FACTORY TRACTS.

FACTORY LIFE AS IT IS.

BY AN OPERATIVE.

[Those friendly to our cause will please circulate. Orders addressed to the Female Labor Reform Association, Lowell, Mass., will be promptly attended to.]

INTRODUCTION.

Philanthropists of the nineteenth century!—shall not the operatives of our country be permitted to speak for themselves? Shall they be compelled to listen in silence to those who speak for gain, and are the mere echo of the will of the corporations? Shall the worthy laborer be subdued into silence by wealth and power, and for fear of being deprived of the means of procuring his daily bread? Shall tyranny and cruel oppression be allowed to rivet the chains of physical and mental slavery on the millions of our country who are the real producers of all its improvements and wealth, and they fear to speak out in noble self-defence? Shall they fear to appeal to the sympathies of the people, or the justice of this far-famed republican nation? God forbid!

Much has been written and spoken in woman's behalf, especially in America; and yet a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude as degrading as unceasing toil can make it. I refer to the female operatives of New England—the free states of our union—the boasted land of equal rights for all—the states where no colored slave can breathe the balmy air, and exist as such;—but yet there are those, a host of them, too, who are in fact nothing more nor less than slaves in every sense of the word! Slaves to a system of labor which requires them to toil from five until seven o'clock, with one hour only to attend to the wants of nature, allowed—slaves to the will and requirements of the "powers that be," however they may infringe on the rights or conflict with the feelings of the operative—slaves to ignorance—and how can it be otherwise? What time has the operative to bestow on moral, religious or intellectual culture? How can our country look for aught but ignorance and vice, under the existing state of things? When the whole system is exhausted by unremitting labor during twelve and thirteen hours per day, can any reasonable being expect that the mind will
retain its vigor and energy? Impossible! Common sense will teach every
one the utter impossibility of improving the mind under these circumstan-
ces, however great the desire may be for knowledge.

Again, we hear much said on the subject of benevolence among the
wealthy and, so called, "Christian part of community." Have we not cause
to question the sincerity of those who, while they "talk" benevolence in the
parlor, compel their help to labor for a mean, paltry pittance in the kitch-
en? And while they manifest great concern for the souls of the "heathen"
in distant lands, care nothing for the bodies and intellects of those within
their own precincts? Shall we esteem men honest in their pretensions to
piety and benevolence, who compel their help to labor on the Sabbath day
or lose their situation? Have they made their regulations hold up to the
world a large amount of piety, and a great desire that those in their em-
ploy shall be religious—so much so that they have made a corporation
law, that "no one shall be retained in their employ who is not a constant
attendant on public worship." Will those who are obliged to hear the
noise and confusion caused by some fifty or more men, with teams of oxen,
and all the noise consequent on such occasions, together with splitting and
blasting of rocks, to their great annoyance while in their places of wor-
ship—will these be deceived by such hypocritical pretensions of piety,
and love to the moral interests of the community in which they live?
What is and must be, the tendency of such examples on those who are
familiar with such violations of the day called the Christian Sabbath, but
to throw off all restraint, and make the Sabbath a pastime, or a day in
which the weary operatives may attend to their own private business?
Such examples have already produced such results, and the end is not yet.

As philanthropists and lovers of equal rights, we address our readers;
and before we close this series of tracts, (which will consist of some three
or four numbers,) we intend to give a fair exposition of the regulations of
the "factory system," its operations and abuses, the grand results of
protection given to industry, including the low price paid for board and
wages—the long hours for labor, with its effects on the health of the
operatives, and some other "facts for the million, &c. &c.

AN OPERATIVE.

PRESERVATION MASTER
AT HARVARD
THE EVILS OF FACTORY LIFE.

NUMBER ONE.

