was dismissed by the railways as a result of a discrepancy in the accounts for which he was held responsible.

In Daphne du Maurier's biography, *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë*, details of the investigation are provided:

Brontë, the station-master, and Woolven, the ticket-collector, were jointly responsible for book-keeping at Luddenden Foot station. Both had to appear before the auditors of the railway company when the books were found to be at fault. There was a discrepancy in the figures entered: the price of the tickets sold did not tally with the sums received. Closer examination of the ledger showed haphazard

entries, with rough sketches of the station-master's acquaintances in the margin. The ticket-collector admitted that the station-master had often been absent from duty. Neither could explain what had happened to the missing money. Theft was not proved, but careless book-keeping was. Woolven seems to have kept his post, but Branwell's services were no longer required. He had been employed for over 18 months, which was a record for him.

Du Maurier speculates that perhaps the move from Sowerby Bridge to Luddenden Foot "had not been a promotion at all, but merely a second chance to prove himself in a smaller station where responsibility would be lighter than at the junction".

After the humiliation of facing the auditors and returning home to his father and aunt, a breakdown was inevitable. Branwell wrote to his friend Leyland in May enclosing a sketch of a half-buried tombstone with the legend "Resurgam" (I will rise again). He also wrote to



Grundy at this time saying his health was improving: "After experiencing ...extreme pain and illness, with mental depression worse than either ... I can now speak cheerfully and enjoy the company of another without the stimulus of six glasses of whisky ..."

Within a month of his dismissal from the railway, Branwell enjoyed his greatest literary success with his first poem published in the new *Bradford Herald*. Many more poems were published in the *Bradford Herald*, *Halifax Guardian* and *Leeds Intelligencer*. Branwell kept up this momentum for the rest of the year.

Branwell sought advice from Grundy about obtaining another post on the railways but there was "a great glut in that market" and he didn't pursue it. He continued with his poetry until he joined Anne at Thorp Green Hall in January 1843 until his dismissal in July 1845 following his rumoured affair with the mistress of the house, Mrs Robinson,

In her diary entry of 31 July 1845, a month after she herself had left Thorp Green, Anne records: "Branwell has left Luddendenfoot and been a Tutor at Thorp Green and had much tribulation and ill health ..."

On the same date, Charlotte wrote to her friend, Ellen Nussey, of Branwell's illness and shocking behaviour, "... We must all I fear prepare for a season of distress and disquietude ..."

Whatever happened at Thorp Green was the ruin of Branwell. From this time on he drank, got into debt, took opium, wrote wild illustrated letters to his friends, occasionally begged Grundy to find him work on the railways, stayed at the Parsonage in a drunken stupor by day, raging and ranting at night.

He finally lost the battle with his demons and died on 24 September 1848 at the age of 31.

Branwell might be the lesser known of the Brontë siblings but his days on the railways are legendary and commemorated not only in the pub he frequented at Luddenden but a wooden statue of him stands as a totem pole on the towpath of the Rochdale Canal near Sowerby Bridge. It was commissioned by Calderdale Council to mark the opening of the Calder Cycleway, and represents various themes of local history and activities.

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THE BRONTËS: WOMEN OF THE NORTH

by **Michelle Cavanagh**

Neither of the Brontë sisters parents originated in Yorkshire. Their mother Maria Branwell grew up in a comfortable home in Penzance, Cornwall while their father came from peasant stock and grew up in Drumballyroney in Country Down, Ireland. However the three Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne were Yorkshire women through and through.

All three were born in Thornton in the West Riding of Yorkshire and just four miles west of Bradford as was their brother Branwell who arrived a year after Charlotte. Two elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth were earlier born in Hartshead, ten miles away. So their mother had given birth to six children in the seven years prior to the family's move to live in the Haworth Parsonage where their father took up the curacy in April 1820.

The journey from Thornton to the Parsonage across the moorland hills some five or six miles away, while no doubt exciting for the children, must have been quite harrowing for their parents with all their possessions packed into two flat wagons as they set out for their new home. It was not a happy start for the young family as, by September 1821 their mother was dead, possibly of cancer. Elizabeth Branwell – known as Aunt Branwell – who travelled from Penzance to Haworth to help nurse her younger sister was to remain in Haworth for the rest of her life as she took on the motherhood role of the six Brontë children.

By November 1824, Patrick Brontë, unable to find a woman who would marry him and help to look after his six children, enrolled Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily into the Clergy Daughter's School, founded by the Reverend Carus Wilson and situated at Cowan Bridge in Lancashire, which was 42 miles away. Maria and Elizabeth were amongst at least eleven girls who became sick – possibly due to typhus – and were taken out of the school; in May 1825 Maria died and was followed to the grave the following month by her sister Elizabeth.

Charlotte and Emily were hastily withdrawn from the school too and for the next few years they were educated at home by Aunt Branwell and their father.

Many years later, when her novel *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, Charlotte Brontë depicted Cowan Bridge School as Lowood School unforgettably showing the harsh discipline, dirty or inadequate food, walks in icy winds and enforced exercise which they had endured at the Cowan Bridge School themselves.



Charlotte resented the treatment metered out at Cowan Bridge to her sister Maria. Maria became Helen Burns in the novel. Charlotte later told her editor William Smith Williams, “You are right in having faith in the reality of Helen Burn's character: she was real enough: I have exaggerated nothing there: I abstained from recording much that I remember respecting her, lest the narrative should sound incredible. Knowing this, I could not but smile at the quiet, self-complacent dogmatism with which one of the journals lays it down that 'such creatures as Helen Burns are very beautiful but very untrue'.”

Patrick Brontë took a keen interest in his children's personal and intellectual development; doubtless they were much more familiar with the world in which they lived than many of the other children in the village. From their father they learnt all about the stories of the Luddites – which Charlotte used as a major source for her novel *Shirley* – when in 1811 and 1812 the West Yorkshire and Lancashire cotton trade and the East Midlands hosiery trade experienced widespread attacks on the mills and destruction of machinery as workers feared for their jobs.

