

The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1989

NO. 8

SECRETARY'S LETTER

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed the general meeting in Manchester at Cross Street Chapel on 22 April with a stimulating talk by Angus Easson, and an outing to Haworth and Gawthorpe Hall on 28 June. The latter was not too well supported; I wonder why? I would welcome comments and suggestions on outings, meetings and any other Society matters.

Plans are almost finalised for our joint weekend conference with the Brontë Society to be held at the Charlotte Mason College, Ambleside, 7-9 September 1990. Space is likely to be at a premium.

Our AGM meeting on 7 October will be held at The Royal George Hotel. (Optional) lunch will be followed by AGM and an address by Margaret Smith on 'Mrs Gaskell as a humourist'. Brook Street Chapel will be open during the morning for visits and viewing of the exhibition arranged by Mrs Mary Thwaite on the history of the chapel. On Sunday there will be an outing to Styal to see the apprentice house, village, chapels and Norcliffe Hall; Dean Row Chapel (contemporary with Brook Street) with tea at Adlington Hall.

On 4 November we will be holding our first London meeting at St James Church, Clerkenwell, close to Farringdon Street Station. Please try to come if you live in the South East - details later to members in this area.

The major problem in running our Society, and many others, is keeping track of membership. I mentioned this in my last newsletter. I must apologise to Mrs Lilian Clode, who took on the role of my assistant, if I implied that this resulted in problems; any errors and muddles are entirely mine, but we found that members were confused by having another address to remember. Please send your annual membership dues (£5 on 1 September) to Mrs Kinder, Treasurer, 16 Sandileigh Avenue, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0AG or to me, or pay at the AGM. An inaccurate membership list resulted in some delays and omissions in mailing the journal; if you have not received the 1989 edition please let me know. Until we have a computer or a

more efficient secretary, you'll have to make do with me!

We hope to see many of you at our AGM weekend and hope others feel they are sharing Society affairs through our publications.

JOAN LEACH

"300 YEARS OF HISTORY"

An Exhibition with this title is being arranged in the gallery (above the west porch) at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, to mark the year of its Tercentenary, and the passing of the "Toleration Act" in May 1689. This Act made it legally possible for dissenters from the Anglican Church to gather together for their own way of worship, and to erect buildings for this purpose, subject to registration of such places by the proper authority. So the monopoly enforced by the established Church since the Restoration was broken, and a limited freedom was enjoyed at last by those who wished for some deviation from its creed and liturgy and government. But toleration as yet did not go very far. Roman Catholics and anti-Trinitarians were excluded, and nearly all the 39 Articles of Faith as set out in the Book of Common Prayer had to be accepted by dissenting ministers.

Brook Street Chapel, the oldest existing place of worship in the town, was the result of much effort on the part of those worshippers who had been meeting in secret for many years. It was in November 1687 that the first minister of what was to be Brook Street Chapel was appointed. This was William Tong, who after a short period in Chester, was then ordained as pastor of the Knutsford congregation. Mr Tong was later to become a distinguished leader of the English Presbyterians. He stayed in Knutsford for little more than two years - an eventful two years according to the Rev Henry Green who later found evidence that the 'New-Chappel' at Brook Street was being erected before his departure in 1690. With the devoted

layman, Isaac Antrobus, who gave land for the building, near to where he lived at Brook House, Tong may be acclaimed as one of the founders of the Chapel.

The Exhibition attempts to show in modest fashion something of the history of the Chapel since members met before it existed in a long vanished cottage, once sited near Cross Town Church. The oldest original item on show is a rather tattered copy of volume one of the Bible Commentaries of Matthew Henry, a friend of Tong, and minister at Chester from 1687-1711. Readers of North and South may perhaps recall that this work - all six volumes of it kept in her splendid dining room - was the usual reading of Mrs Thornton (chapters 9 and 26).

Another exhibit showing something of the early history of the Chapel is taken from a copy of the Minutes of the Cheshire 'Classis' (meetings of ministers of the district for the discussion of chapel affairs and the ministry). These cover a period from 1691-1743. Both the original manuscript and the printed transcription by Alexander Gordon published in 1919 are in the possession of the Chapel. Most of the meetings took place at Knutsford.

Other items in the Exhibition reflect the progress made from early Presbyterian orthodoxy to a more liberal and Unitarian faith. In Mrs Gaskell's day, when as a child she accompanied her Aunt Lumb through leafy lanes to the service at Brook Street, these changes were becoming more prominent. The leadership of Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey in the later 18th century laid the foundations of the Unitarian movement. And at Knutsford when Henry Green, fresh from college, became the minister in 1827, much was done to foster a more liberal and unfettered Christian faith. One example can be seen in the copy of the catalogue of the Chapel Library he instituted in 1833. This indicates the serious interest and extent of Unitarian writings. It was an age of Tracts, and one or two examples of Unitarian tracts of that time which still survive will be on show. Brook Street Chapel is one of the few that still retain an old Chapel Library - or what is left of it.

