

Packet is arranged chronologically by date of publication:

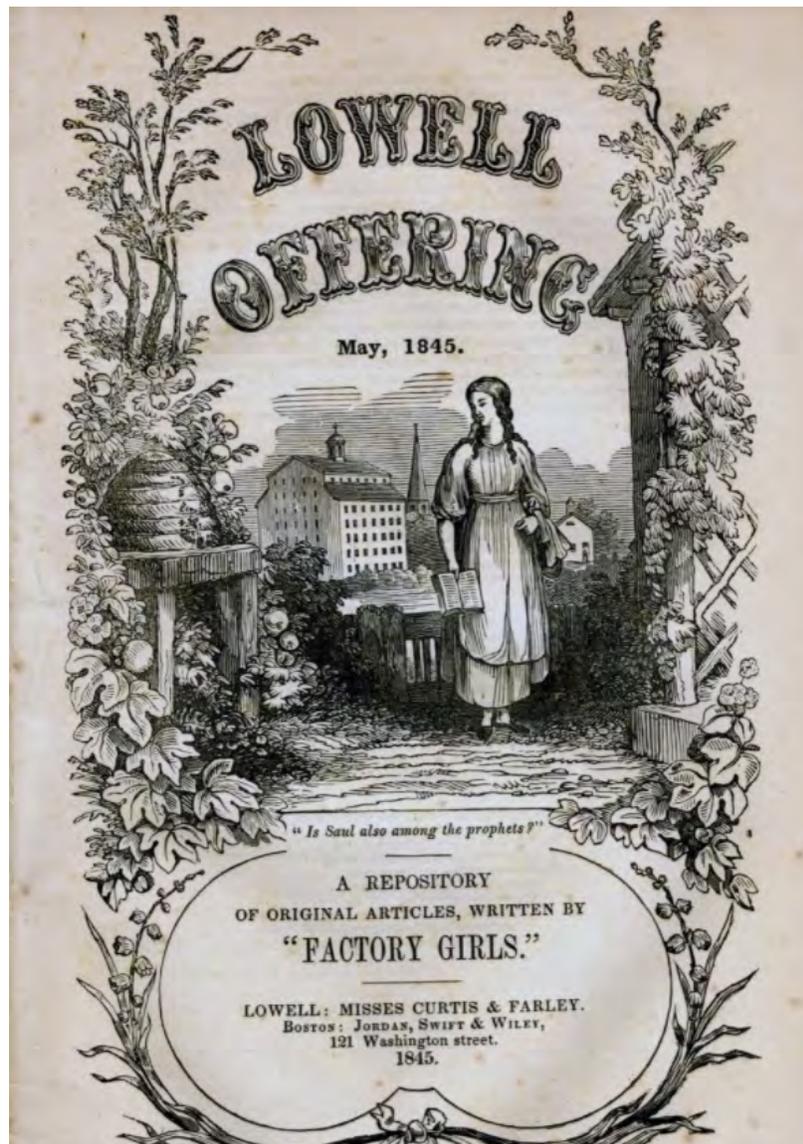
“The Factory Girls of Middlesex” from *The Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, Ohio), Wednesday, March 22, 1843. (Nineteenth-Century Newspapers Online)

Welch, Jane S. “The Mother and Daughter.” *The Lowell Offering*, vol. 4, no. 6, Apr. 1844, pp. 126–28.

Larcom, Lucy “Weaving.” First published in *Poems by Lucy Larcom*, Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869. This version available online:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55895/weaving>

Dewolfe, George Gordon Byron, *The Man with the Waterproof Cape*. 1870. Broadside from the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



“The Factory Girls of Middlesex” from *The Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, Ohio), Wednesday, March 22, 1843. (Nineteenth-Century Newspapers Online) [retyped by Bridget; BOTH poem & note both in original]

Our citizens, we boast, are free,
And peaceful liberty their lot;
Rich or poor, high or low degree,
In palace grand, or humble cot

Free! Is our freedom but a name –
A saturnalian, hey-day theme?
A fleeting ignis fatuus flame,
A mad-man’s phantasy, a dream?