As for the world around them, according to one of their servants Sarah Gars, “Their afternoon walks, as they sallied forth, each neatly and comfortably clad, were a joy. Their fun knew no bounds. It never was expressed wildly. Bright and often dry, it occasioned many a merry burst of laughter. They enjoyed a game of romps, and played with zest.”

Luckily for the four remaining Brontë children their father gave them unrestricted access to the books, magazines and newspapers from which they also learnt about the world in which they lived. The most

influential of these was *Blackwood's Magazine*, a monthly journal published from 1817 by William Blackwood of Edinburgh.

Despite the myth perpetrated by Elizabeth Gaskell that Haworth was an “isolated, solitary and lonely” place, by the time the Brontës moved there nothing could have been further from the truth as the Industrial Revolution had turned it into a busy manufacturing township. The majority of the villagers to whom Patrick Brontë preached were quarry workers, hand loom weavers or farm labourers. Nevertheless Haworth's inhabitants lived a life which differed from the life lived by Dickens, the man of the South. The North South divide was huge – northerners it seemed even spoke another language and to some extent still do even to this day.

We know that their faithful servant Tabitha Aykroyd called the young Brontës “childer”. Having been born in Yorkshire myself we were always called “bairns”. And anyone who has read *Wuthering Heights* no doubt has had trouble understanding the servant Joseph.

For example, in chapter 3 Joseph says, “T' maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath not o'ered, und t' sound o' t' gospel still i' yer lugs, and ye darr be laiking! Shame on ye! sit ye down, ill childer! There's good books enOUGH if ye'll read 'em: sit ye down, and think o' yer souls!”

Rendered into standard English this would be “The master just recently buried, and the Sabbath not over, and the sound of the gospel still in your ears, and you dare be larking about [having fun]! Shame on you! sit down, bad children! There are good books enough if you'll read them: sit down, and think of your souls!”

It is said that we all live twice, once in reality and once in our dreams. This saying is certainly true of the three Brontë sisters and their brother Branwell whose early imaginary life was lived through their *Juvenilia* which they began writing when Patrick Brontë bought a set of toy soldiers from Leeds for his son Branwell who was nine years old at the time. These original twelve soldiers fuelled the imagination of the children who wove them into stories of imaginary worlds, Glass Town, somewhere in Africa and later Angria, the brain-child mainly of Charlotte and Branwell. Later still Gondal was devised by Anne and Emily.

For the Brontë children, London was a glamorous city of palaces inhabited by great men such as the Duke of Wellington who was Charlotte's hero. Their idea of London served as a model for their Glass Town; little did they know that the poor in London lived in decrepit slums breathing in the pollution from tanneries, chemical works, flour mills and printing works and were actually no better off than the poor in Yorkshire. The London which Charlotte and Branwell knew came from the magazine reviews of London art exhibitions and they also gleaned some knowledge of the city from their father who had stayed in the area around St Pauls Cathedral. It wasn't until 1851 when Charlotte read Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* that she found out the real story of the nation's capital. The children recorded the adventures of their heroes and heroines in plays, poems, magazines and novelettes which were written in tiny hand sewn books.

While Charlotte's and Branwell's world of Glass Town was a highly politicised, militaristic land, once Emily and Anne created Gondal their world was ruled by strong willed women who took lovers and got rid of husbands whenever necessary. Indeed sexuality and female desire certainly transgressed Victorian sexual mores even in their Juvenilia and was to be explored in their later novels. "Never suppress your imagination; it's the place we're all trying to get to."

Six years after being taken out of Cowan Bridge school, at almost 15 years of age Charlotte went off to Roe Head School at Mirfield, 18 miles away from Haworth. It was a journey which took nearly all day through a frozen, white winter landscape in a hired covered cart. Here Charlotte met two girls who became life-long friends, Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. Charlotte might not have had much knowledge of geography or arithmetic nevertheless she was keen to discuss what was happening in current affairs telling Mary that she'd been interested in politics since she was five years old. Within 18 months Charlotte had completed her studies becoming the top student.

Back in her beloved Haworth she taught Emily and Anne everything that she'd learnt. When Charlotte returned to Roe Hill as a teacher Emily went with her. But having spent ten years at home Emily hated being at school and she refused to talk and to eat.

Katherine Frank, in her biography – *Emily Brontë: A Chainless Soul* – felt that Emily was anorexic, using food to get her own way. According to Charlotte “Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils, without it she perished. The change from her own home to a school, and from her own very noiseless, very secluded, but unrestricted and inartificial mode of life to one of disciplined routine was what she failed in enduring. Every morning when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rushed on her. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home and with this conviction, obtained her recall.”

Once home, Emily blossomed once again, taking over in the kitchen while at the same time studying French, German, Geography, history and Anne replaced Emily at Roe Hill. But three years later, despite being a home body, Emily took a job at Law Hill, Halifax 10 miles from Haworth, where she taught for about six months.

However, with dreams of opening their own school, and in an effort to equip themselves with more knowledge to enable them to do so, in 1842 Emily and Charlotte enrolled in the boarding school Pensionnat Héger in Brussels. This was run by Constantin Héger (1809–96) and his wife Claire Zoé Parent Héger (1804–87).

In return for board and tuition Charlotte taught English and Emily taught music. Their time at the school was cut short as they returned home when Aunt Branwell died. Charlotte returned alone to Brussels in January 1843 to take up a teaching post at the school. Her second stay was not so happy: she was homesick, in love with Constantin Héger as she became increasingly obsessed with him. Returning to Haworth in January 1844 she wrote him letters which he tore up but which were sewn together by his wife and kept. The letters are now in the British Museum.