Among the first which we shall notice is the tendency it has, at the present time, to destroy all love of order and practice in domestic affairs. It is a common remark, that by the time a young lady has worked in a factory one year, she will lose all relish for the quiet, fireside comforts of life, and the neatness attendant upon order and precision. The truth is, time is wanting, and opportunity, in order to cultivate the mind and form good habits. All is hurry, bustle and confusion in the street, in the mill, and in the overflowing boarding house. If there chance to be an intelligent mind in that crowd which is striving to lay up treasures of knowledge, how unfavorably is it situated! Crowded into a small room which contains three beds and six females, all possessing the "without end" tongue of woman, what chance is there for studying? and much less for sober thinking and reflecting? Some lofty, original minds, we will allow, have surmounted all the obstacles of a factory life and come out, like gold, refined from all the dross of baneful society and pernicious examples, but they are cases of rare occurrence. But few have the moral courage and perseverance to travel on in the rugged paths of science and improvement, amid all these and many other discouragements. After thirteen hours unremitting toil, day after day and week after week, how much energy and life would remain to nerve on the once vigorous mind in the path of wisdom! What ambition or pride would such females possess, to enable them to practice good order and neatness! They are confined so long in close, unhealthy rooms that it is a greater wonder that they possess any life or animation, more than the machines which they have watched so unceasingly!

Let us look forward into the future, and what does the picture present to our imagination! Methinks I behold the self same females occupying new and responsible stations in society. They are now wives and mothers! But oh! how deficient in everything pertaining to those holy, sacred names! Behold what disorder, confusion and disquietude reigns, where quiet, neatness and calm serenity should sanctify and render almost like heaven the home of domestic union and love! Instead of being qualified to rear a family — to instruct them in the great duties of life — to cultivate and unfold the intellect — to imbue the soul in the true and living principles of right and justice — to teach them the most important of all lessons, the art of being useful members in the world, ornaments in society and blessings to all around them, — they, themselves, have need to be instructed in the very first principles of living well and thinking right. Incarcerated within the walls of a factory, while as yet mere children — drilled there from five till seven o'clock, year after year — thrown into company with all sorts and descriptions of minds, dispositions and intellects, without counsellor or friend to advise — far away from a watchful mother's tender care, or father's kind instruction — surrounded on all sides with
the vain ostentation of fashion, vanity and light frivolity — beset with temptations without, and the carnal propensities of nature within, what must, what will be the natural, rational result? What but ignorance, misery, and premature decay of both body and intellect? Our country will be but one great hospital, filled with worn out operatives and colored slaves! Those who marry, even, become a curse instead of a helpmeet to their husbands, because of having broken the laws of God and their own physical natures, in these modern prisons (alias palaces,) in the gardens of Eden! It has been remarked by some writer that the mother educates the man. Now if this be a truth, as we believe it is, to a very great extent, what, we would ask, are we to expect, the same system of labor prevailing, will be the mental and intellectual character of the future generations of New England? What but a race weak, sickly, imbecile, both mental and physical? A race fit only for coporation tools and timeserving slaves? Nobility of America! — producers of all the luxuries and comforts of life! will you not wake up on this subject? Will you sit supinely down and let the drones in society fasten the yoke of tyranny, which is already fitted to your necks so cunningly that you do not feel it but slightly,—will you, I say suffer them to rivet that yoke upon you, which has crushed and is crushing its millions in the old world to earth; yea, to starvation and death! Now is the time to answer this all-important question. Shall we not hear the response from every hill and vale, "equal rights, or death to the corporations"? God grant it, is the fervent prayer of

Lowell, October, 1845.

SOME OF THE BEAUTIES
OF OUR FACTORY SYSTEM—OTHERWISE, LOWELL SLAVERY. *

For the purpose of illustration, let us go with that light-hearted, joyous young girl who is about for the first time to leave the home of her childhood; that home around which clusters so many beautiful and holy associations, pleasant memories, and quiet joys; to leave, too, a mother's

*To the Female Labor Reform Association.—The preceding article, with the accompanying note, written for the Lowell Offering, and rejected by the Editor, is at your disposal. If you deem it worthy a place in the Tracts you are about to publish you are at liberty to use it.

Yours,

AMELIA.

Miss FARLEY.—Having been solicited to contribute to the pages of the Offering, the following article is respectfully submitted to your consideration and that of your readers generally; if the views and opinions therein expressed are such that it be deemed advisable to give it entire without any restriction or qualification whatever, you will please insert the same—if not, you are requested to return it immediately through the Office.

Yours respectfully.
cheerful smile, a father's care and protection; and wend her way toward this far famed "city of spindles," this promised land of the imagination, in whose praise she has doubtless heard so much.

