

# CONDENSED CLASSICS

## JANE EYRE

By CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Condensation by T. L. Hood of Harvard University



Charlotte Bronte, sister of Emily and Anne Bronte, was born April 21, 1816, and died March 24, 1855.

Her father was an Englishman of poor health and eccentric ways. Their mother died when the children were young, and they were left to bring themselves up in a bleak and solitary house, close to the churchyard, their only solace an intense enjoyment of the world of make-believe. Deaths in the family, sorrow and tribulations of all kinds, the struggle to make a way in the world by teaching and serving as governess, the severity of a sister, a mother to the family, all were a part of the intense life of Charlotte.

In 1846 the three sisters issued a small volume of poems under the names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The book was hardly noticed at the time. The three sisters each became a novelist. Emily's "Wuthering Heights" and Anne's "Agnes Grey" found publishers, but "The Professor" of Charlotte remained unaccepted until she had made her name famous with other works. She threw herself into the great world of letters. "Villette," her last book, came in 1853. The next year she was married to the Rev. Mr. Nicholls; she died the year after, when success and happiness should have crowned her life.

Beginning with the life by Charlotte's friend, Mrs. Gaskell, the three sisters have been the subject of innumerable books and articles.

AT HER very birth Jane Eyre was left in the cold lap of charity. Her aunt-in-law, Mrs. Reed of Gateshead Hall, kept the orphan ten years, during which she was subjected to such hard, fixed hatred that she was glad enough to be packed off to Lowood school, a semi-charitable institution for girls.

Her career there was very honorable; from a pupil she became a teacher. She left it to become governess of Adela Varens, the ward of Mr. Edward Rochester, at Thornfield Manor. There she thoroughly liked her situation: The grand old house; the quiet library; her little chamber; the garden with its huge chestnut tree; and the great meadow with its array of knotty thorn trees, strong as oaks.

If Mr. Rochester had been a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman, Jane could never have felt at ease with him. But he was a sombre, moody man, with broad and jetty eyebrows, decisive nose, and grim, square mouth and jaw; and in his presence the plain little governess felt somehow happy. Yet his character was beyond her penetration; she felt a vague sense of insecurity.

He confided to her that Adela Varens was not his child, but the daughter of a Parisian dancer, who had deceived him, and deserted the little girl. So much he told her; but of the strange shadows that passed over his happiest moments, of his apparent affection for Jane Eyre along with his withholding from her some secret grief, she could make nothing.

Then there came most mysterious happenings to Thornfield. One night Jane Eyre found the door of Mr. Rochester's room open, and his bed on fire. She managed with great difficulty to quench the flames, and rouse him from the stupor into which the smoke had plunged him. He advised her to remain silent as to the affair.

Later a Mr. Mason, from Spanish Town, in Jamaica, arrived at Thornfield while Mr. Rochester was entertaining a large party. That night Jane was awakened by a cry for help. When she reached the hall, the guests were aroused.

Mr. Rochester, candle in hand, was descending the stairs from the third floor. "A servant has had a nightmare," he said.

Thus he persuaded the guests back into their rooms. But all night Jane was obliged to attend Mr. Mason, who lay in a bed on the third floor, badly wounded in the arm and shoulder. From scattered hints Jane gathered that a woman had inflicted the wounds. A doctor was summoned, and before morning Mr. Rochester had spirited the wounded man away in a coach, with the doctor to watch over him.

Then Jane was suddenly summoned to Gateshead, to her aunt, Mrs. Reed, who lay dying. Mrs. Reed gave her a letter. It was from John Eyre, in Madeira, asking that his niece, Jane Eyre, come to him, that he might adopt her, as he was unmarried and childless. It was dated three years back. Mrs. Reed had never attempted to deliver it to Jane Eyre, because she disliked her too thoroughly to lend a hand in lifting her to prosperity.

When Jane returned to Thornfield, Mr. Rochester proposed to her; and because she loved him and believed in him, she accepted.