One, composed in French, reads: “If my master withdraws his friendship from me entirely, I shall be absolutely without hope.”

Another one reads: “I must say one word to you in English – I wish I would write to you more cheerful letters, for when I read this over, I find it to be somewhat gloomy – but forgive me my dear master do not be irritated at my sadness. According to the words of the Bible: ‘Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaketh’, and truly I find it difficult to be cheerful so long as I think I shall never see you more.”

Her own experience is recorded to some extent in Charlotte's 1853 novel *Villette* about a young woman with an unrequited love for her Belgian teacher. Charlotte's experiences in Brussels also inspired her novel *The Professor* which wasn't published until after her death. Elizabeth Gaskell omitted the story of Charlotte's passion for her Belgium teacher in her biography of Charlotte Brontë, the first of many written after she died.



Scarborough

Both Anne and Charlotte Brontë worked as governesses at a time when governesses worked long hours – sometimes up to 16 hours a day according to Katherine Frank. Poorly paid and not given much respect for the jobs they were doing, becoming a governess was one of the few occupations open to women and the Brontë women certainly needed to earn money.

It was Anne Brontë's time working at Blake Hall in Mirfield, 18 miles away from Haworth and home of the Ingram family, when she began writing *Agnes Grey* her first novel. Although this was written before Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* it wasn't published until after Charlotte's tale of a governess was already in print.

One reviewer stated that *Agnes Grey* was “a somewhat course imitation of one of Miss Austen's charming stories”. Obviously some readers didn't want to read what many governesses had to put up with. In the novel, Anne's story of the Bloomfield family could have been influenced by the Ingram children she worked with and later by her experiences as governess to the Robinson Family at Thorp Green near York which was 24 miles from her beloved home.

Anne was the governess at Thorp Green for almost five years and it was also where her brother Branwell – who earned double what she did – was a tutor for two years. The Robinsons introduced Anne to Scarborough, as she accompanied the family on their holidays which she grew to love and where she died (and where I was born). Branwell

was dismissed by the Robinsons after, supposedly having an affair with Mrs Robinson.

When he heard that her husband died Branwell hoped to succeed him, but she married Sir Francis Edward Dolman Scott. He was distraught and slid into drug addiction and alcoholism. This prompted the writing of Anne's second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Dealing with alcoholism and debauchery it was an instant success and sold out within six weeks. Hailed as the first feminist novel it was profoundly disturbing and shocking to 19th century readers. The slamming of Helen Huntingdon's bedroom door against her husband reverberated throughout Victorian England as she left him, taking her son with her to protect him from his father's influence.

This was violating not only social conventions, but English law. At the time, a married woman had no independent legal existence apart from her husband; could not own property, sue for divorce, or control custody of her children. If she attempted to live apart, her husband had the right to reclaim her. If she took their child, she was liable for kidnapping. But as Anne pointed out in the preface to the second edition of the novel “My object in writing the following pages was not simply to amuse the reader, neither was it to gratify my own taste ... I wished to tell the truth, for truth always contains its own moral to those who are able to receive it.”

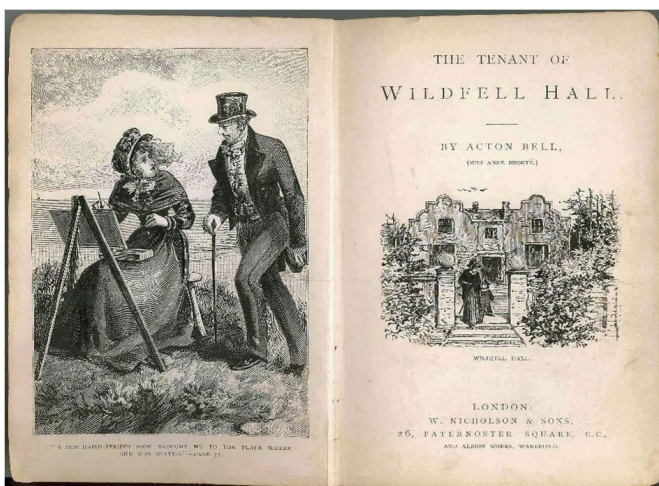
Charlotte was also a governess on at least two occasions: with the Sidgwick family at Stone Gapp at Lothersdale in North Yorkshire, about 10 miles from Haworth and the with the White family of Upperwood House at Rawdon in West Yorkshire approximately 13 miles from Haworth.

While to our 21st century idea of travel these various places appear to be a stone's throw away from the Parsonage, travel was not quite so easy back then. In fact even when my sister Charlotte (named after Charlotte Brontë) and I did the Dales Way walk together in the late 1990's the roads were certainly not major highways.

In May 1846 Charlotte, Emily and Anne self-financed the publication of a joint collection of poems under their assumed names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The pseudonyms veiled the sisters' gender. In the preface to a later edition of *Wuthering Heights* Charlotte explained the decision to use *noms de plume*.

“We had very early cherished the dream of one day becoming authors. This dream, never relinquished even when distance divided and absorbing tasks occupied us, now suddenly acquired strength and consistency: it took the character of a resolve. We agreed to arrange a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, to get them printed. Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because — without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called ‘feminine’ — we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.”

While their poems only sold two copies by 1847 Anne's *Agnes Grey* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* had been accepted for publication by T C Newby, these novels weren't actually published until after *Jane Eyre* which was published by Smith, Elder & Co. *Jane Eyre* was an instant success.



The following year, when T C Newby's published Anne's second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and sold the book in the United States as an early work of Currer Bell it was time for action by these fairly quiet and relatively shy Yorkshire women.

It is easy to imagine the indignation felt by the three ‘Bells’ when their publisher implied that Currer, Ellis and Acton were one person. This prompted Charlotte and Anne to take the night train to London in 1848. And imagine the surprise in store for their publishers, after their journey from the North to London in the South to meet with their publishers who were stunned to hear the news that these three authors were actually women.