More recent events are also represented, including the Rev Albert Smith's 'Scrap-book' with illustrations of the 150th centenary celebrations in 1960 of Mrs Gaskell's birth, and chapel events of that period.

The Chapel will be open on Saturday 7 October 1989 from 10.30 am to 12 midday, to allow visitors to the Gaskell Society meeting to see this Exhibition and visit the Chapel that day if they wish. I hope to be there and to do my best to answer any questions.

MARY THWAITE



Available as note-cards. Packet of 6 for 95p. For Brook Street Chapel Restoration Fund.

For the same cause - FLOWER FESTIVAL - 15-17 September Staged by Knutsford & District Flower Clubs.

Admission by programme £1.00

I recently paid a visit to Pescara in Italy where, at the invitation of Professor Francesco Marroni, I gave two lectures to students of English at the 'Gabriel D'Annunzio' University. The first of these was on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the literature of the industrial city', and the second on George Eliot. The lectures were followed by informal discussion with the students, and I was impressed both by their command of English, and their enthusiasm for Victorian literature generally. Several of them were in the process of writing dissertations on works by Mrs Gaskell for their final degree examination, and their questions were both knowledgable and penetrating. I enjoyed my visit immensely, not least in that the programme Francesco had arranged for me allowed me to spend some time with him discussing our mutual interests. Francesco himself has recently been involved in the publication of translations of several of Mrs Gaskell's stories. His own translation of The Ghost in the Garden Room and other tales includes, as well as the title-story (more usually known in England by its alternative title of The Crooked Branch), The Doom of the Griffiths and Six Weeks at Heppenheim, while he has also written the introduction to a translation by his wife, writing under her own name of Grazia Colli, of The Grey Woman. The appearance of these stories in Italy is a tribute to Mrs Gaskell's popularity there: they are an interesting reflection too of her own taste for tales of the supernatural, an aspect of her work that has not always attracted the attention it might. Returning from Pescara via Rome I was able to visit the location close to the Spanish steps where Mrs Gaskell stayed during her own visit there in 1857. In the next issue of The Gaskell Society Journal we shall be publishing an article by Mary Thwaite on Mrs Gaskell's Italian connections, and my visit, for which thanks are due to Professor Marroni and his colleagues at Pescara, was a happy reminder of this dimension of Mrs Gaskell's life and work.

ALAN SHELSTON

This year's books indicate the increasing interest in the shorter works. Pride of place goes to a new paperback edition of My Lady Ludlow and other stories in Oxford University Press' World Classics series (£5.95). Edited by Edgar Wright, Professor of English in the Laurentian University of Ontario, Canada, who recently edited Mary Barton in the same series.

The text is based on the 1859 two volume collection Round the Sofa published by Sampson Low, but with certain somewhat controversial differences. Originally Mrs Gaskell had gathered together a number of short stories from various journals:- My Lady Ludlow, An accursed race, The doom of the Griffiths, The poor Clare, Half a life-time ago and The half-brothers and added an introduction and linking material to make a continuous narrative. The new edition omits Half a life-time ago because it was included with Cousin Phillis in an earlier volume in the series and replaced it with Mr Harrison's confessions. The linking material is now relegated to an appendix.

Nevertheless the text is scrupulously edited as instanced by the rectifying of the misprint 'as black a traitor as if he had been born in Builth' (p.229) which appeared as Bluith in the 1906 Knutsford edition, and provided with textual notes and an introduction which formed the basis of Professor Wright's article My Lady Ludlow: forms of social change and forms of fiction in Gaskell Society Journal vol. 3 (1989)

An anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd, Pandora Press, £23.00, is a mammoth volume (925 pages) which comprises a representative selection of women's writing. 60 British authors are included from Julian of Norwich to Angela Carter and all genres-fiction, poetry, prose and drama represented though novels regrettably only in extract. Mrs Gaskell is represented by the short story The well of Pen Morfa which "signals a growth of social and political concern" in women's writing. The book is also interesting for the presence of several minor contemporaries whose work is no longer available in

print, eg Geraldine Jewsbury (selections from Letters to Jane Welsh Carlyle) and Eliza Lynn Linton. George Eliot is represented by the critical essay Silly novels by lady novelists in which she bemoans the fact that "Harriet Martineau, Currer Bell and Mrs Gaskell have been treated as cavalierly as if they had been men".

