

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HONRESFIELD LIBRARY COLLECTION

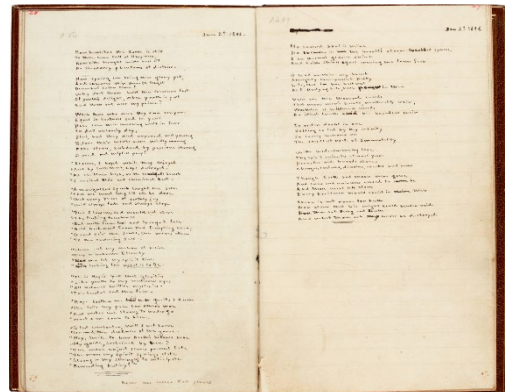
The Personal Collection of the Brontë Family

Of the six Brontë children, Charlotte lived the longest, dying at the age of 38, in 1855. Following her father's Patrick death six years later, the role of the last remaining member of the Brontë family fell to Charlotte's widow, Arthur Bell Nicholls. Nicholls, who had been the curate who conducted Emily's funeral, had a happy yet tragically short marriage to Charlotte after a long struggle convincing her sceptical father to accept him. The pieces in the auction were the family heirlooms with sentimental value which Nicholls had decided to keep after Charlotte's death, taking them to his native Ireland when he moved to become a farmer. In 1895 Nicholls was approached by the journalist Clement Shorter, acting for the notorious member of the bibliographical world Thomas James Wise, and sold him the great majority of the surviving Brontë manuscripts, some of which were then sold to Alfred and William Law.

The Law brothers had grown up less than twenty miles from the Brontë home of Haworth in the 1830s, amid the harsh beauty of the Northern English uplands during the Industrial Revolution. Experiencing the time and landscape immortalised by the Brontë sisters, these works resonated deeply with the collectors.

A rare handwritten manuscript of Emily's poems, mentioned in the preface to *Wuthering Heights*, with pencil corrections by Charlotte (est. £800,000-1,200,000)

Emily Brontë is a writer known around the world today, but who made almost no mark during her brief and withdrawn lifetime, writing her wild, passionate love story *Wuthering Heights* in 1847 and dying of tuberculosis just a year later. With few friends to write letters to, and with incredibly scarce manuscripts, the author left few traces of her life. The auction offers her own handwritten manuscript copy of poems, with revisions from her sister Charlotte, as well as the author's copy of her first published work.



The well-loved Brontë family copy of a book immortalised in *Jane Eyre* (est. £30,000-50,000)

Thomas Bewick's *A History of British Birds* from 1816 was one of the great artistic and imaginative influences on all of the Brontë children, who made countless copies of the miniature wood engravings. It is the same book that famously engrosses *Jane Eyre* during the opening pages of Charlotte's novel, an evocation of the solace that the lonely child finds in her imagination that has moved generations of readers.



This copy is extensively annotated throughout by their father Patrick with entertaining and informative notes from personal observations ("I saw, in Leeds, a stuffed specimen of this bird; it was considerably larger than a goose, as its neck was a thick as a man's arm") to culinary statements blended with religious law ("All kinds of pigeons are good eating..." and "The use of peacocks for food is not forbidden in the Law of Moses").

Presentation copies of novels gifted to family friend Martha Brown

The sale includes a number of presentation copies of the Brontë novels gifted by Patrick to family friends, including first editions inscribed to Martha Brown. Martha had moved in with the Brontës at the age of eleven, when their only servant, Tabitha Aykroyd, broke her leg and needed extra help. She stayed on for many decades, doing everything from laying fires to eventually nursing the family when, one by one, they got sick.

Among these is a first edition of *Jane Eyre* from 1847 inscribed by Patrick and including an autograph letter signed by Charlotte to Irish author Julia Kavanagh discussing the novel “*Jane Eyre is but a defective production, yet I daresay whatever merit it has will be appreciated by you*”. As well as first editions of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, 1847 (est. £200,000-300,000), and a letter to Martha from Charlotte on a visit to London (est. £12,000-18,000).

An exceptional letter from Charlotte to her publisher George Smith

Among the most outstanding letters in the sale is one from Charlotte to George Smith, about whom she once said, “*he was my first favourable critic, he first gave me encouragement to persevere as an author*”. Indeed, many think her admiration for George even began to verge into romantic territory. In this letter, they discuss reviews of *Jane Eyre* and enjoy the public’s speculation on the identity of the “Bells” (the pseudonym used by the sisters when publishing their works).