While *Wuthering Heights* was Emily Brontë's only published novel, as little over a year later she was dead, it is considered to be one of the most powerful and mysterious works in English literature. I say published novel because it's felt that after her death Charlotte burnt another novel that Emily had either written or was in the process of writing.

Charlotte found it hard to grasp the enduring nature of such an intense tale, ranging over two generations, of passionate relationships set in the windswept Yorkshire moors which has been compared to Tolstoy's *War & Peace* and Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*.

Charlotte Brontë did become a little more acquainted with London following the deaths of her siblings. She became firm friends and stayed with George Smith's family on at least four occasions in 1849, 1850, 1851 and 1853. She met James Taylor, John Forbes, Harriet Martineau, William Makepeace Thackeray and many others. She visited the Royal Academy Exhibition; attended the Opera; the Crystal Palace, Bank of the Royal Exchange, Newgate Prison and the new Pentonville; she saw the Bethlem Hospital in Lambeth, visited the Foundling Museum and generally discovered what the south had to offer. And she may have even met Dickens.

But like her sisters, Charlotte's heart was in the North and most especially in the West Yorkshire town of Haworth which was so dear to her.

As we know, all three Brontë women died early, Charlotte at 39, Emily at 30 and Anne at 29 but such early deaths were not unusual in Haworth at the time in which they lived. The average age of death in Haworth at that time was just under 26 years.

Charlotte, Emily and Anne are to be celebrated as true women of the North, the likes of whom we'll probably never see again.

Michelle Cavanagh

The Plot & Characters of Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

prepared by Christopher Cooper

The illustrations are from the Folio Society edition
of the novel.



PLOT

**PART I: Narration by Gilbert Markham in
a letter to his friend.**

CHAP 1: THE NEW TENANT

Gilbert learns from his family that Wildfell Hall has a tenant -- a young widow. She is observed closely, especially by Gilbert, when she attends church.

CHAP 2: GILBERT MEETS MRS GRAHAM AND HER YOUNG SON

While out hunting Gilbert finds himself in the vicinity of Wildfell Hall and rescues a little boy from a fall. Gilbert meets Mrs Graham, the boy's mother. Not having seen the rescue she is at first hostile.



CHAP 3: ON BRINGING UP CHILDREN

Mrs Graham visits Gilbert's family with young Arthur and an animated discussion takes place on the extent to which children should be shielded from temptation.

CHAP 4: GOSSIP

At a small party some of Gilbert's neighbours discuss Mrs Graham and her ideas on children.

CHAP 5: THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Gilbert and his sister Rose visit Mrs Graham and see her studio. She paints for a dealer in London.



CHAP 6: GILBERT'S GROWING INTEREST IN MRS GRAHAM

Gilbert comes upon Mrs Graham painting by a brook and talks to her. In his eyes she is beginning to eclipse Eliza, who has been something of a sweetheart. Though Helen Graham is somewhat cold towards him he prefers her depth to Eliza's shallowness.

CHAP 7: THE EXCURSION TO THE SEA

Gilbert accompanies his brother and sister and Eliza on a visit to Wildfell Hall and they propose a walk to the coast for a picnic when the weather is warmer. Somewhat reluctantly Helen Graham agrees to accompany them. The outing takes place and at one stage Helen goes off from the party to a nearby cliff to paint, and this gives Gilbert an opportunity to spend some time with her alone.

CHAP 8: THE GIFT OF "MARMION"

As a surprise Gilbert offers a copy of "Marmion" to Helen. She has expressed interest in it and he has bought it specially. But she doesn't want to accept it unless he allows her to pay for it. She relents but makes it clear that he is not to presume anything by it and that their friendship must continue as it is.

CHAP 9: MALICIOUS GOSSIP

Gilbert hears of damaging reports about Mrs Graham's respectability and insinuations involving Mr Lawrence her landlord.

CHAP 10: GILBERT BEGINS TO DISLIKE LAWRENCE

Gilbert visits Helen to show his support. On leaving he meets Mr Lawrence on his way to visit her, "as her landlord", but Gilbert suspects other motives and heated words are exchanged.

CHAP 11: THE MUCH-TALKED-ABOUT WOMAN

Many of Gilbert's neighbours, including his sister and Rev Millward, warn him against continuing his friendship with Mrs Graham because of her doubtful respectability.

CHAP 12: HELEN'S SPECIAL VISITOR

Gilbert is deeply unhappy because: (1) everyone unjustly accuses Helen of having doubtful morals; (2) judging by her behaviour with Lawrence, they might be right.

CHAP 13: THE ATTACK ON THE ROAD

Gilbert sets off on business and comes upon Lawrence on the road. In jealous anger he strikes him with his whip and Lawrence



falls off his horse with a bloody head. Gilbert leaves but, prompted by conscience, returns to offer help. This is spurned so Gilbert continues on his way. On his return he is relieved to see that Lawrence has gone. He arrives home to reports of Lawrence being thrown from his horse. Lawrence, not wanting to involve Helen, chooses to remain silent as to the real facts.

PART II: Helen's Diary

CHAP 16: HELEN REJECTS BOARHAM

Helen rejects Mr Boarham's proposal of marriage.

CHAP 17: THE WARNING

At a dinner party Huntingdon rescues Helen from the unwelcome attentions of Mr Wilmot. Later her aunt warns her against him, but she defends him.

CHAP 18: THE COURTSHIP

Huntingdon, Wilmot and Boarham spend some days with Helen's uncle and Helen gets to know Huntingdon better.

CHAP 19: HUNTINGDON'S PROPSAL

Huntingdon proposes. Helen tells him he must ask her uncle and aunt.

CHAP 20: HELEN ACCEPTS

Helen's uncle, despite some misgivings, considers the match a sound investment and gives his consent. He writes to Helen's father.