Romantic crime in the Victorian novel by Anthea Trodd (lecturer in English at the University of Keele) Macmillan, £27.50, also mentions short stories as well as novels. The author tells how crime is used by Victorian novelists to show the tensions within society with particular reference to class and gender conflict. Novelists discussed include Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, James and Wilkie Collins as well as the more sensational writers such as Mary Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood. An early chapter deals with the relationship of the heroine to the police in Mary Barton and North and South while a later one discusses the role of the servant with particular reference to Dark night's work, the Grey women and Right at last.

However a new biography Charles Dickens by Fred Kaplan (Hodder and Stoughton, £17.95) which mentions their relationship dismisses the short stories she contributed to Household Words as morbid.

Staying with Dickens far more useful is the latest volume of the Pilgrim edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens vol. 6, 1850-1852 (edited by Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Nina Burges, Clarendon Press, £80.00) which has now reached the stage where it is relevant to Gaskell studies. It includes 35 letters from Dickens, several of them published for the first time. They show his reaction to several stories such as Lizzie Leigh and the early episodes of Cranford. They also mention a projected article which Mrs Gaskell planned to write on a factory school which had impressed her, run by James Pillans Wilson (Mr Wilson of Price's Candle factory in GL.162) but which she abandoned out of deference to her subject's wishes. This all goes to show how many of Mrs Gaskell's letters have been lost.

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 2nd enlarged edition Vol. VII: The Later Years Part 4 (1840-1853) by Alan G Hill (Clarendon Press, £70.00) includes a letter of July 22, 1840 to William Gaskell praising his Temperance Rhymes. Several letters assigned to Elizabeth Gaskell in the first edition have been reassigned to Mrs Mary Gaskell wife of MP for Maldon.

Finally the explanatory notes of Stephen Gill's biography William Wordsworth (Clarendon Press, £17.50) include the following anecdote. In a letter of July 1849, following a dinner at Rydal Mount, Edward Quillinan, Wordsworth's son-in-law wrote to Mrs Hartley Coleridge - that she was 'As nice a person as possible ... a great pet'.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

The Society will be represented at THE NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL at Manchester Town Hall on 15th and 16th September.

This should be well worth visiting - publishers, book-sellers and dealers, libraries etc. Held for the first time last year, the editor of a leading journal described it as 'the most consistently crowded fair that I have attended'.

The Town Hall itself is well worth a visit. Architect Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) was also responsible for Manchester Assize Courts, the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, AND Knutsford Town Hall!

Mrs Gaskell would have been pleased about the latter as she knew him socially and he was a member of Cross Street Chapel. She tried to further his career by appealing to John Ruskin to use his influence in getting Waterhouse on the list of architects to compete for the design of London Law Courts in 1865. Does anyone know if this plea succeeded?

The range of varying emotions given unfettered scope in the last century is often remarkable. Readers of Mrs Gaskell's letters will recall her comical account of the hapless Mrs J J Tayler and her 'impromptu baby at Blackpool; - went there and lo & behold a little girl unexpectedly made her appearance, & clothes have had to be sent in such a hurry. Bathing places do so much good. Susan and Mary went to Blackpool last year, but did not derive the same benefit. ... So ends Mrs J J Tayler's "delicate state of health arising from some internal complaint", as Mr Ransom called it.'

A sense of humour was always useful in days when Mrs Gaskell could write that little cousins were 'pouring in upon the world'. In The Water Babies Charles Kingsley, with careless male insouciance, invented that nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, who 'took up two great armfuls of babies - nine hundred under one arm, and thirteen hundred under the other - and threw them away, right and left, into the water.' Not that they seem to have minded in his fable, for they 'did not even take their thumbs out of their mouths, but came paddling and wriggling back to her like so many tadpoles, till you could see nothing of her from head to foot for the swarm of little babies.' It all sounds great fun.

The very opposite is seen in a letter from Mrs Gaskell's American friend, Charles Eliot Norton, to her second daughter, Meta, on 17 June 1866. In it he announces the birth of his own second daughter and asks permission to name the child in memory of Mrs Gaskell, who had died some six months before. The 'birth of a little child is a most grave & serious joy', Norton writes; and he trusts that the influence of Mrs Gaskell's spirit will 'impress itself on the character of our little child if she should live to grow up'. The last clause reminds us that we must look elsewhere in Kingsley's myth of Evolution for the ever-present facts of mortality in this world.