Else, where’s the freedom of the pale
And toil worn “factory girl,”
The tenant of a “home league” jail,
Obedient to some brutal churl!

Helpless victim of his avarice,
His legal bonded, trembling slave;
From other slaves unlike in this:
The master pays not for her grave.

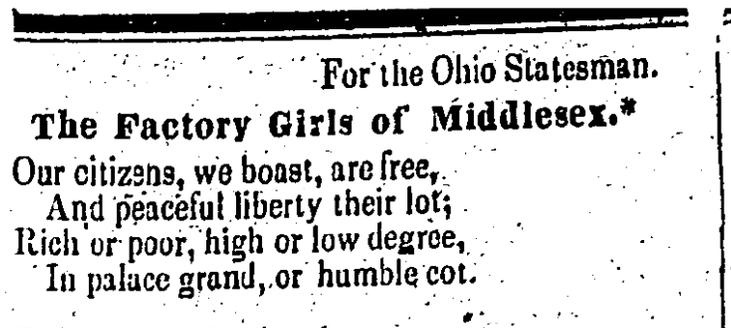
His are her sinews, while in health,
Whereon to live in gorgeous state,
Whereon to gather massive wealth,
Honor and rank among the great.

When toil-worn tremulous and weak,
Infirm, and prematurely old,
No factory lordling needs she seek
For help or shelter from the cold.

For that’s not in the bond, he’ll say;
Of contracts talk, or charity;
Or bid her patience have – or pray --
That the world’s wide and she is free!

Aye, she is free – *free to die!*
Not else, th’ oppressor’s power she’ll flee
His angry frown, and threat’ning eye –
His “factory rules” and tyranny.

But, while health blooms upon thy cheek,
And thy hands can labor still,
Be careful girl, in whispers speak,
Brave not the factory lordling’s will!



Provoke, resist his tyranny,
And thou art doomed, destroyed!
From “mill” to “mill” he’ll follow thee –
Thou canst not be employed!

The insolence of chartered might
Will haunt the steps with fiendish hate,
And claim thee as a “*vested right*” –
A bonded slave, by law and fate!

‘Twere vain to plead thy helplessness,
The holy justice of thy cause;
The chartered lords will still oppress,
They’re vindicated by the laws.

Yet this, we boast, is freedom’s land!
New England’s pilgrim honored shore;
Where valiant men fought, hand in hand,
For Liberty, in days of yore.

They were MEN – now, alas, departed!
And beings without souls succeed,
Higglers, mean and craven hearted,
With avarice their only creed.

Such are the BARONS OF THE MILL,
The lordlings of the Factory,
Whose voice resounds o’er dale and hill,
“Home League!!” “Home League!!” “Home Industry!!”

Vile hypocrits in godly dress,
Levying tribute on the poor,
By charters, tariffs, banks, finesse,
And wrongs ‘twere treason to endure.

Say, brook ye tyrants in this land –
Men of the workshop and the plough!
“No!” “No!” – unite, then, hand in hand,
Be freemen – not next year -- but *now*.

Arouse, stalwart men! Sound th’ alarm
Of Bank and Tariff slavery!
Reform! Let your anvils clang, “Reform!”
“Reform!” till honest toil is free!

Rally! Men of every trade!
And stay the tyrant’s hand.
‘Tis woman’s voice implores your aid –
‘Tis justice liberty’s command!

