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JANE EYRE

4

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

7

by Charlotte Brontë

9

CHAPTER I

22 There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been
34 wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but
47 since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold
61 winter wind had brought with it clouds so somber, and a rain so penetrating,
71 that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

85 I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons:
99 dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers
113 and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and
125 humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and
127 Georgiana Reed.

139 The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama
155 in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, and with her
166 darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked
178 perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, "She
193 regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until
206 she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation, that I

218 was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike
227 disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter,
239 franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from
247 privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.”

256 “What does Bessie say I have done?” I asked.

267 “Jane, I don’t like cavilers or questioners; besides, there is something truly
281 forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated
290 somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.”

302 A breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room, I slipped in there. It
315 contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that
328 it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat:
343 gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the
354 red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement.

370 Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were
383 the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear
396 November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I
410 studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of
424 mist and cloud; near a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with
435 ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast.

447 I returned to my book—Bewick’s History of British Birds: the letterpress
459 thereof I cared little for, generally speaking; and yet there were certain
474 introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank.
489 They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of “the solitary rocks
501 and promontories” by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded
514 with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindeness, or Naze, to the North
515 Cape—

522 “Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls,
528 Boils round the naked, melancholy isles
535 Of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge
541 Pours in among the stormy Hebrides.”

554 Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland,
563 Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with “the vast
576 sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space,—that
589 reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of
600 centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the
612 pole, and centre the multiplied rigours of extreme cold.” Of these death-
626 white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-
636 comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely
645 impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves

657 with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up
673 alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate
687 coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a
690 wreck just sinking.

702 I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quite solitary churchyard, with its
715 inscribed headstone; its gate, its two trees, its low horizon, girdled by a
727 broken wall, and its newly-risen crescent, attesting the hour of eventide.

741 The two ships becalmed on a torpid sea, I believed to be marine phantoms.

753 The fiend pinning down the thief's pack behind him, I passed over
760 quickly: it was an object of terror.

774 So was the black horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant
778 crowd surrounding a gallows.

788 Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped
797 understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as
808 interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when
821 she chanced to be in good humour; and when, having brought her ironing-
837 table to the nursery hearth, she allowed us to sit about it, and while she got
850 up Mrs. Reed's lace frills, and crimped her nightcap borders, fed our eager
863 attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and

878 other ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of Pamela,
883 and Henry, Earl of Moreland.

899 With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I
911 feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon. The breakfast-room
913 door opened.

926 “Boh! Madam Mope!” cried the voice of John Reed; then he paused: he
931 found the room apparently empty.

943 “Where the dickens is she!” he continued. “Lizzy! Georgy! (calling to his
959 sisters) Joan is not here: tell mama she is run out into the rain—bad animal!”

974 “It is well I drew the curtain,” thought I; and I wished fervently he might
987 not discover my hiding-place: nor would John Reed have found it out
1001 himself; he was not quick either of vision or conception; but Eliza just put
1111 her head in at the door, and said at once—

1121 “She is in the window-seat, to be sure, Jack.”

1135 And I came out immediately, for I trembled at the idea of being dragged
1140 forth by the said Jack.

1149 “What do you want?” I asked, with awkward diffidence.

1163 “Say, ‘What do you want, Master Reed?’” was the answer. “I want you to
1177 come here;” and seating himself in an arm-chair, he intimated by a gesture
1186 that I was to approach and stand before him.

1200 John Reed was a schoolboy of fourteen years old; four years older than I,
1216 for I was but ten: large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome
1227 skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large
1238 extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious,
1253 and gave him a dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks. He ought now to
1269 have been at school; but his mama had taken him home for a month or two,
1282 “on account of his delicate health.” Mr. Miles, the master, affirmed that he
1296 would do very well if he had fewer cakes and sweetmeats sent him from
1309 home; but the mother’s heart turned from an opinion so harsh, and inclined
1322 rather to the more refined idea that John’s sallowness was owing to over-
1329 application and, perhaps, to pining after home.