

How were jane and  
her fellow pupils  
affected by the  
condition of lowood  
school an...



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Lowood was a charity school, which was not a homely place for children to grow up in, with such strict rules and harsh conditions. The proportion of food served could not satisfy the hunger of growing girls, cheese and bread were seen as a rarity. Darkness settled in Lowood at night, there were only two candles offered on each table during suppertime. ' on each of which burnt a pair of candles '. They were deficient in basic necessities, such as a mug for drinking, a basin for washing, proper clothes to keep warm in the bitter winter, and a bed to themselves for a restful night's sleep. I glanced at the long rows of beds, each of which was quickly filled with two occupants'.

Beds were not the only things to be shared, diseases spread like wildlife. The first impression of Lowood for Jane was dim, a large school with dreary silence. ' I passed from compartment to compartment, from passage to passage, of a large and irregular building. ' the conference room where a servant left her was not grand in appearance and small, the drawing room at Gateshead was better than it. ' it was a parlour , not so spacious and splendid as the drawing room at Gateshead '.

The number of the girls in Lowood was surprised her , ' seen by the dim light of the dips , heir number to me appeared countless'. However, she was exhausted and couldn't discover the horrible side of this school at once. The next day after her arrival, Jane was like an alien in the garden, and she was confused by what an institution was actually like . She came to the front of Helen Burns and talked to her without thinking at all, when Helen was reading . The answer from Helen was totally released Jane from her confusion, ' you and I, and all of us, are charity children'.

All the resources in Lowood are in short supply. The quantity of food that they are given is small. 'How small my portion seemed!' The older girls would 'coax or menace the little ones out of their portion'. Life would be very harsh for the younger girls, 'Many a time I have shared between two claimants the tea-time'. The older girls would report to the teachers about what the young girls did wrong. Their clothing was insufficient to protect them from the bitter cold, 'we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there our ungloved hands become numbed and covered with chilblains, as were our feet'.

Every time they came back from church, the older girls would immediately sit near the fire the young girls would be left, behind them, far from the heat of the fire and would snuggle up together with their hands tucked into their dresses to try to get some warmth,' each hearth in the schoolroom was immediately surrounded by a double row of great girls and behind them the younger children crouched in groups, wrapping their starved arms in their pinafores'. Although the treatment of the younger girls is crude and unfair, there are reasons behind it.

The old girls were treated like this when they were young and they had learned how to fight for everything they wanted and harsh how to survive in such conditions. The older girls show little compassion to the younger ones. Jane is an immature girl, impatient, she did and spoke as she thought right 'I spoke as I felt, without reserve or softening'. She would resist who punished her unjustly. Naturally she would love those who showed her affection.

She could not tolerate wicked people, action should be taken to stop them and make them afraid. And if I were in your place I should dislike her, I should resist her. If she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose? Revenge burdened Jane's thought and made it impossible for her to forgive the crudeness of Mrs. Reed and her son John. Helen is more mature than Jane. She is patient and obedient. She followed the teachings of the bible 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you' she thought it's waste time to remember all the vengeance, as everyone is burdened with faults.

She boldly admitted her faults 'I am careless; I forget rules' and didn't feel her punishment was unjust. As she said 'I live in calm', she clearly understood that the best way to survive is to accept her fate. 'Yet it would be your duty to hear it, if you could not avoid it'. Jane and Helen face up to their difficult is in completely different ways. Helen accepts her life and tries to make the best of it. Jane, however finds it difficult to cope and seems to wallow in self-pity. Jane is determined to continue her life in Lowood with a positive attitude.

The reason for the change is that Miss Temple gave her a chance to speak in her own defence and did not merely believe what Mr. Brocklehurst said when he humiliated Jane in front of the whole school proclaiming her to be wicked. However, Miss Temple found out the truth, and publicly cleared her from every imputation. Jane was comforted by Helen, when she was so upset after the disgrace. Miss Temple encouraged Jane to continue to be a good girl, to work hard, and everything would be proved later on.

As Helen said 'angels see our tortures, recognize our innocence' Miss Temple's affection completely influenced Jane, she places her trust fully in Miss Temple 'I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me' Jane began to make an effort in her studies, she finally gained the affection and respect from the teachers. 'I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations for Gateshead and its daily luxuries'. She puts herself into the life of Lowood and loves more than before. Since the weather becomes warmer, a pleasant site is approaching to Lowood.

However, death is a frequent visitor there, during the outbreak of the typhus epidemic. Most of the pupils are infected made worse by semi-starvation and negligence of colds 'forth, five out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time'. Typhus spread like wild fire. The school is disrupted by the typhus 'Classes were broken up, rules relaxed', all the teachers are occupied with packing up and making other necessary preparations for those stricken girls to go home. 'Miss Temple's whole attention was absorbed by the patients'. A cloud of fear and gloom had settled over Lowood.

The school suddenly becomes a hospital. 'While its rooms and passages steamed with hospital smells, the drug and pastille striving vainly to overcome the effluvia of mortality'. They don't even have regular dinner. They have cold pie, bread and cheese instead. The typhus separated Jane and Helen, as Helen was ill, the fever patients were separated. Jane had discovered Helen was on the edge of death, when Mrs. Bates came late in the evening, she was nervous and hurried to see Helen, 'I heard you were very ill, and I could not sleep till I had spoken to you'.

Helen was calmer than about facing her death, she thought no one would regret her leaving and she would escape great suffering by dying young. 'I leave no one to regret me much'. She trusted that she was going to God; she would stay with God forever. 'I am going to God'. Finally, she died when Jane was asleep next to her. It's like saying goodnight to each other when Helen farewell with Jane, 'Good night, Jane', 'Good night, Helen' 'She kissed me, and I her,' nothing extraordinary happened at that moment. Jane eyewitness Helen's left.

Lowood changed after the devastation of typhus; the number of victims draws public attention on the school. A large fund from several benevolent individuals improves the school life, and new rules were set up to replace the old harsh one. 'New regulations were made, improvements in diet and clothing introduced'. Mr. Brocklehurst was charged with failing in his duties, and the management of school funds was taken over by a committee. Jane used to dislike the life at Lowood, she thinks herself unable to cope with the unreasonable rules.

She feels the teachers are crude and without compassion, she felt especially after she was an eyewitness to Miss Scatcherd punishing Helen with a rod. As a result, she didn't talk much and wandered around the garden alone during break time. Her opinions of Lowood are different upon her arrival. Those changes are due to Miss Temple and Helen Burns. She is praised by Miss Temple, and determined to work hard and to be a good girl. 'In time I rose to be the first girl of the first class'. She made an amazing improvement in her studies. Helen Burns was a first friend of Jane. They have a really good friendship.

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Jane's learnt the correct attitude to deal with their terrible life from Helen. She became more patient and mature, since Helen point out her vulnerability " you are, too impulsive, too vehement" and she tried to use Bible teaching to persuade Jane to learn to be patient. Jane shared the joy of Lowood at the end, and she doesn't wallow in self-pity anymore, she is confident of her given life. When Miss Temple left, Jane lost her only friend in Lowood who had shared her memory of childhood. However, Miss Temple has to leave with her husband Mr. Nasmyth, and Jane is upset and miss Miss Temple very much.

From the day she left I was no longer the same'. Also the death of Helen, Jane feels instinctively that she has no friends in Lowood. She finds there is nothing she miss in this place. On the other hand, she is aware, that she had been staying in Lowood since the first day she was sent there. She thinks it is time for her to leave, and begin a new life in a different place. ' I remembered that the real world was wide'. She is eager to welcome her future, full of hopes that her tomorrow would be brighter. Also there is one thing that hasn't changed through out her life in Lowood, her curiosity about the world is still strong like a flame.