A month later, at the wedding, when the clergyman's lips were unclosed to ask, "Will thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?" in the gray old house of God, a distinct and near voice spoke in the silence of the empty church:

"The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment." Asked by the clergyman for the facts, the speaker showed a document to prove that Mr. Rochester had married Bertha Mason, fifteen years before, in Spanish Town, Jamaica; and produced Mr. Mason to witness that the woman was alive and at Thornfield.

Edward Rochester confessed hardly and recklessly that he had married, as the lawyer asserted; that his wife was still living; and that he had kept her secretly at Thornfield for years. She was mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs for three generations. He had been inveigled into the marriage by her family, with the connivance of his father and brother, who had desired him to marry a fortune. He invited the clergyman, the lawyer, and Mr. Mason to come up to Thornfield and see what sort of a being he had been cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not he had a right to break the compact.

At Thornfield he took them to the third story. In a room without a window, there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. A trusty maid servant bent over the fire, apparently cooking something. In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, at first sight, one could not tell; it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal; but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

"That is my wife," said Mr. Rochester. Then all withdrew.

That night Jane stole away from Thornfield. The few shillings that she possessed she gave to the driver of the first coach she saw, to take her as far as he would for the money. Thirty-six hours later he let her off at a crossroads in the moorlands. Into the heather she walked. That night she ate bilberries, and slept under a crag.

Two days later, famished and drenched, she was taken into Marsh End, the house of Rev. St. John Rivers, a young and ambitious clergyman in the neighboring village of Morton. His two sisters, Mary and Diana, were more than kind to Jane. They were soon to return to their work as governesses in a large south-of-England city.

St. John secured employment for Jane as mistress of the new girls' school in Morton. His plan was to become a missionary in India. He asked Jane to become his wife and go with him. But something kept her from consenting; he did not really love her; he felt the call to missionary work, but she did not.

Then he discovered for her that her uncle had died, leaving her £20,000. This was confirmed by Mr. Briggs, the solicitor in London. She discovered, too, that the mother of St. John and Mary and Diana had been her father's sister, so that they too should have been heirs to her uncle in Madeira. She insisted on a division of the legacy with them.

One night St. John was pressing her for her final decision. The one candle was dying out; the room was full of moonlight. She heard a voice from somewhere cry—

"Jane! Jane! Jane!"

Next day she was on her way to Thornfield. In thirty-six hours she arrived at "The Rochester Arms," two miles away. With much misgiving she walked up to Thornfield—to find only a blackened ruin.

Back at the inn she learned that Thornfield Hall had burned down about harvest time in the previous year. The fire had broken out in the dead of night. Mr. Rochester had tried to rescue his wife. She had climbed onto the roof, where she had stood, waving her arms, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off. Mr. Rochester had ascended through the skylight. The crowd had heard him call, "Bertha!" They had seen him approach her; and then she had yelled, and given a spring, and the next minute she had lain dead on the pavement.

Mr. Rochester had been taken from the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt; one eye had been knocked out, and one hand so crushed that the surgeon had had to amputate it directly. The other eye inflamed; he lost the sight of that also.

He was now at Ferndean, a manor house on a farm he had, about thirty miles off; quite a desolate spot. There Jane found him, sad, helpless and crippled. She married him. Eventually the sight returned to his eye so that when his first-born was put into his arms he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant and black. On that occasion, with a full heart, he acknowledged that God had tempered judgment with mercy.

Diana and Mary Rivers were both married soon after, and alternately, once a year, came to visit Jane and Mr. Rochester. St. John Rivers left for India, to labor until called at length into the joy of his Lord.

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# CONDENSED CLASSICS

## TRILBY

By GEORGE DU MAURIER

Condensation by Alice G. Crocker



George Louis Palmella Bussan Du Maurier was born in Paris in 1834, and died in England in 1916. His father, a naturalized British subject, was the son of emigrants who had left France during the Reign of Terror and settled in London.

