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The Brontes: Interviews and Recollections

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A great deal of what we know about the Brontës has come not from the Brontës themselves but from local tradition, inhabitants of the places associated with them, friends and acquaintances, journalists, other novelists, publishers, and even the most casual of visitors to the Haworth Parsonage. Because this extraordinary family left behind such sketchy documentation, the testimonies in Harold Orel's admirable anthology will go far toward satisfying readers interested in the question of how a family living in so small and remote a community were able to produce some of the most heartfelt, original, and striking literature of the nineteenth century.

The Brontës: Interviews and Recollections includes forty selections from books and periodicals—many of them never reprinted before in their entirety—which cast light upon the personalities and activities of the Reverend Patrick Brontë; his son, Branwell; and his three daughters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Arranged chronologically, the volume begins with T. Wemyss Reid's recollections of “the little family” of the Brontës and ends with C. Holmes Cautley's interviews with “old Haworth folk who knew the Brontës.” Among the many contributors are William Makepeace Thackeray, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Brontës themselves.

This lively gathering will both correct and put into perspective some of the many romanticized anecdotes and regrettably distorted biographies of the members of this famous family. It will enhance our appreciation of their imaginative and widely read novels, which collectively may have no peer in the annals of English literature.

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