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## Sotheby's London To Offer An Unpublished Autograph Manuscript by Charlotte Brontë Which Reveals a Precursor to One of the Most Famous Scenes in *Jane Eyre*

\*\*\* *The Most Important Brontë Manuscript To Appear at Auction in Over 30 Years*\*\*\*

Set in the Earliest Fictional World Created by the Brontë Siblings, *Young Men's Magazine*, Number 2, Has Never Before Been Seen by Scholars



Unpublished Autograph Manuscript of Charlotte Brontë's *Young Men's Magazine*, Number 2, estimated at £200,000-300,000\*

SOTHEBY'S LONDON, Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2011, is delighted announce the sale of an unpublished manuscript by Charlotte Brontë as part of its sale of English Literature, History, Children's Books & Illustrations on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011, estimated at £200,000-300,000\*. Never before seen by scholars, it is the most important Brontë manuscript to have appeared at auction in more than thirty years, and is one of only a handful of such manuscripts remaining in private hands. Set in 'Glass Town', the earliest fictional world that the four Brontë siblings created, and written by a fourteen-year-old Charlotte in miniature magazine format, *The Young Men's Magazine*, Number 2, is dated August 1830.

**Gabriel Heaton, Sotheby's Senior Specialist, Books & Manuscripts Department**, comments, "*Crafted with extraordinary care, this minute manuscript marks Charlotte Brontë's first burst of creativity and, significantly, provides a rare and intimate insight into one of history's great literary minds. It contains a colourful tale of murder and madness which includes a precursor to one of the most famous scenes in Jane Eyre – the moment when Bertha, Mr Rochester's insane wife seeks revenge by setting fire to the bed curtains in her husband's chamber.*"

## THE WORLD OF 'GLASS TOWN'

The childhood empires of the Brontë children's imaginations play a significant role in our understanding and appreciation of their works, which include some of the greatest novels of the nineteenth century. The world of 'Glass Town', the first expression of the incredible imaginative community at Haworth parsonage in Yorkshire where the children grew up, had its origins in a gift of toy soldiers: "*Papa bought Branwell some soldiers from Leeds. When Papa came home it was night and we were in bed, so the next morning Branwell came to our door with a box of soldiers. Emily and I jumped out of bed and I snatched one up and exclaimed, 'This is the Duke of Wellington! It shall be mine!'...*" (Charlotte Brontë, *The History of the Year*, 12 March 1829). Following Charlotte's lead, each of the siblings took one soldier as their own and named them for a hero: Branwell chose Napoleon in a riposte to Charlotte's Wellington, whilst the younger sisters Emily and Anne named theirs for the explorers Edward Parry and William Ross.



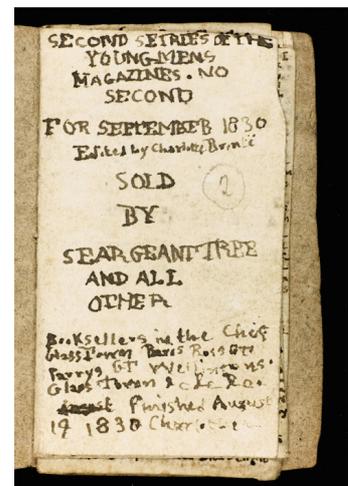
The children assembled a world around these characters – a ‘confederacy’ in which all four siblings had their own realm – from the material to hand: the towering cities of ‘Glass Town’ were inspired by prints of Biblical illustrations by John Martin which hung in Haworth Parsonage; the geography of their world was based on West Africa, about which they had read in the life of Mungo Park; from the *Arabian Nights* they took the four near-omnipotent Genii (one for each of the siblings) that hovered over the world, intervening at will; while the texture of the world and the adventures of its inhabitants drew extensively on *Blackwood's Magazine*, to which their father subscribed. ‘Glass Town’ wonderfully illustrates the Brontë siblings’ precocious imaginations; their father, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, recounted: “*As they had few opportunities of being in learned and polished society, in their retired country situation, they formed a little society amongst themselves – with which they seem’d content and happy.*” (Rev. Patrick Brontë’s letter to Mrs Gaskell, 20 June 1855).

## THE CONTENTS OF YOUNG MEN’S MAGAZINE, NUMBER 2

Containing more than 4,000 words painstakingly crammed on to 19 pages, each measuring approximately 35 x 61mm, the size of the manuscript reflects the miniature nature of its subject. Charlotte Brontë’s friend and fellow writer Mrs Gaskell recalls “[A]n immense amount of manuscript, in an inconceivably small space.”

Its size also reflects the intimacy of the subject; this imaginary world was intensely private and the minuteness of these works ensured that they were easily hidden and could only be read without the aid of a magnifying glass by the sharp eyes of a child. The manuscript’s table of contents lists “A letter from Lord Charles Wellesley,” a vivid adventure tale; “*The Midnight Song* by Marquis Duoro,” a poem; “Frenchman’s Journal,” a continuation of a fictional diary series; and a mocked-up classifieds section, “Advertisements.”

‘A letter from Lord Charles Wellesley’, the first and most substantial piece in this issue of the *Young Men's Magazine*, is supposedly written by the son of the Duke of Wellington who was a frequent hero of the ‘Glass Town’ stories. It follows the developments of a “rather mysterious incident” that begins when he was awoken in the night and, whilst



admiring the stars from his palace garden, hears a sudden shriek from a boat - but before he can intervene the girl who has been captured by the four men aboard is stabbed to death. When he leaps into the canal to avenge her, he himself is captured by the murderer. Lord Charles is taken to the capturer's country house where he is imprisoned in a vividly-described attic: *"the floor was of wet rotten wood blacker than the back of a chimney. the sides were of the same but ...partially concealed by elegant draperies of spiders web. & no vestige of furniture was to be seen not even a straw bed"*. Following his dramatic escape, Lord Charles is able to wreak his revenge, but his fright of conscience in so doing sends his victim into a delirium which is described in a passage of remarkable power. It is this passage that represents a precursor to one of the most famous scenes in Charlotte Brontë's later fiction – the moment in *Jane Eyre* (written in 1847) when Bertha, Mr Rochester's insane wife (who was, like Lord Charles, kept in the attic) seeks revenge by setting fire to the bed-curtains in her husband's chamber. In the case of Lord Charles's victim, *"...he constantly raged about the spirits of Caroline Krista & Charles Wellesley dancing before him. he said that every now & then they glided through his eyes to his brain where an immense fire was continually burning & that he felt them adding fuel to the flames that caused it to catch the curtains of the bed that would soon be reduced to ashes. at other times he said he felt them pulling his heart-strings till a sound like a death knell came from them..."*

The manuscript is encased in the original, specially made protective red folder, in addition to an equally minute brown morocco slip-off case with gilt lettering on the spine. Charlotte Brontë's manuscripts were dispersed in the nineteenth century but the vast majority are now in institutional collections in the UK and USA.

#### **FURTHER BRONTE SALE HIGHLIGHTS TO BE OFFERED**

A further eleven Brontë highlights to be offered in Sotheby's sale of English Literature, History, Children's Books & Illustrations on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2011, include an extremely rare copy of the first edition of Anne Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), inscribed by the author to Ellen Nussey *"by her affectionate friend"* (est. £30,000 – 50,000), and Ellen Nussey's copy of *Wuthering Heights* (1847), with Ellen's ownership signature (est. £70,000 – 100,000), in addition to Ellen's annotated copy of Elizabeth Gaskell's pioneering - and at the time notorious - first biography, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) (est. £4000 – 6000)

Ellen Nussey (1817-1897), the daughter of a cloth merchant, first met Charlotte Brontë when they both attended Roe Head School, near Dewsbury. They became close and firm friends, exchanging over 500 letters over the course of the next 24 years before Charlotte's early death aged 38 in 1855. Ellen was a frequent visitor to the Parsonage at Haworth, and also became a friend of Anne's and Emily's. Ellen accompanied Charlotte and Anne to Scarborough in May 1849 in a vain last hope to aid her failing health; she was a strong support to Charlotte in the following months when she was writing *Shirley* (part of the character of Caroline Helstone may have been based on her); she was then one of two witnesses present when Charlotte married the Rev. Arthur Bell Nichols at Haworth in June 1854. Many of the letters (over 200) are held in the collection of the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth. Other portions are at the Huntington, Berg and Pierpont Morgan libraries in America.

Each of these eleven lots to be offered are formerly from the library of Sir George John Armytage, FSA., 6th baronet Kirklees (1842-1918), of Kirklees Park, Brighouse in West Yorkshire. It is Kirklees that some have thought to be the model for Ferndean Manor in *Jane Eyre*. The local parish church, where Armytage is buried, is a few miles away at Hartshead. It was here that Rev. Patrick Brontë was curate from 1811 to 1816, before later moving to Thornton and then Haworth, where Maria, Charlotte, Patrick, Emily and Anne Brontë grew up. Armytage was an active member, and sometime chairman, of the recently formed Brontë Society. Eight of the following lots are a special group of presentation copies of first and other editions of the Brontë sisters which he acquired in May 1889 from Charlotte Brontë's lifelong friend and correspondent Ellen Nussey (1817-1897), the chief source for Elizabeth's Gaskell's pioneering (but at the time notorious) 1857 biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium