

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI AT HAIGH HALL

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In November 1855 Christina Rossetti was staying at Haigh Hall in Lancashire. One of the two extant letters she wrote while there was published in William Michael Rossetti's early edition of his sister's *Family Letters* (1907). In it, Rossetti gave the address as "H.H.," which her brother struggled unsuccessfully to elucidate. "I do not now well remember where she was – possibly Hampstead Heath," he wrote (24). Luckily, in the second surviving letter, to Amelia Heimann, published in Volume I of *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, edited by Antony H. Harrison (1997), Rossetti spelt out "Haigh Hall / Wigan / Lancashire," and explained the reason for her "unexpected northern migration":

Lady Frances Lindsay (A daughter of Lord Wicklow to some of whose children if you remember Aunt Charlotte [Polidori] was once Governess) was in want of a temporary Governess for her little boys and girls, so hither I am come till Christmas. (*Letters* 1:102)

Though she added that she was "most kindly treated" and that her duties were "not onerous," she also rejoiced, in the first extant letter, that her health really did preclude her from "miscellaneous governessing en permanence" (*Family Letters* 24). She stayed at Haigh Hall for no more than six to eight weeks, and the episode merits little attention in her life story, except as one of her few visits to the industrial north. Haigh Hall stands on what was the productive East Lancashire coalfield, which indeed provided the Lindsay family with "vast incomes" (Brigstocke, "Alexander" 33:851) and which Rossetti rather whimsically surmised was responsible for the continual autumnal mists ("attributable perhaps to the coaliness of our neighbourhood," *Letters* 1:104).

Given the location and the season, she is unlikely to have made many