

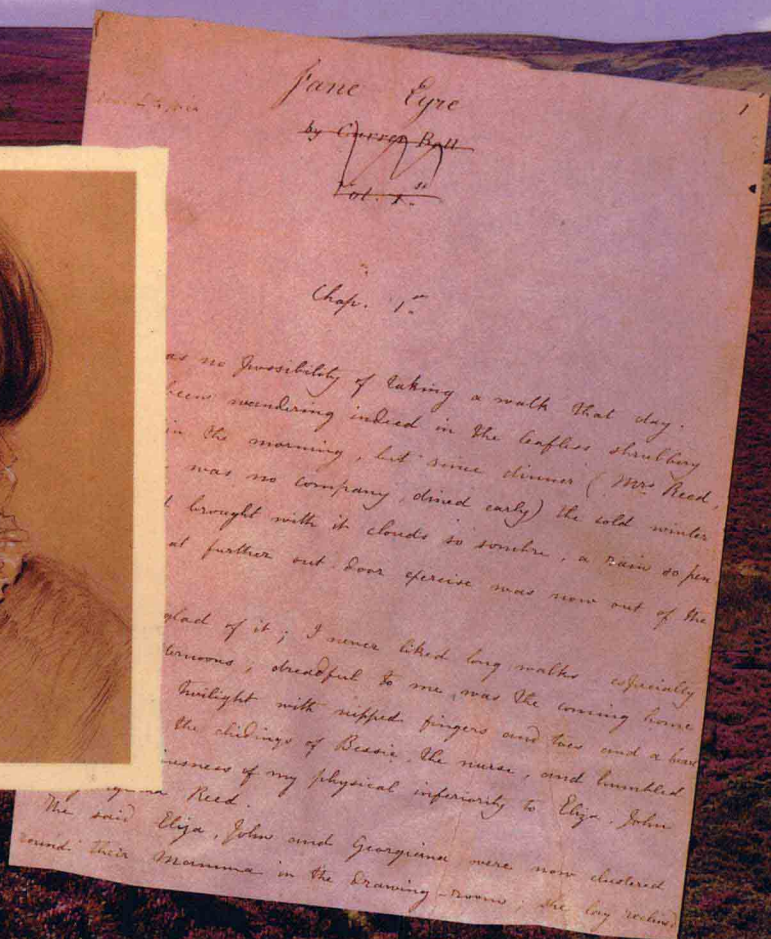
英国作家生平丛书

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# Charlotte Brontë

## 夏洛蒂·勃朗特

JANE SELIARS



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# 总序

普通中国读者，包括英语专业的学生，对于英国文学的了解一般只限于个别经典作品，而对作家其人其事及其整个文学创作情况所知甚少。其中部分的原因是文学史家们编写的英国文学史往往注重介绍作品的情节内容，对作家的生活经历、作品的具体创作过程着墨不多。上海外语教育出版社从英国大英图书馆出版社(The British Library)引进出版“英国作家生平丛书”，弥补了这方面的缺憾。该丛书以图文并茂的形式讲述莎士比亚等14位英国著名作家的生平故事，同时穿插介绍他们的作品，有助于充实读者对英国文学的认识。

英国文学源远流长，经历了长期复杂的发展演变过程。在这个过程中，文学本体以外的各种现实的、历史的、政治的、文化的力量对文学发生着影响，而作家个体的独特生活遭遇也是造就文学杰作的一个重要因素。“英国作家生平丛书”对14位名家的传记式介绍，充分展示了这一点。戏剧方面，莎士比亚是英国文艺复兴时期最杰出的剧作家，他当过演员，其作品思想内容深刻、艺术表现手法精湛，历经几个世纪长演不衰。诗歌方面，浪漫主义诗人华兹华斯、柯勒律治、拜伦、济慈的不同身世对他们的诗歌创作及艺术风格产生深刻影响；维多利亚时代诗人伊丽莎白·巴雷特和罗伯特·布朗宁的爱情故事是英国文坛的一段佳话。小说方面，狄更斯是19世纪英国最伟大的小说家，他的许多小说以孤儿为主人公，这与作家童年时代的一段不幸经历有关；康拉德来自波兰，将自己奇特的身世背景和航海经历交融在字里行间；女作家奥斯丁、玛丽·雪莱、勃朗特姐妹、伍尔夫以女性特有的视角和敏锐的观察描摹人性与社会，思考妇女的生存状况，她们的小说无论在思想主题、题材表现方面，还是在叙述手法上，都有创新，对推动英国文学的发展作出了突出贡献。

“英国作家生平丛书”原版由大英图书馆出版社出版，体现出图书馆出版物的特点。书中配有大量的插图，有些是珍贵的手稿，有些是罕见的照片，有些是博物馆或美术馆珍藏的油画和素描，让读者有幸一睹作家的风采，产生直观的感觉。这些插图带有不同时代的印记，营造出浓厚的历史感。丛书的作者均为专业领域里有着较深造诣的学者，对史料的掌握系统全面，他们用生动的语言娓娓讲述作家生平事迹，点评具体文学作品，书末还附有供读者进一步阅读的书单，推荐了有代表性的文献，对英语专业学生撰写课程论文或毕业论文很有帮助。

“英国作家生平丛书”内容有趣，插图精美，文字简洁，兼顾普及性和专业性，是学习和了解英国文学的良师益友。

王守仁  
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# 导 读

夏洛蒂·勃朗特 (Charlotte Brontë, 1816–1855) 是 19 世纪英国著名的小说家，以其长篇小说《简·爱》闻名于世。

夏洛蒂于 1816 年 4 月 21 日出生在英格兰北部约克郡的偏远小镇布拉德福德的桑顿。1820 年 2 月，其父帕特立克·勃朗特被任命为约克郡霍沃思小镇的教区长。翌年，帕特立克·勃朗特将家迁至这里定居。帕特立克·勃朗特原籍爱尔兰，1806 年从剑桥圣约翰学院毕业，博学多才，不仅精通他所服务的神学，而且还在自然科学、医学、艺术、文学以及音乐上颇有造诣。他的渊博的知识对孩子们的教育起到了很大作用。

霍沃思小镇是一个荒蛮之地，坐落于 800 英尺高的奔宁山脉间。冬日里寒冷入骨的阴湿、凛冽的寒风以及铺天盖地的大雪，给这个小镇平添了许多艰涩和愁绪。不过，这个荒蛮之地也给夏洛蒂·勃朗特的童年带来了不少乐趣，同时还激发了她的文

学灵感。

帕特立克·勃朗特收入微薄，全家度日艰难。就在全家迁居霍沃斯小镇不久，夏洛蒂的母亲玛丽亚因病去世。1825 年，不幸又一次降临到勃朗特家。夏洛蒂的两个姐姐因被传染斑疹伤寒，死于她们就读的一家慈善学校。九岁的夏洛蒂接二连三地目睹了死亡，开始体味到了命运的残酷。

在把婚姻作为女人唯一出路的年代，加上贫寒的家境和势利的社会现实，帕特立克意识到自己的女儿们没办法单纯仰仗婚姻来改变处境。因此，他执意让女儿们广泛学习知识，启迪她们的心智，以期能为她们的未来打下基础。1831 年，夏洛蒂到距霍沃斯小镇 20 英里外的一所学校学习。在这里，她遇见了两位年轻的女士——埃伦·纳西和玛丽·泰勒，她们后来