In "Peter Rabbit," the first of the three books which won Du Maurier, late in life, a reputation as a novelist, almost as great as he had enjoyed as an artist and humorist.

The year 1858 found him in Paris in the Latin Quarter, a student at the "Cure of the art world" of which "Trilby" he produced a fascinating idealistic picture, with both pen and pencil.

A CHARMING studio, in the Latin quarter of Paris, sheltered "Three Musketeers of the Brush;" Talbot Wynne, or Taffy, a big, fair, blue-eyed young Yorkshireman, who had been a soldier, but was at last following his wish to be an artist; then Sandy McAllister, or the Laird, as his friends called him, intended by his parents for a solicitor, but who was in Paris painting Torenadors and singing French ballads, with a decided Scotch accent.

"The third he was Little Billie," or William Bagot, a pleasing young Englishman from London. To live and work in Paris had been Billie's dream, and at last it was a reality, he and his two friends having taken the studio together. He often looked at these friends and wondered if anyone, living or dead, ever had two such glorious chums. His absolute belief in all they said and did touched them exceedingly, and they in turn loved him for his affectionate disposition and lively ways; and recognizing his quickness, keenness and delicacy in all matters of form and color, they had also a great admiration for him.

On a showery April day the three friends were in the studio, each occupied to his taste. Taffy vigorously swinging a pair of Indian clubs, the Laird sitting before his easel painting, and Billie kneeling on the broad divan before the great studio window was gazing out over the roofs of Paris speculating upon the future of himself and his friends.

These speculations were rudely interrupted by a loud knocking at the door and two men entered; first a tall, thin individual of any age between thirty and forty-five, of Jewish aspect, well-featured, but sinister. He had bold, brilliant black eyes, with long, heavy lids. He went by the name of Svengali, spoke fluent French, but with a German accent. His companion was a little, swarthy young man, possibly a gypsy; under his arm he carried a fiddle and bow.

Svengali at once suggested that they have some music and, seating himself at the piano, ran his fingers up and down the keys with the easy power of a master. Then he fell to playing Chopin's Impromptu in A flat, so beautifully that Little Billie's heart was nigh to bursting with emotion and delight. He never forgot that Impromptu, which he was destined to hear again one day in very strange circumstances.

Then the two, Svengali and his companion Gecko, made music together so divinely, indeed, that even Taffy and the Laird were almost as wild in their enthusiasm as Billie, but with an enthusiasm too deep for words.

Suddenly there came another interruption, a loud knocking-rapping at the outer door, and a voice of great volume, that might belong to any sex, or even an angel, uttered the British milkman's yodel, "milk below," and before anyone could say "entrez," a strange figure appeared framed in the gloom of the antechamber; the figure of a very tall and fully developed young girl, clad in the gray overcoat of a French infantry soldier; below this there showed a short striped petticoat, and beneath it were visible her bare white ankles, the toes losing themselves in a huge pair of men's list slippers.

While not strictly beautiful, the girl had great charm; she was really much like a healthy young English boy. Closing the door behind her she said, wistfully: "Ye're all English, now, aren't ye? I heard the music and thought I'd just come in for a bit and pass the time of day; you don't mind?

Trilby, that's my name, Trilby O'Ferrall."

Yes this was Trilby of the studios, artists' model, taking her noonday rest. She sat down upon the model throne to eat her luncheon and listen to the music.

When Svengali had brought the music to a close, Trilby remarked it was not very gay, and offered to sing a song which she knew, and in English, wherewith she sang "Ben Bolt," and finished amid an embarrassing silence; for her hearers did not know whether it was intended seriously or in fun; such a volume of sound ensued that it flooded the studio, but without melody or music of any kind, in fact as if the singer were tone-deaf as indeed she was.

