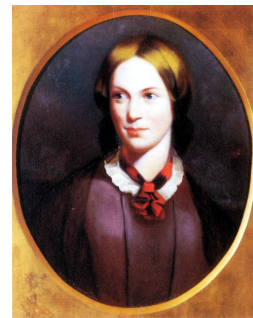


# Charlotte Bronte – Source 2



## A) From the newspaper *The Examiner* (Oct. 16, 1847) Issue 2072

672 THE EXAMINER. [October 16, 1847.]

**MR BENTLEY WILL PUBLISH**  
THE FOLLOWING NEW WORKS—

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Dobbin; James Buchanan; 2 Fuller street; London: William S. Orr and Co. 117 Strand. Sold by all Booksellers.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTION.

## B) From the newspaper *The Manchester Examiner* (Tues. Nov. 16, 1847) Issue 117

**LITERARY EXAMINER.**

*Jane Eyre. An Autobiography.* Edited by Currer Bell. 3 vols. London: Smith, Elder and Son, 1847.

Currer Bell is one of those three brothers Bell, who lately distinguished in concert, a volume of rhymes;—with success enough, it would seem, to make the name, on the title-page of an anonymous book, a respectable passport for it into the literature of the day. The work so introduced, is not, as might be fancied from its title, an authentic narrative of anybody's life. It is a novel—a very clever and striking one, moreover, though written in the quiet, sober style of the old school, and, in its interest, entirely independent of contemporary allusions and discussions.

The heroine begins her story pretty far back in her life,—when she is quite a little girl,—an orphan one, moreover, neglected and sold, but miserably treated, by a wealthy widow lady, her relative, who with her children nearly worry to death the timid little unfortunate outcast. The wretchedness of a shy and tormented child, in such a situation, is vividly portrayed; not less so the sudden outburst with which, when goaded to desperation, she turns on the oppressive widow lady, who in astonishment and almost fear packs her off to school. "Lowood Institution," to wit, a picture, drawn to the life, of an English proprietary girls' school,—with its tolerable teachers, intolerable fare, and the pastoral superintendence of a neighbouring clergyman, who with wife and daughters drowned in finery, comes every now and then to inspect, and order here a ribbon, there a curl, to be cut away, for sanctity's sake. It is at Lowood that Jane's turbulence gets calmed down,—the only touch of direct philosophy in the book, and not a very happy one,—by the example of meekness in a fellow pupil, and the precepts of a good head governess. Nay, so good does she herself become, that on the removal of the latter to another "sphere of usefulness," Jane is made head of the establishment. But after a few years, she wearies of the monotony of her situation, and, wanting another, straightway does, what those who read that or anything else, should always do, namely, advertise. The advertisement is answered; all things go well; and in a few weeks, the young lady of eighteen, impassioned and clever, quiet and demure though she looks, finds herself

transported to "Thornfield," a squirearchical manor house in the "North Midland Counties," with a little French girl for her pupil, and for other companion only an old lady who keeps things trim during the long absence of Mr. Rochester, the owner.

Mr. Rochester, the owner, does of course come home sometimes,—a strange, stern, eccentric, cynical, plain-spoken gentleman, young enough to be fallen in love with, and, though he can scarcely believe it, to fall in love himself. Sated and sceptical as he is, he is fascinated by the truth, earnestness, and hidden fire of his little Adèle's little governess, sees she is too modest to allow herself to be fascinated by him, and fetches over, accordingly, some neighbour household of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen, to one of the number of whom he makes assiduous love, and thus unsuspectingly educes Jane Eyre's secret. Finally, he offers his hand, which, finally, is accepted. They go to church, and are on the point of being married, when some one steps forward, and proclaims the ceremony impossible; for, we hear, Mr. Rochester has already a wife, and alive—a half-alive, a wretched, ferocious maniac, chained up in Thornfield itself. Too true; there she is; and Mr. Rochester cannot deny that with all his fine gifts, wit, and noble-mindedness, and his very beauty of person, he has behaved like a scoundrel, whatever it as he may. Though indeed there is some room for extenuation, with a novel-reader, if not with a jury; for Mr. Rochester had been married to her against his will, when quite a young man, and had borne gently all the mad ravings (for she was of West Indian origin) that drove her to real insanity. And this, faintly over, he had betaken himself to foreign travel, and only been tempted by the sight of such a prize as Jane into the semi-commission of bigamy.

Poor Jane, in her horror, hastily doffs her marriage-garments, and rushes out moneyless into space,—an adventure which, as it falls in some bleak outskirts of the manufacturing districts, gives occasion for a good deal of effective painting. She finds a refuge with two young ladies and their brother, a clergyman, who take pity on her though she refuses to reveal her story, and get her made a village schoolmistress. The same young ladies turn out afterwards to be consins of hers, and she has the satisfaction of presenting them with a share of the fortune which falls to her by the discovery of her parents. At last, she hears the voice of her former

lover and betrothed, shouting (as she fancies) her name one evening, and hurries forth to find him,—in better style than when she left him. She finds him shorn of those proportions which had been his pride,—for Thornfield one night took fire, and in the *voilà* he had lost an arm and an eye: but this philosophical justice fairly enacted on him, we see that happy days are in store for him: his wife was burnt in that fire, which, indeed, had been one of her kindling,—and now, happy Jane! happy Rochester! there is no longer any obstacle to the union!"

We called this novel a very clever one, and it is so in many respects, far beyond the average of its class. The delineation remarkably quiet, is also remarkably correct; and of the three parts into which Jane's story is divided, only the third, that of her residence and intimacy with the two help-madies and the clergyman, fails to excite a deep and true interest. The way, too, in which the use and progress of the affection between her and Rochester is managed seems to us admirable: and a quiet humour, which mingles with the solemnity of the "love passages," makes these the only tolerable ones that we have met with in any recent novel. Yet it must be confessed, if there is no straining after effect in the style, there is a little of it in the incident; the idea, for instance, of the unhappy wife chained and foaming while the husband and hero is leading another to the altar is rather revolting, and the burning her to death to make the two lovers happy is not very delicately imagined. Still, with all its defects, it is an impressive novel,—one which might do honour to a veteran occupant of the circulating libraries, much more to a mere beginner.

If we are asked, however, what is the net result of these three carefully and cleverly written volumes, we should be somewhat at a loss for an answer. Really, every time one reads a new novel, the thought becomes stronger and stronger, "Would not the talent here expended in delineating (strictly speaking) *nothing*, have been far more usefully employed in setting down for us something that actually is or was in this actual existence of ours; much in which that is memorable we see disappearing or left lying wholly neglected. "Truthful," "natural," "life-like," these are all very well; but then what are the "truth," "life," "nature," represented? The loves of an imaginary Miss "Jane Eyre" and Mr. "Rochester"! Our readers remember from childhood the story of that foolish Persian king in want of a "new pleasure," and so

mightily taken with a fellow who came forward and imitated to perfection the squeak of a pig! It was a perfect imitation, undoubtedly; and yet, because the sound imitated was a worthless one, we ridicule the foolish Persian king! Might we not employ our ridicule a little nearer home?

C) See also the PDF of *The Examiner* from Sat Nov 27, 1847 – Issue 2078.