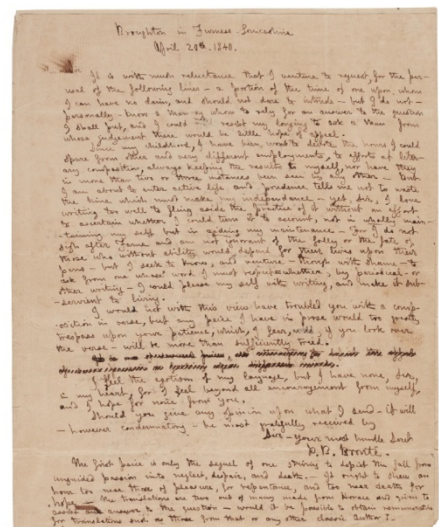
Three letters from Charlotte to her oldest friend Ellen Nussey in 1850

Ellen Nussey was Charlotte’s dearest friend, one of only witnesses present at her wedding to Nicholls and the recipient of over 500 letters over Charlotte’s lifetime. Following Charlotte’s death just five years after our letters were written, Nussey devoted the rest of her life to maintaining the memory of her friend.

Two letters from Branwell Brontë to Hartley Coleridge, 1840 (est. £6,000-8,000)

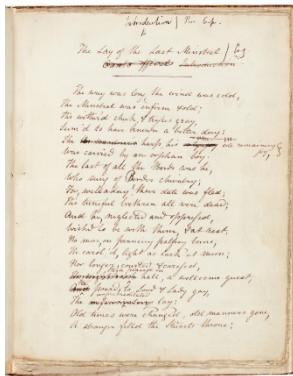
Branwell, the only son of the Brontë family, also had literary ambitions. This sale includes a letter written by Branwell to Hartley Coleridge, son of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, sending examples of his verses and claiming that he had been a poet himself all of his life but had kept his outpourings to himself. Branwell never saw success, and following an addiction to drugs and alcohol, died at the age of 31 in 1848, the same year as Emily and a year before Anne.

The auction also offers eleven pages worth of letters written by fellow novelist Elizabeth Gaskell on Charlotte and Haworth in 1853 (est. £3,000-5,000), several of Charlotte’s drawings, including one of their aunt Elizabeth Branwell (est. £5,000-7,000), and charming notes passed between Anne and Emily, including a little sketch of them writing at the table – all of which provide evocative glimpses of life at Haworth parsonage.



Scottish Literature

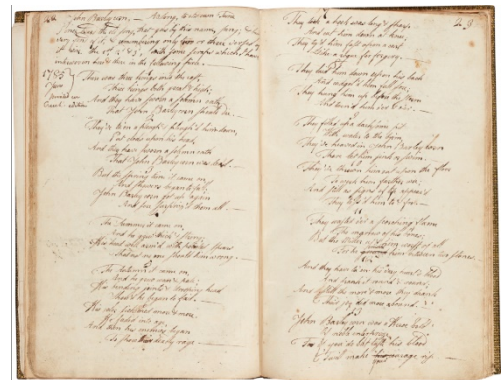
Romantic writer Sir Walter Scott – the second-most quoted writer in the *Oxford English Dictionary* after William Shakespeare – created the template for the historical novel. The auction offers an extensive collection of Scott’s writings, the pinnacle of which is the original manuscript for his most



famous creation – *Rob Roy*. It is one of only a small handful of manuscripts of any of the great 19th-century novels outside institutional collections, as well as being the only Scott novel in manuscript form remaining in private hands.

Further highlights an autograph manuscript travel journal to the Northern Isles, comprising five notebooks bound together, and a portion of the autograph working manuscript for *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (est. £20,000-30,000).

The auction will also offer the most important manuscript by Robert Burns, Scotland’s national poet, to exist in private hands – a unique insight into the mind of a great poet. The so-called *First Commonplace Book* is a handwritten compilation that Burns made of his own lyrics, with accompanying notes and introductions, as a young and relatively unknown poet between April 1783 and October 1785. The manuscript last sold at Sotheby’s in 1879 for £10, before it was purchased by William Law in 1891.



It will sit alongside further handwritten manuscripts for his poems and original letters to Burns’ friends, family, patrons and lovers which build a picture of his colourful life. For example, a letter to his father predicting his own failure (“*I foresee that very probably Poverty & Obscurity await me*”), and letter to his friend, Clergyman William Stewart, where he is begging for money show the bard’s terrible financial woes. His scandalous sex life is also represented, in a letter to his wife and the mother of nine of his children, Jean Armour Burns, on domestic affairs and another – very lengthy missive – to Agnes Maclehose (est. £7,000-9,000). Burn conducted an ultimately unconsummated yet extremely intimate and tangled affair with Agnes in the 1780s, which in a twist of fate resulted him fathering a child with her maid. To protect their privacy, he would call her “Clarinda” and she would call him “Sylvander”, names recognisable from the several major works that Agnes inspired.

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