With her charm and goodfellowship, Trilby won the hearts of the Three Musketeers, Billie's most of all, and it was Billie for whom she felt the deepest affection. She cooked for them at times, mended their clothing, listened to their music and the wonderful talks of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." At other times she criticized their work; in fact, was quite "one of them."

A climax came one day when Billie, visiting another studio, discovered Trilby posing for the "altogether." He was so shocked that he was awakened to the fact of his great love for Trilby, and rushing home to his friends, declared that he was going to Harbison to paint the forest and that he wanted to be alone.

Trilby, too, saw matters in a different light, and after much self-examination and struggle, decided that she would pose no more, but would earn her living as a fine laundress, with an old friend who had a laundry and was doing well. Poor Trilby was certainly one of the frail ones that through ignorance, rather than wrong intent; now she saw her mistake and with her love for Billie there came a new feeling, a dawning self-respect.

Nineteen times Billie asked Trilby to marry him, but she always refused, feeling herself unworthy. Then one Christmas night he asked her the twentieth time, "Will you marry me? If not I leave Paris in the morning never to return," and Trilby, fearing to lose him out of her life, finally answered "Yes."

Billie's mother, hearing of the intended marriage, journeyed to Paris to make inquiries about Trilby, finally deciding that she was not the wife for her son, all of which she said to Trilby, who in her great love for Billie, and thinking it best for him, promised to go away and not see him again.

Trilby kept her promise and Billie became very ill; when he had sufficiently recovered he went back to England with his mother, his heart, as it seemed, quite dead.

This was a sorrowful time for Taffy and the Laird, as they missed both Trilby and Billie.

Years went by and Billie became a famous painter, with a beautiful home in London and many friends.

Then the three Musketeers were together again in Paris, where they visited the scenes of former times, at least going to the old studio, now rented to other tenants, but having still upon its wall Billie's famous drawing of Trilby's foot, protected by a covering of glass; and beneath it some stanzas to "Pauvre Trilby, la belle et bonne et chere!"

One night they attended a concert in a large hall on the Rue St. Honore. The first violin had scarcely taken his seat before they recognized their old friend Gecko. Just as the clock struck, Svengali appeared—the conductor. Then a moment of silence, and two little page-boys each drew a silken rope, the curtains parted, and a tall figure walked slowly down to the front of the stage. The house rose to meet her as she advanced, bowing to right and left—"It was Trilby."

Her eyes on Svengali, at a signal from him, she sang without accompaniment, in a voice so immense in its softness, richness and freshness, that it seemed to be pouring itself from all around; and then her dove-like eyes looked past Svengali, straight at Billie, and all his long-lost power of loving came back with a rush.

At last—the final performance of the evening. Trilby vocalized, without words, Chopin's Impromptu in A flat; astounding, no piano had ever given out such notes as these! Amid the wild applause and enthusiasm of an immense audience Trilby had made her debut in Paris.

Her debut in London was a different matter; Svengali ill, and unable to conduct, had taken his place in a box exactly opposite Trilby, but his presence had no effect upon her. When it came time for her to sing she started "Ben Bolt," but sang only a few bars when the house was in an uproar of laughter, boots and hisses. Trilby had lost the power of "singing true."

She seemed to be awakening from sleep, not knowing where she was. Her old-time friends rescued her and took her home to Billie's mother. Svengali collapsed from shock and died very suddenly.

The friends learned from Gecko that "there were two Trilbys." Svengali had but to say "d'or" and she suddenly became an unconscious Trilby or marble to do his bidding. So they traveled giving concerts. Svengali, Gecko, Trilby, attended by Marta, an old servant of Svengali.

The long strain had its effect upon poor Trilby, and she drooped and died, surrounded by the old-time friends and Billie's mother. Not long after, little Billie, broken-hearted, followed her.

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The foolish man makes a big noise over a little thought. That is the reason he is foolish.

Many men prate loudly of the value of their convictions, but the market price of convictions often fluctuates.

Downers of the fellow who knows it all. He knows nothing and doesn't know it.

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