*The above lines were suggested by the following petition of the female operatives in one of the rich *tariff-protected* establishments of New England:

"To the Massachusetts Legislature:

"We, the undersigned females, dependent upon the labor of our hands for subsistence, having left the employment of the Middlesex Manufacturing Company on account of a violation on their part of the agreement existing between the undersigned and said company, are now suffering persecution from said company, and are hunted from place to place, that we may find no employment by which to earn a living. Not being able to contend against our rich persecutors by bringing a suit at law for satisfaction, we are compelled to seek redress or protection from the powers which created said company. The "regulation paper" which accompanies this memorial reads as follows: "All persons entering into the employment of the company are considered as engaged for twelve months; and those who leave sooner will not receive a regular discharge." We did not imply, by agreeing to this, that our wages were to be subject to any reduction which the company might see fit to make; and when they gave us official notice that they were going to cut our wages down about 25 per cent., we considered it a violation of the agreement which existed between us, and therefore did not feel bound by an agreement which they had a right to break; for if they could reduce our wages 25 per cent., why not fifty, and still hold us to work twelve months? We therefore quit working for said company, and the consequence for us is as follows: Some of us went to work for other companies, but these companies soon received our names, and we were immediately turned off. Some of us applied for work where hands were wanted, but were informed that they could employ none of the "turn outs from Middlesex;" and many who labored with us have been obliged to leave Lowell, and seek their bread, we know not where, on account of the persecution carried on against them by the Middlesex Company. Our names are upon all the corporations in Lowell, that we find no employment. We therefore pray that you will, if consistent with your constitutional powers, stay the hands of our persecutors; and, if not, that some law may be enacted which will prevent our brothers, sisters, and friends suffering as we suffer, if ever they should resist injustice from manufacturing companies.

Ruth Hancock
Mary J. Stowell
Caroline I. Sweetser
Deborah Smith,
Betsey Tenney
Lydia g. Bates
Julia A. Taylor
Mary A. Morgan

Maria French
Mary W. Honey
Lucinda Keeler
Eunice G. Ilsley
Sarah Flying
Amy Littlefield
Jane G. Morgan

THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

“My dear child, how can I part with you?” said a mother to her only daughter, who was preparing to go some fifty miles in quest of employment in a factory. “You have been my only earthly solace since my bereavement in the death of your father; and, for the last few years, I have even thought the sad vacuum, created by his death, was in part re-filled by your fond and unceasing attention.”

“Mother,” replied the girl, while her eyes were filling with tears, “I would not leave you, did I not think I could assist you in the education of little Henry. You know that by our needles we can hardly earn enough to live; Henry is getting along very fast in his studies, and it will soon be necessary to send him to a higher school; his books and tuition will then make an additional expense. How happy I shall be, if I can support myself, and aid you; from me the idea takes all the pain of separation; it will give to my toil all its pleasure, and cause me to forget that I am a stranger in a strange place. Now, mother, do try to be reconciled,” said the young affectionate girl, imprinting a kiss upon her cheek; “I’ll go and stay one year, and then perhaps something may be done here, which will supersede the necessity of a longer separation.”

“Oh, that *that something* could be found now!” exclaimed the mother; “I have a strange fear that you will no more return to me. In my dream last night I was gazing at a glorious summer sunset; the whole western sky looked as though it were enveloped in a sheet of flame; and as I stood entranced by the common though delightful scene, a small light cloud, which floated near, suddenly assumed the appearance of you, Anna. I reached forth my hands and implored you to come to me, when you disappeared in the flaming sky! It was naught but a dream I know, but it has left an unhappy impression on my mind, which I cannot shake off.”

“Mother,” interrupted Anna, in a tone of persuasive affection, “don’t let it distress you so—excitement and anxiety were evidently the causes of your dream; and don’t you remember you called me to the window last evening to see the glowing west at sunset? You have told me, mother, that dreams were only the wild wanderings of the imagination, unaccompanied by reason; surely, then, we need ‘borrow no trouble’ from them.”

The widow at length became composed. She did not forget her dream, nor the fears it had left, but she had found consolation from a higher source than that of earthly hopes. “I will not repine,” thought she, “for all—yes, all of earth must mourn the departure of some cherished object, and even thus let it be, for to HIM who hath so ordained, it seemeth good.” She looked beyond the “troubled sea of life,” to the boundless ocean of eternity, where she would be sweetly wafted without even a ripple to disturb the calm quiet of her existence.