Let us trace her progress during her first year's residence, and see whether she indeed realizes those golden prospects which have been held out to her. Follow her now as she enters that large gloomy looking building—she is in search of employment, and has been told that she might here obtain an eligible situation. She is sadly wearied with her journey, and withal somewhat annoyed by the noise, confusion, and strange faces all around her. So, after a brief conversation with the overseer, she concludes to accept the first situation which offers; and reserving to herself a sufficient portion of time in which to obtain the necessary rest after her unaccustomed exertions, and the gratification of a stranger's curiosity regarding the place in which she is now to make her future home, she retires to her boarding house, to arrange matters as much to her mind as may be.

The intervening time passes rapidly away, and she soon finds herself once more within the confines of that close noisy apartment, and is forthwith installed in her new situation—first, however, premising that she has been sent to the Counting-room, and receives therefrom a Regulation paper, containing the rules by which she must be governed while in their employ; and lo! here is the beginning of mischief; for in addition to the tyrannous and oppressive rules which meet her astonished eyes, she finds herself compelled to remain for the space of twelve months in the very place she then occupies, however reasonable and just cause of complaint might be hers, or however strong the wish for dismissal; thus, in fact, constituting herself a slave, a very slave to the caprices of him for whom she labors. Several incidents coming to the knowledge of the writer, might be somewhat interesting in this connection, as tending to show the prejudicial influence exerted upon the interests of the operative by this unjust requisition. The first is of a lady who has been engaged as an operative for a number of years, and recently entered a weaving room on the Massachusetts Corporation; the overseer having assured her previous to her entrance, that she should realize the sum of $2.25 per week, exclusive of board; which she finding it impossible to do, appealed to the Counting-room for a line enabling her to engage elsewhere, but it was peremptorily refused.

The next is of a more general bearing, concerning quite a number of individuals employed on the Lawrence Corporation, where the owners have recently erected and put in motion a new mill, at the same time stopping one of the old, in which said persons were employed. Now as they did not voluntarily leave their situations, but were discharged therefrom on account of suspension of operations by the company; they had an undoubted right to choose their own place of labor; and as the work in the new mill is vastly more laborious, and the wages less than can be obtained in many parts of the city, they signified their wish to go elsewhere, but are insolently told that they shall labor there or not at all: and will not be released until their year has expired, when if they can possibly find no further excuse for delay, they may deign to bestow upon them what is in common parlance termed, a "regular discharge;" thus enabling them to pass from one prison house to another. Concerning this precious document, it is only necessary to say, that it very precisely reminds one of that which the dealers in human flesh at the South are wont to give and receive as the transfer of one piece of property from one owner to another.
Now, reader, what think you? is not this the height of the beautiful? and are not we operatives an ungrateful set of creatures that we do not properly appreciate, and be highly thankful for such unparalleled generosity on the part of our employers!

But to return to our toiling Maiden,—the next beautiful feature which she discovers in this glorious system is, the long number of hours which she is obliged to spend in the above named close, unwholesome apartment. It is not enough, that like the poor peasant of Ireland, or the Russian serf who labors from sun to sun, but during one half of the year, she must still continue to toil on, long after Nature’s lamp has ceased to lend its aid—not will even this suffice to satisfy the grasping avarice of her employer; for she is also through the winter months required to rise, partake of her morning meal, and be at her station in the mill, while the sun is yet sleeping behind the eastern hills; thus working on an average, at least twelve hours and three fourths per day, exclusive of the time allotted for her hasty meals, which in winter simply one half hour at noon,—in the spring is allowed the same at morn, and during the summer is added 15 minutes to the half hour at noon. Then too, when she is at last released from her wearisome day’s toil, still may she not depart in peace. No! her footsteps must be dogged to see that they do not stray beyond the corporation limits, and she must, whether she will or no, be subjected to the manifold inconveniences of a large crowded boarding-house, where too, the price paid for her accommodation is so utterly insignificant, that it will not ensure to her the common comforts of life; she is obliged to sleep in a small comfortless, half ventilated apartment containing some half a dozen occupants each, but no matter, she is an operative—it is all well enough for her; there is no “abuse” about it; no, indeed; so think our employers,—but do we think so? time will show. Here, too, comes up a case which strikingly illustrates the petty tyranny of the employer. A little girl, some 12 or 13 years of age, the daughter of a poor widow, dependent on her daily toil for a livelihood, worked on one of the Corporations, boarding with her mother; who dying left her to the care of an aunt, residing but a few steps from the Corporation—but the poor little creature all unqualified as she was, to provide for her own wants, was compelled to leave her home and the motherly care bestowed upon her, and enter one of these same large crowded boarding-houses. We do but give the facts in this case and they need no comment for every one must see the utter heartlessness which prompted such conduct toward a mere child.

