The Brontë Centenary at Haworth

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To cite this article: Jonas Bradley (1917) The Brontë Centenary at Haworth, Brontë Society Transactions, 5:27, 181-184, DOI: [10.1179/030977617798887922](https://doi.org/10.1179/030977617798887922)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/030977617798887922>

Published online: 18 Jul 2013.

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THE BRONTË CENTENARY AT HAWORTH.

Impressions contributed to the "Yorkshire Observer"
of June 19th, 1916, by Mr. Jonas Bradley.

Bishop Welldon, in his wonderfully eloquent appreciation of the Brontës, mentioned that the charming weather gave visitors little idea of the inhospitable nature of the bleak and barren hills and moors which surrounded the parsonage house at Haworth. Mrs. Gaskell's sombre picture would scarcely be believed by the thousands of visitors who attended the celebration and who made the pilgrimage to the waterfalls, for nature was at her very best and everything conspired to make the day a memorable one. Matthew Arnold, in his poem on Haworth Churchyard, written at the time of Charlotte's death, says in the concluding lines of that fine appreciation of the genius of the Brontës:—

Sleep, O cluster of friends,
Sleep!—or only when May,
Brought by the West-wind, returns
Back to your native heaths,
And the plover is heard on the moors,
Yearly awake to behold
The opening summer, the sky,
The shining moorland—to hear
The drowsy bee, as of old,
Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse
Call from the heather in bloom!
Sleep, or only for this
Break your united repose!

Unquiet souls!
In the dark fermentation of earth,
In the never idle workshop of nature,
In the eternal movement,
Ye shall find yourselves again!

This picture of the "shining moorland" was very true on Saturday afternoon, and several who have attempted descriptions of it in prose or verse—including Mr. Halliwell Sutcliffe, the distinguished Yorkshire novelist—thoroughly enjoyed the ramble.

As the vast crowd emerged from the church, press photographers were busy among the more notable visitors, and among the old people who have passed the allotted span, but who still have vivid recollections of the Brontës. As these chatted with each other and "swopped" tales of their early years at Haworth a cinematographer was also at work amongst them. It would have been interesting to hear all that was said of the church school where Charlotte used to superintend the needlework and knitting, and of the Sunday school where she used to teach. Mrs. Tempest, of Rough Nook, who had had the proud privilege of knitting a pair of socks for the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, under Charlotte's instruction and supervision, was present. Mr. and Mrs. John L. Smith, of Blackpool, told of being married by Mr. Nicholls in 1861, the year of Mr. Brontë's death. Mr. Smith is now in his eighty-third year, but pays annual visits to the "fatherland," and figures prominently in the photograph taken in front of the museum when Bishop Welldon and other notables submitted to the camera. In the same group was Mr. W. W. Yates, a veteran journalist, of Dewsbury, and one of the founders of the Brontë Society. He is comparatively active under a weight of eighty-seven summers, and was evidently in his element on Saturday. Another interesting personage, still in full possession of all his faculties, looking twenty or thirty years younger than one of 82, was Mr. James Barraclough, of Thornton. He told of being "kursened" (christened) by the Rev. P. Brontë. In the days when the late Edwin Feather was postmaster, and also kept a jeweller's shop near the rectory, Mr. Barraclough was his assistant, and he prides himself on having taken, by the old wet-plate process, several photographs which are well known all over the world—notably the portrait of Mr. Brontë with the hugh

cravat which reached almost to his mouth. Some of his latest exposures were made under vigorous protests from his curate, Charlotte Brontë's husband, who lived with the aged father to the end.

After tea hundreds wended their way to the moors and the Brontë Waterfalls along the "Little, lone green Lane" that Emily wrote so charmingly about when by "alien firelight" she pencilled the lines that so powerfully expressed her intense longing for home. She was then at Miss Wooler's School at Roehead, near Kirkstall Priory, but she never settled there, or anywhere else, as a matter of fact, away from her beloved moorlands. Mr. Bradley, who acted as leader on this pilgrimage to the waterfalls, gave a short address pointing out the places of literary interest that could be seen from an eminence near the cemetery. As this place was approached an interesting relic was to be seen—the Brontë chair that used to stand in the back parlour at the Black Bull Hotel, and which was associated with the unfortunate but gifted Branwell's too frequent visits to that noted hostelry. A charge was made for the privileges of sitting in the chair—for which it is said, nearly £100 was offered some years ago by a wealthy American. By this way a considerable sum of money, over ten guineas, was raised for the Red Cross funds. Another means of raising money for this worthy object was the sale of Mr. Dickinson's relief map of the Brontë country and key to the place-names of literary interest. A thousand copies had been neatly printed and folded and formed quite an interesting and handsome souvenir of the occasion.

Scores of Brontë enthusiasts sat amongst the bracken and heather round the waterfall while Mr. Bradley told tales racy of the soil and quoted passages from the Brontës' works descriptive of moorland scenery. Mr. Edwin Mountain gave a recitation, and Mr. Hirst, head-master of the Haworth Central Schools and a member of the Brontë Society, bade the party a hearty welcome to the Brontë Country. Mr. William Smith, of

Keighley, proposed a vote of thanks to those who had assisted during the day, and this was seconded by Mr. Clem England, of Colne, an ardent admirer of the Brontës, who concluded an eloquent little speech by reciting Emily's last lines commencing, "No coward soul is mine." During the speaking a pair of willow wrens were busy feeding a brood of six half-fledged young within half-a-dozen yards of the Brontë Seat—aptly illustrating Charlotte's fine passage, "There's not a tuft of heather, not a blade of grass, not a fluttering lark or linnet but reminds me of Emily."