Anna busied herself in making the last few arrangements preparatory to her departure. The care of the pretty flower garden, fronting the cottage, was transferred to Henry, with particular charges respecting the sweet white jessamine and woodbine, the united foliage of which formed a fragrant shade for the cottage windows.

“Why do you wish me to take better care of them than of the other plants,” said Henry, looking archly in his sister’s face? “Oh, I know it

is because cousin James gave them to you, and I'll tell him all about it when he returns from sea."

"You are a saucy fellow," said Anna, putting her arms around his neck; "but, hark, the stage is coming. One kiss, dear brother. There, that must answer for a long time. Write me a letter often."

"I will," said he, smiling through his tears; "and *you* shall hear all *we* hear from cousin James."

The farewell was spoken between mother and daughter. The fervent ejaculation, "God keep you, and bless you," from the former, was accompanied by a cheerfulness which had been imparted by her calm meditations. Anna was soon seated in the stage-coach, through the window of which, as it rolled away, she looked an adieu once more to the loved ones who were still gazing after her.

It is not worth while to give a detail of the particulars of her journey. It is sufficient to say, that she arrived at her destined place in safety, and met with a cordial reception from the mistress of the boarding-house, at which she had been directed to stop. Anna was a stranger to all the inmates of the family, and there were but few in the village with whom she had any acquaintance. Her frank and guileless countenance convinced at once those with whom she was connected of her purity, and her gentle winning ways soon brought around her many friends. She procured employment in the mill, and her situation was as pleasant, and more so, than she had anticipated.

Weeks and months had passed since Anna had become a "factory girl." Summer had gone and come again, and still found her industriously and cheerfully employed at her mill labor. No opportunity for improvement, either in mind or heart, had been neglected by her; nor was her progress unobserved by her gratified mother. She had been reminded in her last letter from Henry, that her year of absence had nearly expired, and her return would soon be joyfully expected.

"You are always light-hearted and happy," said Sarah Smith to Anna, one pleasant summer morning, as they were going in the mill, "but you are unusually so now; may I ask what has occurred to render you so joyous?"

"Why, did you not know," said Anna, while her countenance beamed with delight, "that this is my last day in the mill, and I am to start for home to-morrow."

Sarah expressed both surprise and regret on hearing this intelligence.

"I am sorry to leave the pleasant acquaintances I have formed here," replied Anna; "but, only think, I am going once more to my happy cottage home, and I shall again be greeted by that kind sympathizing voice I love so well to hear."

Sarah turned with sadness from the joyous laugh and buoyant step of Anna, as she remembered that for her there was no such pleasant home, and kind enduring friends.

Early in the afternoon of the same day, Anna was suddenly interrupted in her employment by the information, from one of her room-mates, that the lower part of the mill was on fire, and one flight of stairs was already nearly consumed! She then observed, for the first time, that considerable confusion prevailed in the room; many of the frames were stopped, and the girls were walking to and fro, looking anxious and fearful. Their fears had been quieted once and again by the overseers, who thought the

fire would be easily extinguished. They soon perceived their fatal mistake. The flames rapidly increased, and were soon entirely beyond control. It was already difficult, if not hazardous, to descend the usual way. The wheel was stopped, and orders were given for all to leave the building as quickly as possible. The excited terrified inmates needed not a second bidding to leave the scene where danger presented itself in such a terrible form. The lower part of the building was soon cleared; but when those who were employed in the upper room reached the entry, they found it extremely perilous to descend. The bolder ones, stepping forward first, gave to the more timid courage, until nearly all had escaped the place of danger. At this moment the smoke and flames, bursting out with accelerated fury, completely barred the passage, and forced the few remaining behind back to the room to prevent suffocation. Anna was among the number. The wood work and material manufactured soon caught the "fierce element," and caused it to spread almost with the rapidity of lightning. The half-frantic few left behind, comprehending their peril, rushed to an open window, and shrieked wildly for help. The piercing tone was heard above the confusion which reigned without, and arrested the attention of the crowd. No means were at hand—none were devised, by which they could be rescued, and they were left to their inevitable doom. They saw and knew this, and some, who feared naught so much as the fiery death to which they were exposed, precipitated themselves from the window. Anna still remained at the window, and, in the agonizing tones of despair, implored assistance. She saw the gathering flames approaching nearer and nearer; again she turned to the window, and again that piercing cry was heard above the hoarse voices below. She could endure no more; reason had been displaced by the agony of fear, and she sunk, exhausted, upon the floor. The fearful reality had passed away, and visions of home and friends flitted over her imagination.

