

CHAPTER III**T H E A U T H O R A N D H E R W O R K S**

Charlotte Bronte was born on April 21, 1816 in Yorkshire, a northern part of England. Her father was an Irish clergyman, Patrick Bronte, who devoted his life to the church. Her mother, Maria Branwell, was a Cornish girl. Charlotte Bronte was the third of six children. There were five girls and one boy. The eldest was Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, Emily, and the youngest was Anne.

Charlotte's mother died of cancer soon after the sixth child was born. Three months after Anne's birth, Patrick Bronte removed his family to Haworth which was nine miles from Bradford. In Haworth, Patrick Bronte was promoted as a rector of the village-church for the rest of his life. Eventhough he was promoted as a rector, Patrick and his family lived so poor because the salary as a rector was not enough to fulfil their needed. They stayed in a bleak parsonage which overlooked a grim and over-used graveyard. In this house those six children spent their childhood without love of a mother.

Realizing that his children needed the love and care of a woman, Patrick Bronte had an initiative to ask his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Branwell to live with his family.

But the fact was, Elizabeth Branwell was too lazy to give her attention for those six children. She seldom kept in touch to those children. She liked to lock up herself in her own room much of the time. It also happened with Patrick Bronte, he was too busy with his job. There was no time for him to share his attention for the children. Thus, no other way except those children had to take care of themselves.

During their early life, they were educated at home except three years later (1821), the four elder girls were sent to the Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge. The condition of that school was so bad. The fees were extremely low, the food was correspondingly bad, while the discipline was unpardonably harsh. These four girls spent their time with unhappy feeling. The bad condition of that school brought two sacrifices, Maria and Elizabeth. They both died of tuberculosis at that school. This accident happened before Charlotte reached the age of ten and made her very sad. Based on her experiences at Cowan's Bridge, Charlotte, later in 1847 wrote a novel, titled *Jane Eyre*. In this novel she described Cowan's Bridge as "Lowood", Jane Eyre's school. Charlotte and Emily quit from that school and brought home.

Several more years the four surviving children, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne spent their childhood at home. They received a little formal teaching from their

father and aunt. Patrick Bronte let his children read and carry on adult conversation about politics. He subscribed *The Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* so that the children could learn about political and economic essays, art criticism and literary reviews. But the most parts were studied from their spirit and their imaginary world. Most of their time was spent in reading and composition. Their attention to literature was enormous and talented.

When Charlotte was thirteen, she remembered that her father had given a set of wooden soldiers to her brother, Branwell. By these four children (Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, Anne), the wooden soldiers were used for characters in creative play. They created a miniature of a country to make the play alive. That country had rules, governments, political intrigues, legends, and citizens. From these fantasies, Charlotte with her brother and sisters produced a collection of *Juvenilia* (between 1824 and 1839) which consisted of hundreds of items : magazines, maps, tales, essays, histories, dramas, poems, newspapers, speeches and scrapbook.

In 1831, when Charlotte was fifteen years old, she was sent to Miss Margaret Wooller's school at Roe Head, Dewsbury, a much better school than Cowan's Bridge. In this school Charlotte improved her drawing, French and composition. A year and a half later she returned home to give a teaching to her sisters. She spent almost three

years at Haworth. Sometimes her best-friends, Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey whom she knew from Roe Head, visited and accompanied her. They spent their time together in reading and composition. Especially with Miss Nussey, Charlotte was so close to her. Their friendship continued until Charlotte died. When Charlotte was nineteen, she became a junior governess with Miss Wooler at Roe Head which a year later was removed to Dewsbury. She took this job because she needed money to support Branwell as an artist. There, Emily and Anne became her pupils. Unfortunately, it was not for a long time. Emily only could stand three months because she got home-sickness and so does Anne.