To Meta, however, the request was infinitely touching:

Dear Mr Norton - thank you again and again - Papa is so pleased to think of your calling your baby by Mama's name - It was exactly - Elizabeth Cleghorn - She was called so after the daughter (the only child - 'and she was a widow') of a Mrs Cleghorn who had been very good to Mama's mother; and just as Mama was born this Miss Cleghorn died, and the little baby was called after her - at the poor mother's request - (5 July 1866)

A letter of 10 September 1866 from Mrs Susan Norton shows that the baby was sometimes known as Lizzie, and one of 17 March (1867) acknowledges Meta's gift of a locket 'for little Lily', which had been Mrs Gaskell's name in her family circle. Susan Norton carefully put the locket away in Meta's packing, 'that it may come to Lily if she lives, as it did to me, fresh from your loving hands'. Again, we note the automatic qualification. When life is known to be so very precarious for infants, it is no wonder that love and fellow feeling are openly expressed and often signified in names and keepsakes. The locket contained some hair of Mrs Gaskell's, not trusted to the jeweller's hands for fear it would be changed, but put in as neatly as 'dear old Hearn could' (Meta to Charles Norton, 28 March 1867).

Perhaps the name Cleghorn was not continued. The editor of Mrs Gaskell's correspondence with Charles Norton, Jane Whitehill, thanked 'Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton' for placing all these letters in Harvard University Library. It was a Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton who in 1928 gave Knutsford Library 'a lock of Mrs Gaskell's hair in a gold pendant set with turquoise and pearl': a valuable and tangible reminder of the bonds human beings forge - though 'Mama used often to say that the power of sympathy depended on the power of imagination', Meta told Charles Norton in a letter of 2 July 1867.

J A V CHAPPLE

Editor's Note

Sadly the locket was stolen from Knutsford Library some time ago but there is still Meta's small water colour sketch of her mother, sent to Charles Eliza Norton with this letter:

'Dear Mr Norton

I cannot tell you how much I wish that this were better. But nothing could ever give her face. Your charming present of 'Snow bound' is come and I think it is most beautiful. It is so pleasant to feel that you think of us and it is so good of you to send such proof of remembrance. They always come just when one feels dreary, by some lucky chance.

Ever your

M.E.G.'

(dated April 19th - probably 1866 when 'Snow Bound' was published)

The picture, framed in Boston, seems to have been given to the Library by Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton, with the locket, in 1928. It seems as if the 'Cleghorn' name was either not given at Miss Norton's baptism or became unused later.



'A heterogenous mass of nonsense' was the critical comment on one of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters, made by her noted cousin, Sir Henry Holland. A remark which rankled enough to be remembered some years later when she believed that he could not say such a thing now that she had published Mary Barton! William had called another letter of hers 'slipshod and seemed to wish me not to send it' (though she did) (GL.13) but so often she wrote in haste, snatching minutes in a hectic schedule.

The letters reveal her caring, unselfish nature, always ready to give time, effort and sympathy to others; they show her anxieties and problems with family and writing, faced with courage and often humour; her commitment such as social work, entertaining and health-restoring travel which left her with all too little writing time.

Charlotte Brontë found one of her letters 'as pleasant as a quiet chat, as welcome as a spring flower, as reviving as a friend's visit; in short it was very like a page of Cranford'.

Rev Henry Green was the minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, and the two families were friends; the Greens' daughters often joined the Gaskells on holiday and visits were exchanged. A descendant of the Greens, Dr Robin Jamison has in his possession thirteen letters written to Mrs Green by Mrs Gaskell; these are mainly of family matters but reveal, once again, the pressure of many commitments.

Monday night
(? 15 October 1855)

My Dearest Mary,
I am dressed to go to the Hallés as your note and parcel are brought but I have a few minutes to spare before the others are ready & so I shall write as hard as I can. I am so dog-tired I would far rather stay at home, agreeable as it will be, Scotts and Hallés - but the girls want to go & Mr Gaskell is too busy to chaperone them so he stops at home & I go & only wish someone less tired were in my place to enjoy what I

know ought to be enjoyed'. She then details the last week - visiting 'one of Miss Brontë's friends' (Ellen Nussey) going all over 'Miss Brontë's school places and the places named in Shirley & made myself acquainted with a district of 5 miles square (research for the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë')'; then arrived home to find a stream of visitors and now 'I ought to be copying letters &c some hours every day, I ought to be making flannel petticoats, as usual and just at present I can't'.

Three of the Green letters add to our knowledge on the subject of Ruth. She had been surprised to learn that the first two volumes of Ruth had been printed (GL.137) while she was telling Marianne that she might put off publishing it for another year (GL.136). Then Mrs Green had written to say that she had seen an advertisement for it.

Saturday
(november 1852)

My Dear Mary

... Ruth has yet to be written', which is an expression I used only this morn'g to Wm before your letter came. I mean it is far from completion and I feel uncertain if it ever will be done - I have written a good deal of it ... I am so far from satisfied with it myself, that I don't know how much to rewrite, or what to do about it; I was as much startled as you could be by the advertisement. However, it will not hurry me, & until I have thought it out fully I shall not write it, & if I never think it out it will never be either written or (consequently) published. And I am very very busy even for the mechanical writing, much so for the thought required. However it may all come in a minute, & it may never come; so you may fancy that in this state seeing the advertisement, or rather hearing of it - I have not seen it - is an annoyance. And if & when it does come I give you warning I doubt if it is a book that you will like to have in your family.