成为夏洛蒂的终生好友。后来，无论是在捍卫勃朗特三姐妹的声誉上，还是在盖斯凯尔夫人为夏洛蒂写传记时<sup>①</sup>，她们都曾给予大力支持。

夏洛蒂·勃朗特一生著述不多，主要作品有《教师》(*The Professor*, 创作于1846年, 出版于1857年)、《简·爱》(*Jane Eyre*, 1847)、《谢莉》(*Shirley*, 1849)以及《维莱特》(*Villette*, 1853)。其中, 最著名的要算是《简·爱》<sup>②</sup>。这部小说的问世轰动了整个英国文坛。威廉·M·萨克雷认为, 这部小说实际上讲述的是他家中的一位家庭女教师的真实故事<sup>③</sup>。我们无从考察萨克雷家庭女教师的生平际遇, 不过, 从上面我们对夏洛蒂·勃朗特的生平简介来看, 《简·爱》更带有自传的色彩。这不仅是因为夏洛蒂本人像小说中的女主人公一样都曾经做过家庭女教师, 而且还因为夏洛蒂本人自童年就饱尝了生活的艰辛, 向往人间的关爱, 渴望能获得心心相印的美好爱情、独立的人格和尊严。

《简·爱》主要讲述了一位家庭女教师艰难的生活和曲折但却撼人灵魂的爱情故事。夏洛蒂在这部小说中以细腻的笔法, 成功地刻画了一个富有爱心、自尊不屈的坚强女性, 她不顾社会习俗的约束, 勇敢地向双目失明的罗切斯特倾诉了自己的爱慕之情。

本书按照时间顺序, 较为详细地介绍了夏洛蒂·勃朗特的生平和创作。书中的文字资料和图片主要来源于大英图书馆和位于约克郡霍沃斯的勃朗特牧师博物馆。除此之外, 该书的编者还在书中配有许多具有史料价值的图片, 为我们深入研究夏洛蒂·勃朗特的个人生活、作品手稿、作品出版情况、风土人情和社会风貌等提供了宝贵的视觉资料。

乔国强

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① 盖斯凯尔夫人 (Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell) 为夏洛蒂·勃朗特所写的传记名为《夏洛蒂·勃朗特的一生》(*The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857)。

② 夏洛蒂·勃朗特出版这部小说时使用笔名柯勒·贝尔 (Currer Bell)。

③ 参见 Jane Sellars, *Charlotte Brontë*, "Preface", London: The British Library, 1997, p. 6.





## Preface

Charlotte Brontë's life story is almost as well-known as the history of her greatest heroine, Jane Eyre. Indeed, for many readers, the two become inextricably entwined. The Victorian audience was convinced that Charlotte's dedication of the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to her literary hero, William Makepeace Thackeray, meant that the novel was in fact the true account of Thackeray's own governess.

When Charlotte Brontë and her sisters, Emily and Anne, adopted the male pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell for the publication of their *Poems* in 1846 and the classic novels which followed, they were already aware of the need to conceal their female identities. Later in life, her beloved sisters both gone, Charlotte took action to protect, as she saw it, Emily's and Anne's posthumous privacy and their literary reputations. At the same time she struggled with the public demands of her own fame, suffering rather than enjoying the glamorous rewards, often preferring to retreat into the dreary but comfortably familiar home life of Haworth Parsonage.

After Charlotte's death in 1855, her widower Arthur Bell Nicholls and her aged father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë, grieving for a much-loved wife and daughter, also had to come to terms with a world which clamoured to know more of the life of the famous author, Currer Bell. So, too, did Ellen Nussey, Charlotte's lifelong friend and recipient of decades of her letters. These three people together held the key to Charlotte's history, and each in their own way contributed to what has become an undying fascination with this author of genius. Each of them played a part in informing the first and best-known biography, Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, published in 1857. Mrs Gaskell's *Life* ignited an interest in the Brontës which has today become a passion on an international scale.

This biography, *The British Library Writers' Lives: Charlotte Brontë*, draws many of its sources and illustrations from the outstanding collections of Brontë manuscripts and memorabilia in The British Library in London and the Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth in Yorkshire, formerly the Brontës' home and now a literary museum dedicated to their literature and their lives. It does not seek to pose new theories or make startling revelations about Charlotte Brontë and her art as a

writer, but is intended as a fluent account of her life, an introduction to the extraordinary background which produced this much-loved genius of English literature.

This book is also a celebration. Published in 1997, it coincides with the 150th anniversary of one of the most significant events in the history of nineteenth-century literature: the publication of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*.

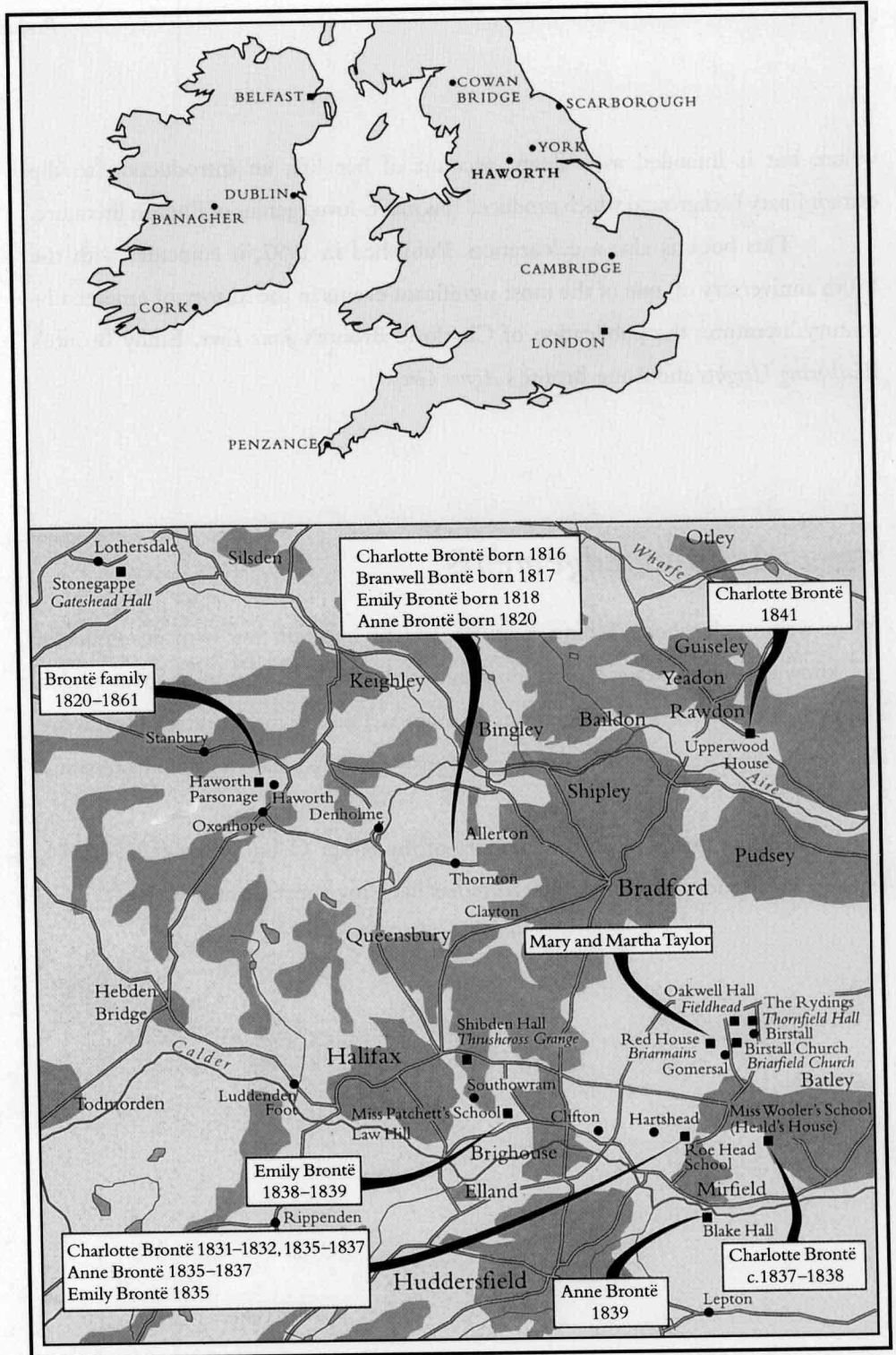
## *Acknowledgements*

**I**n writing this book I have been dependent both on my own accumulated knowledge of seven years as director of the Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth, and the work of generations of other writers on the Brontës. Thanks are also due to the Brontë Society, which generously provided many of the illustrations.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my father Colin Sellars (1925-1997), whose scholarly love of English literature has been my constant inspiration.

*Jane Sellars*  
May 1997

Some places in Great Britain and Ireland associated with the Brontë family.





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## *A Haworth Childhood*

Haworth is a bleak-looking place; a string of dark stone buildings, clinging and massing together on a precipitous Pennine hillside. At the top of the steep Main Street, cobbled with wide stone setts to stop the horses' hooves from slipping, a narrow lane turns a sharp corner and climbs up past the church, between the graveyard – overflowing with tombstones – and the low-roofed Sunday School building. At the top of the lane stands Haworth Parsonage, a neat, symmetrical building, with its nine many-paned windows overlooking a square of garden which abuts into the sombre churchyard, so that the house seems to rise from a sea of gravestones: ever-present reminders of death surrounding the place which became the Brontë family's home in 1820. Behind the parsonage the land sweeps away into the dramatic wildness of the moors, the harsh landscape which for the Brontës was their childhood playground and their literary inspiration.

In February 1820, the Reverend Patrick Brontë was appointed Rector of Haworth, and two months later he arrived to take up residence at the parsonage with his Cornish-born wife Maria and his six children: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte,



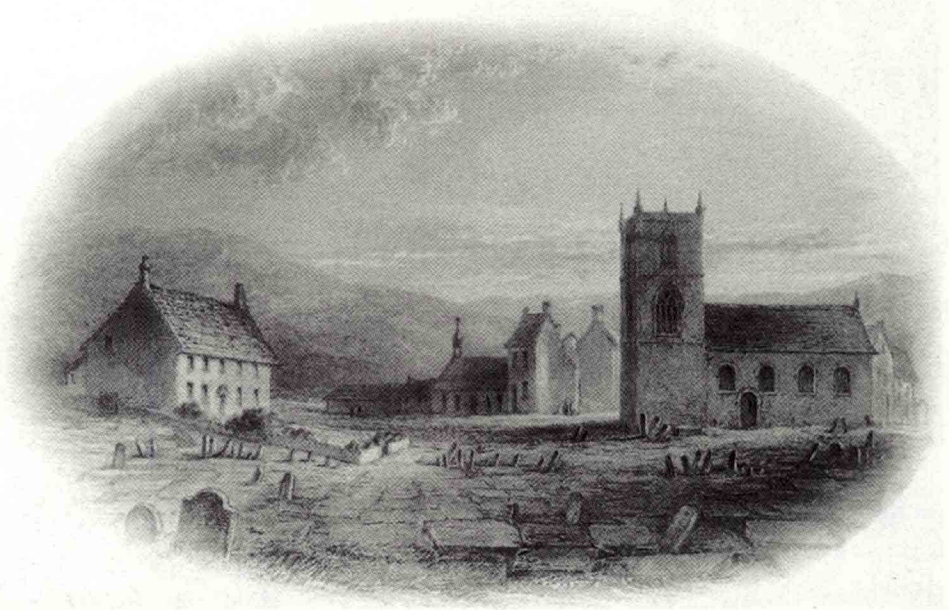
*The earliest known image of Haworth Parsonage, an ambrotype which dates from the 1850s. The trees in the graveyard which now surround the parsonage were not planted until later that decade.*

*The Brontë Society*

Branwell, Emily and Anne. Charlotte was just four years old and Anne was a babe-in-arms. The Brontës had come to Haworth from the parish of Thornton, Bradford, where all the children except Maria had been born, and where they had spent five pleasant, sociable years.

Haworth was Patrick Brontë's fourth position in the church since he graduated from St John's College, Cambridge in 1806. He made an extraordinary father – lively, intellectual, with interests in science, medicine, art, literature and music that reached far beyond his province as a rector of a small Yorkshire parish. Patrick Brontë was Irish, born in Emdale, County Down, in 1777, and he had clawed his way from his humble origins to acquire a hard-won education and a sponsored place at Cambridge University. He came to Yorkshire in the first place as minister at Hartshead Church near Dewsbury, and it was at nearby Woodhouse Grove School that he met Maria Branwell, who was visiting relatives there and came from faraway Penzance. After a brief courtship, Patrick and Maria married in December 1812. They came to Haworth as a young and lively family, optimistic for the future, prepared to set down roots in this inhospitable corner of the West Yorkshire landscape.

The Haworth the Brontës knew was a harsh place in more ways than one. Situated eight hundred feet high in the Pennines, the small township suffered an extreme winter climate of impenetrable dampness, fierce cold winds and blanketings



*Haworth Parsonage and  
the church of St Michael  
and All Angels, Haworth,  
from a drawing by  
Elizabeth Gaskell.*

*The Brontë Society*

of snow. Charlotte's hundreds of letters to her life-long friend Ellen Nussey contain innumerable references to the state of the weather and the effect on the family's health, health being the other preoccupying issue of life in Haworth. Living conditions for the crowded local population of this industrial centre were poor. There were no sewers and the water supply was inadequate and polluted, thus creating a high mortality rate. There were a scarcely believable 1344 burials in Haworth churchyard between 1840 and 1850, and the average age of death was a mere twenty-five years. Less than sixty per cent of babies born there survived beyond their sixth birthday. Although the Brontë deaths came tragically early, they seem unremarkable when set against this background.

Subsistence farming, hand-loom weaving and wool-combing made up the local employment. When the Brontës arrived in Haworth the domestic system of worsted manufacture was changing to factory production with water-powered machinery and there were already long-established mills working alongside the river Worth. Quarrying, building and crafts were the only other areas of work at the time, though there were also a few professional people in the neighbourhood. The church and the flourishing Baptist and Wesleyan chapels provided the only education on offer, and they formed the focus of the community's social life.

Much has been made of the Brontës' isolation, of how they lived on the edge of the moors, outsiders in a coarse environment where life was nasty, brutish and short. Elizabeth Gaskell is largely responsible for this persistent view, because, in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, in an attempt to defend Charlotte from accusations of coarseness in the novels, she accentuated the primitive character of Haworth, basing her descriptions of the place on how it was in the eighteenth century. Her aim was to show that Charlotte's writing came out of innocence trapped in a savage environment. In fact, mid-nineteenth-century Haworth was a fast-developing town, standing at the apex of a group of substantial industrial centres – Halifax, Burnley and Keighley – and consequently the focus of much traffic of trade and people. There was too a self-sufficiency about Haworth – every process of the worsted trade was carried out there – which imbued the tough character of the local people. If the Brontës were isolated, it was socially rather than physically. As Patrick Brontë wrote in a letter to a friend in November 1821 of how he struggled to cope with his wife's



*A portrait of Patrick Brontë as a young man by an unknown artist.*

*The Brontë Society*

fatal illness without his friends around him, he felt like 'a stranger in a strange land'. Maria Brontë died on 15 September 1821, her six little children at her bedside. After his wife's death, Patrick Brontë, forty-seven years old, without fortune or social position and six young children to raise, found himself to be an unmarriageable prospect. It was the generosity of his deceased wife's sister, Elizabeth Branwell, which saved the Brontë household. She gave up her comfortable life in Cornwall, and any prospect of marriage for herself, to come and live at Haworth Parsonage to take on the role of housekeeper and surrogate mother.

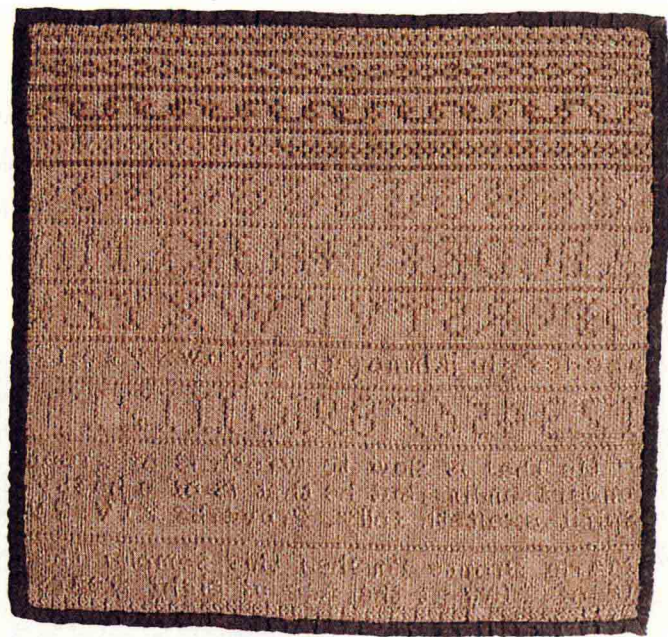
Lurid tales abound of Patrick's severity as a father, again promoted by Mrs Gaskell, unwisely directed by the vengeful tales of a nurse sacked

from the Brontës' employ. However, more reliable sources paint a more appropriate picture of the Brontës' childhood; a picture in accord with the early fostering of lively minds and incipient genius. One well-known story in particular, told by Patrick himself in a letter to Gaskell, demonstrates not only the children's precocity, but also Patrick's enthusiastic involvement in their personal and intellectual development. Charlotte Brontë was about eight years old at the time:

*'thinking that they knew more, than I had yet discover'd, in order to make them speak with less timidity, I deem'd that if they were put under a sort of cover, I might gain my end – and happening to have a mask in the house, I told them all to stand, and speak boldly from under cover of the mask ... I then asked Charlotte, what was the best Book in the world, she answered, the Bible – and what was the next best, she answer'd the Book of Nature – I then asked what was the best mode of education for a woman, she answered, that which could make her rule the house well...'*



Domestic details of Charlotte Brontë's early life can be gleaned from the reminiscences of Sarah Garrs, who with her sister Nancy was a family servant until 1825. After morning prayers and a breakfast of porridge, milk, bread and butter, the children had lessons with their father in his study, followed by sewing instruction with Sarah until dinner-time at two o'clock, when they usually ate meat followed by milk-pudding. In the afternoon they walked out onto the moors, coming home for tea in the kitchen, followed by more lessons and discussion with their father, then night-time prayers and bed.



*A sampler worked by Maria Brontë, the only surviving relic of Charlotte's eldest sister who died of consumption in 1825.*

*The Brontë Society*

There was nothing unusual about the self-sufficiency of a large family of children close together in age. It was natural that they should need no other playmates than each other. All of them were voracious readers from an early age, and endless source material for their play was found in the local newspapers, the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Intelligencer, with their accounts of political debate, tales of Charlotte's childhood hero the Duke of Wellington, reviews of books and magazines, high society gossip and local scandal and trivia.

When his children were still very young, Patrick was concerned for his daughters' futures. What were they going to do with their lives? Being realistic, he knew that the daughters of a poor clergyman had very few options open to them. Their marriage prospects were poor, careers in the professions were out of the question for women at the time, and working-class occupations could not be considered. All that was left was teaching. Whatever the girls did, they needed a reasonable education, whether it was to provide them with the feminine accomplishments needed to make them more attractive marriage prospects, or the qualifications to become governesses. Accordingly, Maria and Elizabeth, when nine and eight years old, were packed off to Crofton Hall boarding school near Wakefield. Their stay was brief, presumably because Patrick could not easily afford the fees. So