In 1838, all three sisters were back once more at Haworth, especially for Charlotte, she returned on account of ill-health. Charlotte received offers of marriage from two gentlemen. One was from Ellen Nussey's brother Henry who was a clergyman and the other one came from Bryce, a curate. To supplement the family income, Charlotte served for some months as nursery governess to Sidgwick of Stonegappe and to the Whites of Rawdon, Yorkshire. After she quit from those two places, Charlotte with Anne who had become a governess had a plan to open a school of their own. Her aunt agreed to finance this experiment. In order to improve her knowledge of modern languages she decided to go to the Continent. In early 1842, Charlotte went with Emily to Brussels as pupil in the Pensionnat Heger. Their

talents brought them to the special notice of the principal teacher, Constantin Heger. From his hands they became the masters of language. After eight months, their study were disturbed by the death of their aunt on October 29, 1842. That made them returned to England. After attending the burial of their aunt, Charlotte went back to Brussels, but Emily didn't go with Charlotte. Emily decided to stay at home. In Brussels Charlotte became a junior teacher of Monsieur Heger. But spending the whole of 1843 abroad made her unhappy. She was lonely and pressed down. This was caused Mme. Hager became jealous of her. Mme. Hager knew that Charlotte had an affair with her husband. This story later was satirized in Charlotte's novel *Villette*. This circumstance made her return to Haworth on Jan 2, 1844. In Haworth with her sister Charlotte launched the school of The Misses Bronte's Establishment which they had planned. But unfortunately, no pupils applied. Worse than this, her disappointment came from her brother, Branwell. He dismissed in disgrace from his post as a tutor and an artist, coming home to drink, taking opium and disintegrate. Later, on September 24, 1848 he died in complications.

In 1845 with Emily and Anne, Charlotte wrote some poems. A year later a volume of poems (*The Nineteen Poems*) by "Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" was published. The name of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell are pseudonyms initials of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. But only two copies were sold.

After joining with her sisters, Charlotte Bronte tried to write her own works. She succeeded to write her first short-novel which was called *The Professor* (1847). That moment was also followed by her two sisters, Emily and Anne. Then, those three-young women went to the publisher. Emily's *Wuthering Height* (1847) and Anne's *Agnes Grey* (1847) were accepted, on the other hand Charlotte's *The Professor* was refused. George Smith, an editor, said that he wanted to see a three-volume novel written by its author. Then, on August 24, 1847 Charlotte sent her novel *Jane Eyre* to Mr. Smith that by the time almost finished. That novel made a good impression on Mr. Smith. He published it by the middle of October. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte used the pseudonym of "*Currer Bell*". She used this name because she didn't want anybody know that the author was a woman beside that she was too shy. But when she visited London in 1848, to see her publisher her real name could no longer be concealed from them. *Jane Eyre* was immediately popular and became one of the most succesful of all English novels. *Jane Eyre* was written in a period of sadness as a consequence of Branwell's collapse, the growing blindness of her father and the ill-health of her sisters. Returning from London, Charlotte was shocked when she found that Emily's health began to fail rapidly. Emily was in a great pain and could not breath. Only three months after the death of Branweel, Charlotte lost her sister,

Emily who died on December 19, 1848. A year later, on May 28, 1849 Anne also passed away, left Charlotte, alone. Between the death of Branwell and of Emily, Charlotte had been writing a new novel *Shirley*. Two third were written and the other parts was postponed while she had to nurse her sister, Anne. She completed after Anne's death and published in October, 1849.

In 1851 she received a third offer of marriage from Mr. James Taylor whom she knew from her publisher. But, again she refused him. During 1852 she worked hard to finish her third novel, entitled *Villette*. Then in 1853, this novel was published. On June 29, 1854, Charlotte accepted an offer of marriage from Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's curate. She lived happily with her husband. But the Fate who attended the members of this happy family were not done with them yet. Charlotte, pregnant, contracted with a chill after being caught in a rain-storm while walking on the moors. She died in March 31, 1855. She was buried in Haworth church by the side of her mother, Branwell and Emily. Her father died in 1861 and her husband returned to Ireland.

Charlotte Bronte most important works : *Juvenilia* (between 1824 and 1839) which produced together with her brother and sisters, *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853), *The Professor* (wrote in 1847 and published in 1857).

(Source : *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol.2, 1985)

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS