

Bronte letter to be auctioned in Edinburgh

A rare autographed letter signed, from Charlotte Brontë to a David Waldie, [L.R.C.S.] (1813-1889), thanking him for his appreciative comments regarding Jane Eyre and the gift of some “...little books”, addressed from Gloucester Terrace, London, dated January 19th, 1853 will be sold at Lyon & Turnbull tomorrow and is estimated to reach £10,000-12,000.

Cathy Marsden Book Specialist at Lyon & Turnbull said:- “Brontë’s letter is addressed to a David Waldie Esq., a well-respected pharmacist who, it is commonly accepted, first suggested the use of chloroform in midwifery. Indeed, Professor James Y. Simpson of the Department of Midwifery at Edinburgh University, acknowledged Waldie’s suggestion in a footnote in his account of discovery. Although the letter was addressed to Waldie in Liverpool, where he first encountered chloroform, he is still remembered in his home town of Linlithgow, where the Annet House Museum currently has an exhibition relating to his life and work.”

The letter tells us that Waldie was impressed by Jane Eyre, published in 1847 under the pseudonym ‘Currer Bell’, and was inspired to write to Brontë of his appreciation of the book. Brontë replies:

“The sincere affection of a reader’s gratification is – I scarcely need to say – one of the much acceptable favours in which an author can be repaid for his labours. I shall be glad if any future work of mine gives you equal pleasure to that you speak of having found in “Jane Eyre”.”

In 1848, following the publication of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte and Ann Brontë had revealed their true identities to their publishers. In a bibliographical note of her sisters in an edition of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte explains the reasons for the rather masculine-sounding pseudonyms used by the three siblings:


Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names, positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because without at the time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine,' we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice.

Charlotte's rejection of, "personal publicity" seems to have extended beyond the gradual outing of her sex. Even in 1849, when Charlotte, "...paid her first visit to London in her own proper person as a woman of distinction and literary fame," (in the words of Auguste Birrell), she did not rush to be the centre of attention amongst her fellow writers. She declined to meet with Charles Dickens, for example, although she did visit William Makepeace Thackeray, of whom she was a great admirer.

However, it was between this point and Charlotte Brontë's untimely death in 1855, whilst pregnant with her first child, that the author writes this very appreciative and gracious note to Waldie.

Lyon & Turnbull Sale No 391 – Rare

Books, Maps & Manuscripts

	<p>Date: 4 Sep 2013 11:00 Location: Edinburgh Contact: Simon Vickers Phone: +44 (0) 131 557 8844</p>	<p>Viewing Information: Sunday, 1st September 2pm – 5pm Monday, 2nd September 10am – 5pm Tuesday, 3rd September 10am – 5pm Morning of Sale from 9am</p>
<p>Buyers premium 25% up to £25,000, 20% thereafter Live internet bidding incurs an additional fee of 3% VAT will be charged on the premium at the rate imposed by law. No VAT is payable on the hammer price or premium for books or unframed maps bought at auction</p>		