This is forced on me, and all by Chapman's impatience. I don't want it talked about. It only disturbs me utterly, and I expect I shall have grief and annoyance enough to go

through about it, & lack all the strength I can muster to do right. However it is not yet written & may never be.

... I would rather have all this considered private please dear Mary; except that discourage any putting it down on the part of my friends please. - I had hoped to have come over to Knutsford before this subject of pain to me was broached. Now I shall not come, because morbid or not morbid I can't bear to be talked to about it. So don't let us say any more. If I decide on never finishing it I will tell you all about it, - if not, you will know soon enough.

We (Meta & I) have enjoyed ourselves heartily at the Lakes, only I was very ill one week, partly with worry about this book, - & thought I was going to have the typhus fever. I had such deadly headaches and faintness.'

With the pressure from her publisher, Chapman, and the strain on her health from the anxiety and the conflict within herself on presenting the subject of illegitimacy in fiction, she clearly decided it must be finished quickly and wrote to Eliza Fox (GL.146) on December 20th,

'And Ruth is done - utterly off my mind and gone up to the printers - that's all I know about it.'

And to Mrs Green she wrote:-

'I do so wish I could come over to Knutsford. I have hoped & tried, - for after that book of mine is published (this week I think) I don't feel as if I ever could. And yet yr letter today makes me wish more than ever. I shd so like to 'compare notes' and talk things over with you. Yet every day brings ever more than it's full work; and - we have many visitors coming this Xmas, and an inefficient servant.'

Although she had steeled herself for a critical reaction to the publication of Ruth by the press and friends, it was even worse than feared and she suffered

physically and emotionally as a result. She 'could not get over the hard things people said of Ruth ... I think I must be an improper woman without knowing it, I do so manage to shock people' (GL.150). 'An unfit subject for fiction' is the thing to say about it; I knew all this before ... 'Deep regret' is what my friends (such as Miss Mitchell) feel and express. In short, the only comparison I can find for myself is to St. Sebastian tied to a tree to be shot at with arrows'; this she wrote to her sister-in-law, Anne Robson (GL.148); she wrote to her as she had to Mrs Green, saying that she had hoped to see her before the book came out and that she had '... taken leave of my respectable friends up and down the country; you, I don't call respectable, but you are surrounded by respectabilities, & I can't encounter their 'shock'.' But there was very little saving humour to be found and only the letters of encouragement from those whose opinions she cared for - Kingsley, Dickens, F D Maurice, Mrs Browning and Charlotte Brontë - revived her.

Mrs Green wrote, too, with approval, 'Henry says he has not cried so much for many years and we do all so admire not only the substance but the style', to which Elizabeth replied: (see facsimile on back cover)

'Your letter was such a relief (first) & pleasure afterwards. I had fancied from what Miss Mitchell had said of what Mr Green had said that both you & he wd be shocked. - I could not wonder, for I am sure I should have been repulsed by hearing that a 'tale of seduction' was chosen as a subject for fiction, - that was the opinion I dreaded; - I felt almost sure that if people would only read what I had to say they would not be disgusted, - but I feared & still think it probable that many may refuse to read any book of that kind - (I am writing in such a hurry I can't stop to make myself clear,) but yet I did feel as if I had some thing to say about it that I must say, and you know I can tell stories better than any other way of expressing myself.

This is all a muddle, but I am trying in my heart to arrange how I can do my duty (i.e. stop at home this

eveng for a class of Sunday School girls) & have my pleasure (i.e. go and dine at the Schwabes with the Scotts, Mrs Fanny Kemble -) & I find I 'cannot serve two masters', but must just stop at home - and now that's decided - I've written to Mrs S. - so now I can make myself distinct to you.'

When the dust had settled a little she weighed the balance and decided, 'From the very warmth with which people have discussed the tale I take heart of grace; it has made them talk and think a little on a subject which is so painful that it requires all one's bravery not to hide one's head like an ostrich and try by doing so to forget that the evil exists'. (GL.154)

JOAN LEACH

COLLECTED LETTERS

Professor J A V Chapple is working on the Green letters and others, as yet unpublished.

A new edition of 'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell' edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard would be welcome but Manchester University Press say the cost would be prohibitive. A supplementary edition would be the best substitute.

'Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell' edited by R D Waller, John Rylands, Library Bulletin Vol.20 1936 deserves to be revised and reprinted.

We will hope that Society funds and influence will increase to encourage such endeavours.

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

You may be surprised at the range of interests.
4 x 14p stamps to K Oultram, Clatterwick Hall, Little Leigh, Nr Northwich, Cheshire, for ALS newsletter.

Rebecca Fraser, in her recent biography Charlotte Brontë (Methuen), states that Mrs Gaskell had written in letters to 'several people', that if she had known of Charlotte's illness and the pregnancy that seems to have been the cause, she could have terminated it (p.488). I have only been able to track down the letter on the subject in Chapple and Pollard's edition of the Gaskell letters (No.233 and not 223 as given in Rebecca Fraser's chapter notes), in which, on the 12th April 1855, Mrs Gaskell wrote to John Greenwood (Chapple and Pollard p.337), 'I do fancy that I could have induced her - even though they had all felt angry with me at first - to do what was so absolutely necessary for her very life'.

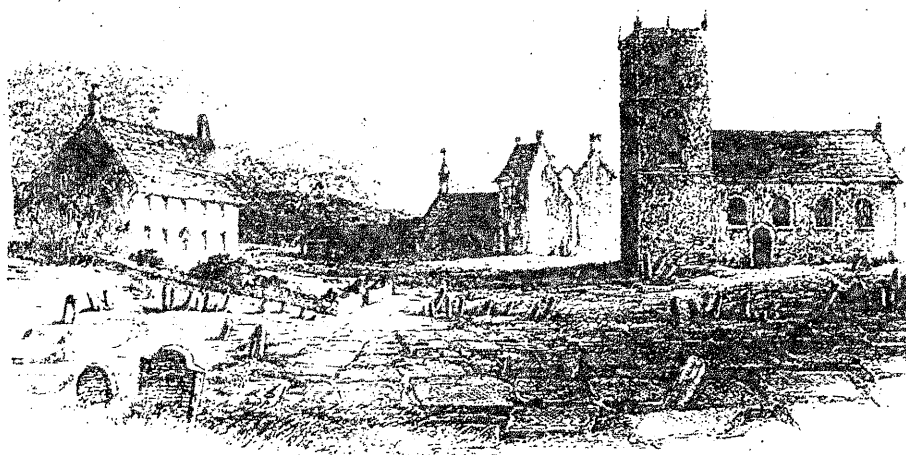
I had always taken the meaning of 'induce' as 'persuasion' to accept her (Mrs Gaskell's) nursing. As a Dissenter who was not welcomed at Haworth by Mr Nicholls, but who herself had gone through five pregnancies and most probably experienced similar cases in her social work in Manchester, it seemed to me that she felt she could have persuaded Charlotte to allow her to nurse her, persuade her to eat and so saved her life.

I had never considered that the word 'induce' had ever been used in a medical sense until recent years, when there has been some controversy about the birth of babies being induced by doctors on Fridays so that they could count on having a free weekend. However, the complete Oxford English Dictionary gives the word as having first appeared in The Lancet in 1840, then in 1852 and 1859, and defined as a new method of bringing about the premature birth of a child which was 'greatly to the benefit of the mother'. The treatment was a herbal one.

Of course, Mrs Gaskell knew well two distinguished doctors, her brother-in-law Sam Gaskell and her uncle, Sir Henry Holland, a distinguished London physician, and it may well have been that she had been given the herbal formula by one or other of them. Certainly, from the wording in The Lancet, there is no trace of medical prejudice against what we would now probably call abortion, as only the benefit of the mother is mentioned.

In any case, it seems that Rebecca Fraser is correct in her interpretation of the word, thus throwing a new light on Mrs Gaskell, who appears as even more 'practical' than she has so often been described. She may well have been prepared to act entirely on her own initiative and we must be prepared to be surprised at the way in which Victorian women may have helped themselves and each other to something that is now normally only available professionally.

ANNA UNSWORTH



Mrs Gaskell to George Smith (publisher) Feb 6th, 1857

'I send you a sepia drawing from a sketch of mine of Haworth Parsonage, Sexton's Shed, School-house and Sexton's (tall) House (where the Curate lodged) and the Church' (GL.339)

As used in 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'

OUTING TO HAWORTH AND GAWTHORPE HALL

When I mentioned to friends and acquaintances that I was going to visit Haworth the usual response was that they had been there and it rained! So when Gaskell Society members arrived there in the wind and the rain - it had not been raining when we left Knutsford - we felt it was traditional, but it was frustrating to have almost the only wet day in three months of hot, dry summer. Haworth did not exhibit its best for Mrs Gaskell either; Charlotte had invited her to come when 'the heath is in bloom, now. I have watched and waited for its purple signal as the forerunner of your coming' but when she arrived Mrs Gaskell found '... it had all been blighted by a thunderstorm a day or two before and was all of a livid brown colour, instead of the blaze of purple glory it ought to have been. Oh! those high wild, desolate moors, up above the whole world and the very realm of silence'. (GL.167)

We were prevented by the weather from walking on the moors as we had hoped to do, under the guidance of Mrs Eunice Skirrow who had helped us to plan our day.

We were welcomed to the Parsonage by the newly-appointed Chairman of The Brontë Society, Michael Steed; it seemed highly appropriate that this meeting was his first official event. Michael is also a member of our Society. He had been reading 'The Memorials of Two Sisters', where Catherine Winkworth told of her meeting Charlotte at the Gaskells' in Manchester, of her intensely shy nature and how the three of them had talked of Charlotte's forthcoming marriage. Charlotte wrote to Catherine while on her honeymoon in Ireland. It was in a letter to Catherine that Mrs Gaskell had described her first meeting with Charlotte, at the Kay-Shuttleworth's holiday house near Windermere, Briery Close: '... A pretty drawing room ... in which were Sir James and Lady KS and a little lady in black silk gown, whom I could not see at first for the dazzle in the room; she came up & shook hands with me at once ...' Charlotte had been an unwilling visitor, going more to please her father than herself, but she found Mrs Gaskell a congenial spirit, writing to Ellen Nussey: 'I was truly glad of her companionship. She is a woman of

the most genuine talent, of cheerful, pleasing and cordial manners, and, I believe, of a kind and good heart'.

On our visit it was this friendship we had in mind, the visits exchanged between friends and the link made between them by the Kay-Shuttleworths, whose home at Gawthorpe Hall we visited in their footsteps.

We were not surprised to find Haworth Parsonage busy with visitors, some pilgrims like ourselves, but we were privileged to have a special viewing, including the Library. Mrs Gaskell found the house 'exquisitely clean' and 'the perfection of warmth, snugness and comfort, crimson predominating in the furniture, which did well with the bleak cold colours without' (GL.166). Only the quiet was lacking for us to imagine the house back in the 1850s.

We walked down the High Street, noting the Black Bull, Branwell's haunt and Mr Greenwood the stationer's shop, to have an excellent lunch at The Heath Cottage Cafe.

Then, as the weather prevented us from walking on the moors, we made our way to Gawthorpe Hall. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was respected by both literary ladies as a practical man of business - nine tenths utilitarian and one part artistic was Charlotte's estimate - and both appreciated his kindness and good intentions. Charlotte observed that he gave her good advice, mostly in the form of monologues, but that she wished he were as sincere as he was polished and he showed his white teeth with too frequent a smile! Mrs Gaskell was grateful for his help in extracting material for the biography, from the unwilling Rev Nicholls, though her conscience smote her for allowing Sir James to over-ride his wishes.

The house at Gawthorpe is attractively set in woodland 'nearly three centuries old, grey, stately and picturesque' said Charlotte. The parterre gardens