Reader will you pronounce this a mere fancy sketch, written for the sake of effect? It is not so. It is a real picture of “Factory life;” nor is it one half so bad as might truthfully and justly have been drawn. But it has been asked, and doubtless will be again, why, if these evils are so aggravating, have they been so long and so peacefully borne? Ah! and why have they? It is a question well worthy of our consideration, and we would call upon every operative in our city, aye, throughout the length and breadth of the land, to awake from the lethargy which has fallen upon them, and assert and maintain their rights. We call upon you for action—united and immediate action. But, says one, let us wait till we are stronger. In the language of one of old, we ask, when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are reduced to the servile condition of the poor operatives of England? for verily we shall be and that right soon, if matters be suffered to remain as they
are. Says another, how shall we act? We are but one amongst a thousand, what shall we do that our influence may be felt in this vast multitude? We answer, there is in this city an Association called the Female Labor Reform Association, having for its professed object, the amelioration of the condition of the operative. Enrolled upon its records are the names of five hundred members—come then, and add thereto five hundred or rather five thousand more, and in the strength of our united influence we will soon show these drivelling cotton lords, this mushroom aristocracy of New England, who so arrogantly aspire to lord it over God's heritage, that our rights cannot be trampled upon with impunity; that we will not longer submit to that arbitrary power which has for the last ten years been so abundantly exercised over us.

One word ere we close, to the hardy independent yeomanry and mechanics, among the Granite Hills of New Hampshire, the woody forests of Maine, the cloud capped mountains of Vermont, and the busy, bustling towns of the old Bay State—ye! who have daughters and sisters toiling in these sickly prison-houses which are scattered far and wide over each of these States, we appeal to you for aid in this matter. Do you ask how that aid can be administered? We answer through the Ballot Box. Yes! if you have one spark of sympathy for our condition, carry it there, and see to it that you send to preside in the Councils of each Commonwealth, men who have hearts as well as heads, souls as well bodies; men who will watch zealously over the interests of the laborer in every department; who will protect him by the strong arm of the law from the encroachments of arbitrary power; who will see that he is not deprived of those rights and privileges which God and Nature have bestowed upon him—yes,

From every rolling river,
From mountain, vale and plain,
We call on you to deliver
Us, from the tyrant's chain:

And shall we call in vain? we trust not. More anon. Amelia.
THE SUMMONS.

Ye children of New England!
The summons is to you!
Come from the workshop and the field,
With steadfast hearts and true.

Come, sing your banner to the breeze,
For liberty and light;
Come, like the rolling of the seas—
The tempest in its might.

Aye, with a voice of thunder come;
And swear 'fore tyranny,
Thy vows are registered on high,
To perish or be free.

Hear ye the groans from foreign lands,
Ruled by despotic powers?
From Spain's bright shores, from Gallia's strand,
And England's stately towers?

In costly, splendid luxury
Each royal board is spread;
While thousands in their streets may die
For lack of daily bread.

And turn to our own boasted clime,—
What scenes before us lie?
Aye, want and woe and care and crime,
Still greet the tearful eye.

'Tis mockery in the sight of God,
To say that land is blest
Where millions bow beneath the rod
Of tyranny oppressed.

For bread, where famished children cry,
And none their want supplies—
Where toiling thousands live and die
In ignorance and vice.

Then in the name of God come forth,
To battle with the foe;
Nor stay ye till your hands have laid
Each proud oppressor low.

Aye, come, and blessed shalt thou be,
By millions yet unborn,
Whom thou hast saved from misery,
From insult and from scorn.

Yea, be thou strong—there yet remains
A promise sure to thee,
That God will break the oppressor's chains,
And set the prisoner free.

That righteousness and truth shall reign,
Through all the peopled earth,
And heaven repeat the exulting strain,
Which hailed creation's birth.