CHAP 21: CONSENT

Helen's father gives his consent but Annabella thinks she is making a mistake.

CHAP 22: LOWBOROUGH'S FORTUNES

Arthur tells Helen of Lowborough's financial ruin through gambling and of the plan to remedy it by marrying Annabella. He concedes that both the ruin and the plan owed a lot to his influence over his friend. However when Annabella confides to Arthur that she was only marrying Lowborough for his title and ancient seat, he chooses not to warn his friend and so the engagement takes place.

CHAP 23: TOO RELIGIOUS?

Helen has now married Arthur and they are living at Grassdale Manor. She loves him but is becoming more and more aware of his faults. Meanwhile Arthur is afraid that Helen is too serious about her religion. She says that she cannot love him more than God allows and would be happier if he, Arthur, loved her a little less and loved God more. The discussion ends with Arthur declaring that it is better to enjoy today's dinner than to hope for a feast tomorrow.

CHAP 24: THE QUARREL

Arthur becomes very irritable, with the quiet of country life, with the weather, and with Helen and declares his intention to go to London. She doesn't want to go but agrees to accompany him.

CHAP 25: THE SEPARATION

After a month in London Arthur insists on Helen returning while he remains for "a couple more weeks to attend to business". She does return and becomes increasingly upset as repeatedly he postpones his return. He finally comes home, much dissipated, after nearly two months of separation. As the hunting season approaches he plans to invite some of his friends to Grassdale.

CHAP 26: COQUETRY

The party arrive. Lady Lowborough flirts with Arthur and he doesn't discourage her. Although Helen regards it as perfectly innocent it nevertheless annoys her, though she determines not to notice.

CHAP 27: HELEN UPBRAIDS ARTHUR

Eventually Helen challenges Arthur over his conduct towards Annabella and for having consumed too much wine. His expressions of remorse are undisguisedly theatrical. However he does restrain himself during the next few days.

CHAP 28: LITTLE ARTHUR IS BORN

Helen and Arthur now have a son and this, to some extent, compensates her for the fact that there is now little sympathy or communication between them. He goes to London for months and writes little and infrequently.

CHAP 29: WALTER HAS NEWS OF ARTHUR

Walter has come to Grassdale from London to stay with his mother and he gives Helen news of her husband's dissipation there. He wonders that he can neglect such a wonderful wife and son.

CHAP 30: SOME IMPROVEMENT IN ARTHUR

Arthur returns, sick and weary. At first there are arguments over his conduct, especially his fondness for wine. Helen's patient watchfulness and Walter's encouragement help to some extent.

CHAP 31: INTOXICATED

Arthur goes hunting in Scotland for several months. After his return he invites his friends to Grassdale. Here we witness a typical evening of various degrees of intoxication among the men: Lowborough not at all, Hargrave slightly, but Hattersley, Grimsby and Huntingdon severely.



CHAP 32: IN CONFIDENCE

Millicent confides to Helen that while she still loves her husband she would like Esther to be more cautious in choosing a husband. Hattersley tells Helen that Millicent bothers him by being too yielding. Hargrave wants to get Helen alone to confide something of importance.

CHAP 33: THE WRONG WOMAN IN THE SHRUBBERY

Walking in the garden after dinner Helen comes across Arthur. Thinking her to be Annabella he reacts warmly to her embraces but, discovering his mistake, he recoils in confusion and anxiously tries to hurry her inside. Hargrave engages Helen in a chess game while Arthur rendezvous with Annabella. But Helen, becoming suspicious, spies on them. Later that night she confronts Arthur with her discovery.

CHAP 34: HELEN CONFRONTS ANNABELLA

Helen confronts Annabella but promises her that not to tell Lowborough to spare him the pain, provided she leaves the house with no further misconduct.

CHAP 35: HARGRAVE OFFERS HIS PROTECTION

Hargrave, alluding to the fact that her marriage is over in all but outward appearances, declares his love for her and offers her his protection. Helen refuses both with great passion.

CHAP 36: HARGRAVE CONTINUES HIS ATTENTIONS

Arthur goes away on another hunting trip and Hargrave becomes a frequent visitor.

CHAP 37: HARGRAVE PROFESSES LOVE FOR HELEN

Hargrave makes another declaration of his love, which Helen rebuffs as strongly as ever. He goes away to Paris.

CHAP 38: LOWBOROUGH DISCOVERS ANNABELLA'S TREACHERY

On a subsequent visit Lowborough discovers the truth about Arthur and Annabella. He takes it very badly and upbraids Helen for not telling him.

CHAP 39: ENCOUNTER WITH HARGRAVE

Helen tells Hargrave of her plan to escape from her husband but rejects his offer to assist. Words become heated and when the other gentlemen enter they see Helen's flushed countenance. Hints of something improper are made but Helen denies them strongly, even hauling Hargrave back to admit that she was innocent.

CHAP 40: THE PLOT UNCOVERED

Huntingdon discovers Helen's diary, confiscates her keys and destroys her painting equipment.

CHAP 41: LAWRENCE'S VISIT

While Arthur is away Lawrence stays for a fortnight. While he is indignant about Arthur's treatment of her and offers to help her if she runs away, he urges her to find ways of coping with her situation.

CHAP 42: HATTERSLEY REFORMS

Helen talks to Hattersley about Millicent. He thinks she meekly accepts his dissipated life-style because she doesn't mind but when Helen shows him some of Millicent's letters to her he realises otherwise and is horrified. He vows to turn over a new leaf.

CHAP 43: THE GOVERNESS

Arthur hires a governess but Helen suspects that she was intended to become her replacement. This provides the catalyst to flee.

CHAP 44: ESCAPE

Helen, little Arthur and Rachel make their escape and, after a day's journey, arrive at Wildfell Hall.