"Mother, dear mother," murmured the dying girl; but the air, laden with noxious vapor, was no longer respirable; a bright smile illumined her countenance, as in her dreamy vision she again met her mother, and her spirit passed from earth.

The sad tidings were communicated to the widow; she repined not, though her heart was riven with anguish; she meekly bowed to the will of HIM who prepared the bitter cup.

"Yet through her tears the mourning mother smiled,
As with the eye of faith she saw the bowers
Of heaven fresh blooming with immortal flowers,
Amid whose fragrance wandered, undefiled,
The loved and early lost! A healing balm
Fell on her heart serene, though sad withal,
And hopeful still, with spirit meek and calm
Life's lowly ways through shade and sunlight trod,
While leaned her chastened heart confidingly on God."

J. S. W.

All day she stands before her loom;
The flying shuttles come and go:
By grassy fields, and trees in bloom,
She sees the winding river flow:
And fancy's shuttle flieth wide,
And faster than the waters glide.

Is she entangled in her dreams,
Like that fair-weaver of Shalott,
Who left her mystic mirror's gleams,
To gaze on light Sir Lancelot?
Her heart, a mirror sadly true,
Brings gloomier visions into view.

"I weave, and weave, the livelong day:
The woof is strong, the warp is good:
I weave, to be my mother's stay;
I weave, to win my daily food:
But ever as I weave," saith she,
"The world of women haunteth me.

"The river glides along, one thread
In nature's mesh, so beautiful!
The stars are woven in; the red
Of sunrise; and the rain-cloud dull.
Each seems a separate wonder wrought;
Each blends with some more wondrous
thought.

"So, at the loom of life, we weave
Our separate shreds, that varying fall,
Some strained, some fair: and, passing, leave
To God the gathering up of all,
In that full pattern wherein man
Works blindly out the eternal plan.

"In his vast work, for good or ill,
The undone and the done he blends:
With whatsoever woof we fill,
To our weak hands His might He lends,
And gives the threads beneath His eye
The texture of eternity.

"Wind on, by willow and by pine,
Thou blue, untroubled Merrimack!
Afar, by sunnier streams than thine,

My sisters toil, with foreheads black;
And water with their blood this root,
Whereof we gather bounteous fruit.

"There be sad women, sick and poor:
And those who walk in garments soiled:
Their shame, their sorrow, I endure;
By their defect my hope is foiled:
The blot they bear is on my name;
Who sins, and I am not to blame?"

"And how much of your wrong is mine,
Dark women slaving at the South?
Of your stolen grapes I quaff the wine;
The bread you starve for fills my mouth:
The beam unwinds, but every thread
With blood of strangled souls is red.

"If this be so, we win and wear
A Nessus-robe of poisoned cloth;
Or weave them shrouds they may not wear,—
Fathers and brothers falling both
On ghastly, death-sown fields, that lie
Beneath the tearless Southern sky.

"Alas! the weft has lost its white.
It grows a hideous tapestry,
That pictures war's abhorrent sight:—
Unroll not, web of destiny!
Be the dark volume left unread,—
The tale untold,—the curse unsaid!"

So up and down before her loom
She paces on, and to and fro,
Till sunset fills the dusty room,
And makes the water redly glow,
As if the Merrimack's calm flood
Were changed into a stream of blood.