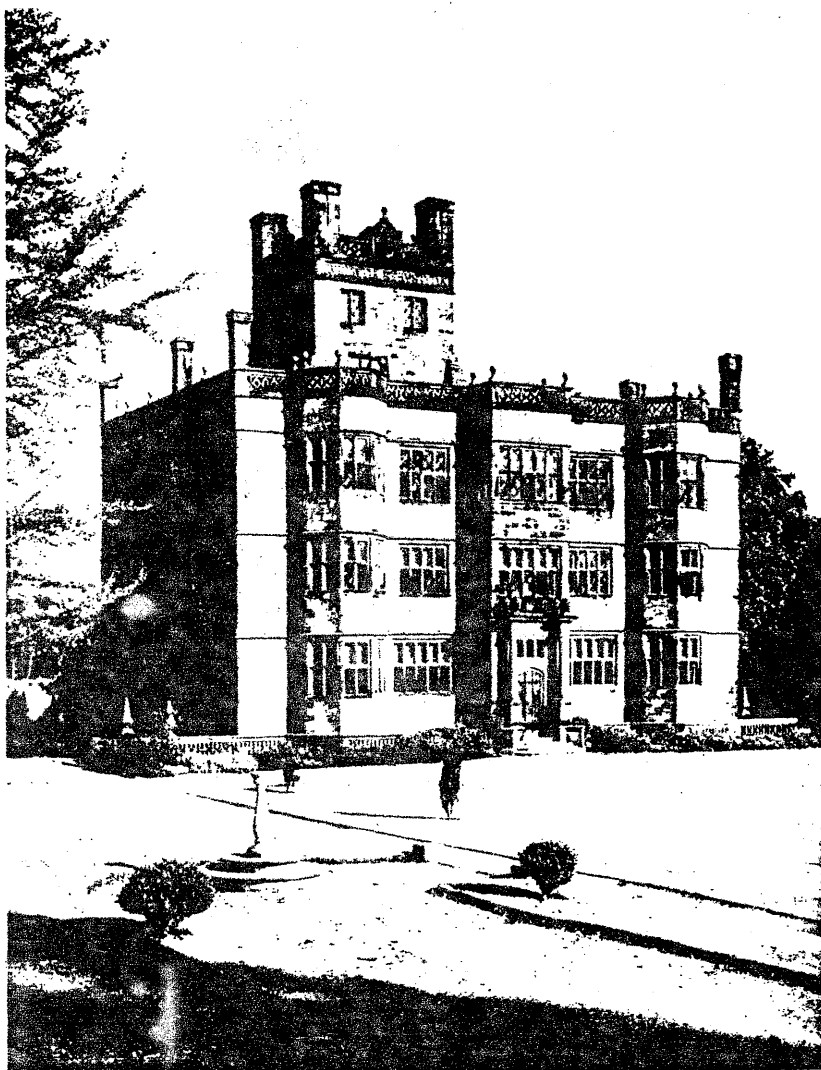


Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, 1st Bt (1804-77)
from an early photograph c.1865

which she would have seen are being recreated but the wind and rain were strong enough to blow branches down so we were contented with the house with its Jacobean furniture, panelling, ornate plasterwork ceilings, and fine embroideries.

We enjoyed our day out, despite poor weather, and were particularly grateful to Mrs Eunice Skirrow, corresponding secretary of the Brontë Society, for being our guide at Haworth.

JOAN LEACH



GAWTHORPE HALL

In the Autumn of 1985 while reading the Transactions of the Brontë Society Vol.18 I noticed the announcement of the formation of the Gaskell Society on 12th October 1985. As I have been a fan of Mrs Gaskell's writings for many years I became very interested and wrote to Mrs Joan Leach for information regarding the Gaskell Society. Incidentally, as a girl in Lisbon long ago, I loved that Brontë family and some years ago I presented the Brontë Society with a copy of Jane Eyre in Portuguese for their museum.

I duly joined the Gaskell Society and I have attended the three Annual General Meetings since 1986. After reading Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë my husband decided to accompany me as my escort.

I was quite excited at the thought of visiting Knutsford and seeing the places described in her novels and short stories, and this thrilled me immensely. I was most impressed with the large number of people who attended the meetings, and enjoyed making new acquaintances and friends. The various lectures were of great interest to me and I have derived great pleasure in attending these gatherings. It was quite intriguing to visit the different places connected with Mrs Gaskell and her works around the beautiful rural countryside of Cheshire. The whole atmosphere is simply delightful and Knutsford came up to all my expectations.

How engaging it is to throw one's mind back 150 years and in a sort of reverie go back and see Heathwaite - Aunt Lymb's house where Elizabeth Stevenson was brought up, with its open view to the heath; Cranford and the "Amazons"; Eltham of Cousin Phillis and Hollingford of Wives and Daughters with all the quaint Tudor buildings in King Street like the Rose & Crown, The Angel, the excellent Royal George Hotel which was built in the 14th century, supposedly named at the time The White Swan; the Unitarian Brook Street Chapel with its lattice windows; the graveyard where Mrs Gaskell is

buried together with her husband and two daughters, and realise that the Knutsford of today is still redolent of the atmosphere of the time and has kept its character to date.

Had I lived nearer I would have attended throughout the year many of the different activities organised by Joan Leach, who is the life and soul of the Gaskell Society. Instead I have to content myself with motoring down the M6 for the AGM in September. I do enjoy these weekends in a delightful English small town, a complete contrast with living in a large city like Edinburgh and a country like Scotland where people have a different outlook from the English people. I come home quite refreshed and looking forward to the next meeting.

I do hope and feel sure that the membership of the society will go from strength to strength and that the members will derive as much pleasure from the Gaskell Society as I have done.

MANUELA SUTHERLAND

Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN
Tel: 0565 4668

as a subject for fiction. - that
was her opinion. I dreaded.
I felt almost sure that if
people would only read what
I had to say they would not
be disappointed. - but I feared I
still think it probable that
many may prefer to read any
book of that kind. - I am
writing in such a hurry I can't
stop to make myself clear. / but
yet I did feel as if I had done

afterwards. I was surprised
from what Miss Gaskell had
said of what but I was not
satisfied with you & the 102
be shocked. - I could not wonder
for I knew since I should have
been repelled by hearing that
"a tale of seduction" was chosen

Reduced facsimile of letter on p.15 - Mrs Gaskell's writing is sometimes referred to as a 'fine flowing hand'!!!