PART III: Continuation of Gilbert's Narrative

CHAP 45: RECONCILED

Having read the diary Gilbert hurries to Helen. She tells him that she has decided that it is best for them not to see each other again. They may communicate by letter, as friends, but not for six months. Gilbert, now knowing that Lawrence is Helen's brother, visits him and apologises for his attack. Lawrence accepts this apology and invites him to visit from time to time.

CHAP 46: GILBERT'S ADVICE TO LAWRENCE

Gilbert hears of Helen through her brother. Meanwhile Lawrence has been seeing quite a bit of Jane Wilson and Gilbert knows that Jane has set her eyes on him, but he warns Lawrence against her, partly for her cold-hearted ambitious shallow-minded character and partly because (not knowing that Helen was his sister and fearing her as a rival) she hates Helen. While not admitting it to Gilbert, Lawrence does subsequently heed the advice.

CHAP 47: HELEN GOES BACK TO HUNTINGDON

Hearing from Eliza that Helen has gone back to her husband Gilbert rushes off to Lawrence. Yes, she has returned to Grassdale -- but the reason is that Arthur is seriously ill. Lawrence has a letter from her which Gilbert insists on seeing.



Letter 1: Arthur is gravely ill but is ungrateful to Helen for her patient care, claiming that she acts solely for her heavenly reward and that she hopes her charity will “heap coals of fire on his head”.

Lawrence agrees to show Gilbert all future letters from Helen.

CHAP 48: THE IRRITABLE PATIENT

Letter 2: Arthur has improved, but with the improvement comes increasing irritability. Esther refuses to marry according to her parents' wishes and suffers for it. Sanctioned by Helen's permission Gilbert tells the true facts of Helen's history to Rose and their mother. Rose will tell Eliza and so the whole village will see Helen in a more favourable light.

Postscript on Eliza Millward: She marries a tradesman.

Postscript on Jane Wilson: Being unable to find a husband good enough, she becomes a cold-hearted supercilious, censorious old maid.

CHAP 49: DEATH COMES TO HUNTINGDON

Letter 3: Through his obstinacy Arthur suffers a relapse and becomes very difficult to manage and Helen puts young Arthur into Esther's care. Though Huntingdon's life is at risk he is careless that his soul is also in peril.



Letter 4: Arthur's health continues to deteriorate. The Hattersleys visit. Arthur reports a sudden absence of pain, which Helen interprets as a sign that the end is near.

Letter 5: Arthur has gone and Helen describes his last moments.

CHAP 50: FREE AT LAST

Gilbert cannot but be pleased at the news of Helen's release from a tyrannical marriage, partly for her sake but partly because it improves his own prospects.

Postscript on Lord and Lady Lowborough: She elopes to the continent with a "gallant". They split up; she gets into debt and dies wretchedly. He divorces her and remarries -- a lady who is unremarkable in beauty and status, but sensible and good.

Postscript on Grimsby: He continues his moral decline and dies in a drunken brawl.

Postscript on Hattersley: He moves to the country, gives up his friends of ill repute, breeds horses and becomes respectable.

CHAP 51: THE WRONG BRIDE

Eliza tells Gilbert that Helen is shortly to marry Walter Hargrave. Distressed, Gilbert goes to Lawrence for confirmation but finds him gone to Grassdale. Gilbert hurries there by coach in the vain hope of being able to stop the wedding. He arrives too late but discovers that Eliza had got it a little wrong -- the groom was Lawrence himself and the bride was Esther Hargrave! Helen is not present so Gilbert hurries off in a gig to see her.

CHAP 52: THE WOMAN OF PROPERTY

Helen is not at Grassdale Manor but has been living at Staningley with her aunt. On their way there the driver tells Gilbert that Helen has inherited her uncle's property and fortune. Gilbert decides that as she is now a lady of considerable property he can no longer entertain the thoughts of a marriage with her. He decides, therefore to return home without seeing her.

CHAP 53: THE PROPOSAL

At this point Helen, her aunt and young Arthur come by in a handsome coach. Both she, and especially Arthur, insist on Gilbert coming into the house. One thing leads to another and, following a delightfully touching scene involving a twice-given rose, he finds himself being encouraged to propose and being



accepted. After an agreed separation of some months he returns to woo her (and her aunt). They marry and live at Staningley with young Arthur and Mrs Maxwell. Gilbert gives his farm at Linden-Car to Fergus and his new bride. Rose marries Halford, the recipient of Gilbert's letters that comprise the entire novel.

CHARACTERS

Helen Lawrence/Huntingdon/Graham/Markham: She has raven black hair in long, glossy ringlets. Her complexion is clear and pale. She has long black eye-lashes and her brows are expressive and well defined. Her forehead is lofty and intellectual and her nose is perfect aquiline. She has a slight hollow about the cheeks and eyes. Her lips, though finely formed, were thin and firmly compressed.

Before marriage she was gay and outgoing with a lot of spirit, but her marriage very quickly made her introspective and sober and robbed her of her sense of humour. She has a strong sense of duty and is rather too confident in her ability to control others to walk the straight path. Having abandoned all hope of reforming her husband she conducts an overly string regime with her son to prevent his wandering astray. She has serious intellectual tastes (literature and painting) and despises gossip and other female pursuits.

Losing her mother early in life she lives with her aunt and uncle, the Maxwell's, and has very little to do with either her father or her older brother, Frederick. After a brief time in the gay world of society with its parties and balls she marries Arthur Huntingdon.

They have a son, young Arthur, but the marriage is a disaster due to her Huntingdon's intemperance and his dissipated friends. With Frederick's help she runs away with little Arthur and becomes the tenant of Wildfell Hall, a property belonging to her brother. Here she is known as a widow, Mrs Graham (taking her mother's maiden name), who supports herself by her painting.

She and Gilbert Markham become very good friends but, although Gilbert hints that he would like to be more than just friends, Helen resists. Some time later, news of her husband's illness drives her back to look after him but Huntingdon dies. After several incidents of misunderstanding she marries Gilbert.