Too soon fulfilled, and all too true
The words she murmured as she wrought:
But, weary weaver, not to you
Alone was war's stern message brought:
"Woman!" it knelled from heart to heart,
"Thy sister's keeper know thou art!"

The Man with the

WATERPROOF CAPE.



I'm a factory girl, and Maria's my name,
My age is eighteen, from New-Hamp-
shire I came,
Because I am fair, and attractive in shape,
I was chased by the man with the water-
proof cape!

I sing of a man, and the mill girls will say:
He's old and he's ugly, his hairs are all grey,
He chases a girl to her boarding house door,
And leaves her so weak that she faints on the floor;
He, oft, like a phantom, appeareth in sight,
When girls are returning from shopping at night,
He'll pick out the one that's most pleasing in shape,
And follow her then with his waterproof cape!

On all corporations this queer man will roam,
And nobody knows of his friends or his home;
The cars, boats, and stages, may carry the mails,
But this queer old man, who has no fear of jails,
To carry our females has such a desire,
They'll run from his grasp as men run to a fire,
They'll call him a clown, or a monkey, or ape,
Then say he's a man with a waterproof cape!

O, try not to coax him to streets where the stores
Look gay at the windows, or glad at the doors,
For if you would beckon but little he'd care,
He's not such a fool as to follow you there;
Go offer him oysters, he'll see through your plau,
He knows he'd be taken like "Nap" at Sedan,
And well he's aware that police of good shape,
Would have no respect for his waterproof cape!

He'd be introducing a fashion quite new,
And pants, coats, and vests, he without them would
do;
He don't need a hat, and a shirt he ne'er craved,
By going without one a washing bill's saved;

He's ready with bricks at his hunters to throw;
He'll heed not the winds that around him may
blow;
He's proud though he's ugly; he doats on his shape,
And frightens the girls with his waterproof cape!

There's Mary, who's wishing to go out with Jane,
And Annie, a girl who came lately from Maine,
They want to buy bonnets and dresses to-night,
And look in gay stores where the gas burneth
bright,
And young Cinderella "her fellow would meet,"
But all of them dread to go out on the street,
For fear that they each may get into a scrape,
By meeting the man with the waterproof cape!

They've special policemen to hunt the man down,
He knows that they seek him, and laughs like a
clown;
He'll come straight along with his cape, and he'll
say:

"I guess I know how to keep out of their way!"
Indeed he's a wonder, deny it who can,
On all corporations a terrible man!
He'll grin at your powders, your pistols, and grape,
They can't hit the man with the waterproof cape!

If he was but young, and had love-lighted eyes,
Some factory girl might take him as a prize,
She'd call him the gayest and best, of the beaux,
She'd make him put on a nice suit of warm clothes,
She never would run from his presence away;
But, terrible man, he is wrinkled and grey,
And when she goes out for silk, cotton, or tape,
She don't want to meet with the waterproof cape!

Some think that the fires have been caus'd by his
hand,
But for him the stables of Leavitt's would stand,
The horses would yet be both lively and gay;
Nute would not be mourning his losses to-day;
When aught is done wrong, and they can't tell by
who,
They think of the man makes the girls feel so blue,
If a woman elopes with a man of good shape,
They say she's gone off with the waterproof cape!

Now girls of the mills don't your weeping eyes rub,
Against your great foe form yourselves in a club,
He's old and he's ugly, and not in good trim,
And certain I am you want nothing from him,
But let one of you just take him for a beau,
And home with her once let the waterproof go,
While others surround him, and few will wear
cape,
If you capture the man with the waterproof cape!

He walks, but he leaves not a foot-print behind;
He runs like a reindeer whenever inclined;
Though ugly and old, and though wrinkled and grey,
The youngest can't catch him when he's on his way;
He'd laugh at a storm that you'd say was severe;
And flashes of lightning can cause him no fear;
And many folks say, while with wonder they gaze,
He wears a great cloak with his waterproof cape!
Lowell, Massachusetts, October 28, 1870.

Composed in twenty-nine minutes and sixty
seconds, by Byron DeWolfe.