Frederick Lawrence: Frederick is Helen's (somewhat older) brother. He allows Helen the use of his property Wildfell Hall to hide from her husband. Once the family home this secluded house came into his possession but 15 years ago he moved to a more comfortable house in the next parish. His neighbours do not know that the mysterious tenant is his sister and noticing that his visits were rather more frequent than is usual for a landlord, imagine some sort of clandestine romance.

Gilbert Markham becomes jealous of him and at one stage he knocks Lawrence off his horse. But when Helen returns to her husband at Grassdale Manor Gilbert discovers that Lawrence is her brother and mutual interest in Helen's welfare brings them, somewhat uneasily, together. Lawrence goes away unexpectedly and Gilbert, having heard rumours of an impending Hargraves-Lawrence wedding, believes that he has gone to his sister's wedding. However it is Frederick's own, as he marries Esther Hargraves.

Mr & Mrs (Peggy) Maxwell: Helen's uncle and maternal aunt.

Arthur Huntingdon: Arthur is the somewhat wild, but interesting suitor to Helen who becomes her husband. He is the son of a late friend of Mr Maxwell. He has laughing blue eyes, but is prone to every vice that is common to youth and lacks principles.

Helen is conscious of his somewhat dissolute nature but believes that she can lead him into the paths of righteousness. However she is no match for his circle of friends who encourage his intemperance, both in the narrow sense of his taking more wine than is good for him, and in the wider sense.

It is not so much the fact that living with him has become intolerable for herself, but the fact that she fears that he will lead young Arthur down a similar path, that brings her to secretly run away. But later she dutifully returns when she hears that he is gravely ill and nurses him patiently till he dies. He is ungrateful and unrepentant to the last.

Master Arthur Huntingdon: Arthur is Helen and Arthur's son and is about 5 years old when they come to Wildfell Hall. Although very attached to his mother he shows signs of being adversely influenced by "devil Daddy". In an attempt to protect him from a love of strong drink, Helen forces young Arthur to drink small amounts when he is sick, as a "medicine". At Wildfell Hall she is fiercely protective of him and believes that by sheltering him from temptation she can best avoid him becoming like his father.

Mr Wilmot: A friend of the Maxwells, considered a possible catch for Helen.

Annabella Wilmot/Lowborough: Mr Wilmot's niece. She is a fine dashing girl of about 25. Greatly admired by the gentlemen she is considered too much of a flirt to marry. However she does marry -- Lord Lowborough.

Mrs Hargraves: She is Mr Wilmot's sister-in-law.

Walter Hargraves: He is Mr Wilmot's nephew. Although he is one of Huntingdon's friends he is somewhat critical of Arthur's behaviour towards his wife and encourages Helen to leave him. His advice is not altogether altruistic however, because he has hopes of taking Huntingdon's place when the time comes.

Esther Hargraves: Walter's sister. The Hargraves - Lawrence that Gilbert fears was between Walter and Helen is in fact between Esther and Frederick.

Milicent Hargraves/Hattersley: Walter's other sister. She marries Ralph Hattersley.

Gilbert Markham: Gilbert is the hero and despite the fact that he hates cats he is a likeable short of chap. He manages the family farm. He is used to getting things done when it comes to practical matters about the farm but is somewhat of a ditherer when it comes to affairs of the heart.

Though the unofficial beau of Eliza Millward he takes an increasingly strong interest in the widow at Wildfell Hall and appreciates her superior depth of character and intellect. He defends her when rumours start to circulate about secret liaisons with Lawrence and the suspicion that her husband still lives. He engages in a violent jealous quarrel with Lawrence and is devastated when she returns to nurse her sick husband.

After discovering that she has inherited not only her husband's fortune but her uncle's as well he is drawn to visit her but is shy about actually making contact with one who is now so financially superior. Fate brings them together and a delightfully amusing scene involving a Christmas rose in and out of a window, Gilbert is torn between the love he feels and the fear that she will now consider herself so much above him. His diffidence is so great that Helen has to practically get down on her knees and propose to herself on his behalf! The proposal does succeed and they marry, though whether there are the right ingredients for a successful marriage is left to the reader's imagination.

Mrs Markham: Mrs Markham is Gilbert's mother who is mostly occupied by knitting and discussing the local news. She considers the needs of the men of the house, especially Gilbert, take precedence over those of her daughter. Meal times are dictated by Gilbert's comings and goings and she insists that the best parts of the meal be kept for him.

Rose: Rose is Gilbert's sister. She was aged 19 in October 1827 at the time of Helen taking up residence in the neighbourhood. She is smart and pretty and has a tidy, though dumpy, figure. She has little merry brown eyes set in a round face above bright blooming cheeks and

framed by glossy, clustering curls. She marries Gilbert's friend Halford.

Fergus: Fergus is Gilbert's younger brother who loves hunting. After Gilbert marries Helen he gives the farm to Fergus.

Halford J: Halford is the mysterious friend to whom Gilbert writes the whole story. At the end Gilbert alludes to the fact that Halford has married Rose. Despite being a frequent visitor Halford appears to need to get all the family history by letter instead of in person.

Rev Michael Millward: The Reverend Michael is a tall, ponderous elderly man who wears a shovel hat and carries a stout walking stick. He has a large, square, massive-featured face. He has powerful limbs and wears knee-breeches and gaiters or black silk stockings. He is a man of fixed principles and strong prejudices. He is famous for his fixed habits and intolerance of those who do not agree with him.

He is exceedingly careful of his health, keeping early hours, and being most particular about warm dry clothes. He has good lungs and a powerful voice and, like Patrick Brontë, is said to swallow a raw egg before preaching a sermon. He is very particular about what he eats and drinks. He despises tea but likes malt liquors, bacon and eggs, ham and hung beef.

He has been the vicar at Linden-Car for many years. Although Helen lived at Wildfell Hall as a girl and her maid Rachel was then her nurse, the vicar fails to recognise them on their return to their former home. Perhaps his sight or his memory is in decline. (Certainly his health is and towards the end of the book he dies.)

Mary Millward/Wilson: Mary is Michael Millward's elder daughter. She is several years older, several inches taller and has a larger and coarser build than her sister Eliza. As befits a plain girl she is quiet and sensible. She is the family drudge and patiently nursed her mother

through her last long tedious illness. While Eliza does embroidery, Mary is mending stockings. Not surprisingly she is trusted and valued by her father. Loved? The author did not say. But she was loved by all the cats, dogs, children and poor people in the neighbourhood. Hopefully human love came to her when she marries Richard Wilson.

Eliza Millward: Michael Millward's younger daughter and a good friend of Rose Markham. She is an amusing little thing, a very engaging little creature. Her figure is slight and plump and she has a small face, nearly as round as Rose's. Her complexion is similar to Rose's but is less decidedly blooming. Her nose is *retrousse* and her features are generally irregular. She is perhaps more charming than pretty.

She has long, narrow eyes with black or very dark brown irids. Her expression is ever changing -- wicked and bewitching. She has a gentle, childish voice with a light tread as soft as a cat -- and the manners of a playful kitten.

It is no wonder that she bewitched Gilbert, until he came under the spell of a deeper charm.

Sarah: She is the Millwards' maid.

Mrs Wilson: Mrs Wilson is the widow of a substantial farmer, a narrow-minded tattling old gossip.

Jane: Jane is Mrs Wilson's daughter. She is a young lady of some talents and more ambition. She has a boarding school education with acquired elegance of manners and has managed to lose her provincial accent. She is about 26 years old and is tall and slender. Her complexion is fair and brilliant. She has a small head with a long neck and a long chin. Her hair is neither chestnut nor auburn, but a most decided, bright, light red. Her eyes are clear hazel, quick and penetrating but devoid of poetry or feeling. She scornfully repulsed or

rejected suitors in her own rank but had designs on Frederick Lawrence.

Robert Wilson: One of Mrs Wilson's 2 sons, he was a rough, countrified farmer.

Richard (Dick): Another of Mrs Wilson's 2 sons. He is a retiring, studious young man who was studying the classics with the vicar's help. He enters the church and succeeds Reverend Millward after that gentleman's death. However the Millward family connection with the parish continues with Richard marrying the vicar's useful daughter, Mary.

Mr Leighton: He is the preacher at the Staningley church.

Mr Oldfield, Mr Boreham, Mr Wilmot: These are some of unsuccessful Helen's suitors.

Lord Lowborough, Ralph Hattersley and Mr Grimsby: Along with Walter Hargraves, these are some of Arthur's friends. Lowborough dissipated his fortune in gambling and other vices but may find redemption through his marriage to Millicent Hargraves. Grimsby has a sinister cast in his countenance with a mixture of lurking ferocity and fulsome insincerity.

Rachel: She is Helen's maid. She has been with her for many years. She recalls the early days at Wildfell Hall when Helen was a girl. She was her maid at Grassdale Manor and ran away with her to Wildfell Hall.

Benson, John, Mrs Greaves and Alice Myers: Benson, as the name suggests, was the butler at Grassdale Manor. John was a servant and Mrs Greaves the housekeeper. Shortly before Helen's flight from

Grassdale Alice Myers was hired as a governess to young Arthur. Perhaps attended to the needs of his father more than the son. She disappears when he falls ill and when Helen comes to him his clouded brain thinks it is Alice who has returned.

Jacob: Jacob was a man who was nearby when Eliza thought Gilbert was going to faint.

ANIMALS:

Black Bess, Grey Tom, Nimrod: Huntingdon's horses.

Dash: Mr Huntingdon's favourite cocker spaniel.

Ruby: Helen's horse.

Sancho: Gilbert's black and white setter.

WRITERS & ARTISTS

Sir Walter Scott ("*Marmion*")

Shakespeare ("*Macbeth*")

Vandyke

HISTORICAL CHARACTERS

Humphrey Davy: inventor of mining lamp.

Mahomet: the prophet.

Sir Herbert, Valentine: famous lovers.

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

Absalom, Adam, David, Eli, Jesus, Peter, Solomon.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

George: by ...

Lord Harry: by the ...

Hebe: a very ...

Miss Nancy: make a ... of him

Cupid: ...'s arrows

Caroline: generic term for sweetheart

PLACES

Linden-Car: This wooded valley, with its corn-fields and meadow lands, is the home of the Markhams. It is 2 miles from Wildfell Hall.

Linden-hope: This is the nearby village where Richard Wilson became vicar.

Wildfell Hall: This was the birthplace of Helen and later her refuge as the tenant of her brother. It is 2 miles from Linden-Car and 4 miles from the sea. It is near the top of a hill. It is described as a superannuated Elizabethan mansion of dark, grey stone. It is picturesque but dull and gloomy. It has thick stone mullions and little latticed panes. It is surrounded by Scotch firs, half blighted by the storms. Behind lie a few desolate fields leading up to a heath-clad summit. In front there is a garden, abandoned for many years. It is enclosed by stone walls and is entered by an iron gate with balls of grey granite surmounting the gate-posts.

Woodford: The home of Frederick Lawrence.

Ryecote Farm: The home of the Wilsons.

Staningley Hall: This is home of the Maxwells, later inherited by Helen.

Grassdale Manor: This is the home of Helen and Arthur Huntingdon. Years later, when young Arthur grew up and was married he took it over.

Fernley Manor, Cumberland: name given by Helen to her painting of Wildfell Hall

REAL PLACES

England, London, Cambridge, Dover, Scotland, France, Paris, Italy, Rome, Berlin, Atlantic

