

Barnum Bolton's Plans

Document 1

The economy of nineteenth-century New England was closely tied to the sea and many young men who lived close to the coast made their living as sailors, fishermen and whalers. Occasionally a young man from an inland community would choose to follow the sea. One who did so was Barnum Bolton, the son of a farming family in Oakham, a town in central Massachusetts. Bolton had done well, rising to the rank of second officer (third in command) of a merchant vessel. Yet in this letter to his parents, he writes about his dissatisfaction with seafaring and his plans to buy land and live near his brothers. In fact he never did. He spent the remaining years of his life as a sailor and died at the Marine Hospital of the United States in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1818. Barnum Bolton used almost no punctuation, therefore periods have been added sparingly for readability. His spelling has not been changed.

Once more with pleasure after a long absence from you I attempt to write a few lines to let you know that I am in health...We arrived here about 20 Days ago af[ter] a passage of 44 Days from Plymouth Eng[land]. We have Discharged our Ballist and shall...be Reddy for sea in about 20 Days. The ship...is bound to St. Petersburg in Russia and then to Boston and then if I live I shall come to Oakham. I have wrote Several Letters to Abisha [his brother] and have Given him Directions to Buy me some Land for this is the last Voyage that ever I intend to go to Sea for I have got Sick of it. These long voyages when you Ship to go you Dont know when you will Return. When I left Orrinton [Maine] I did not expect to be gone but 4 or 5 months and it will be 20 months before I See it from the time I left home. But I am a Doing verry well Shall make 5 or 6 Hundred Dollars if I have good luck. I still Remain Second Officer on Bord the ship. You may look for me at home the last of September Next for I Shall Certainly Come home if I live to git to any Part of the Northern States if I can git a Chance from England to Boston I shall leave the Ship when her Cargo is Discharged in Plymouth or Portsmouth for I Cannot bare the thoughts of Running 7000 miles right from home although it is nothing with a fare wind. I am very anxious to here from Some of you for I have heard nothing Since that letter I got in Boston Directed to Oliver [his brother] nor have heard nothing from Oliver nor Abisha Since I left home. I have weighed these matters a great Deal in my mind and

there is but a Small family of us only 3 Brothers of us and I mean to live where we can see each other and take some comfort not to be as it [is] now in a heavy Storm a hundred feet in the air a Roolling abot although I Dont think much of it but it is a Dogs life and I Shall Quit it though I am not at all Concerned but what I could have a Chief Mates Birth on Bord a Better Ship than this. If mother is well I Should be glad for her to make me 3 or 4 pair of long Stockings seemed and I will pay her well for it for I cannot get any to do me half the Servise as those She made me. I have got them Trowses [trousers] on now that She made me and the Shirts I set a great deal by they are as good as every they was. I shall conclude in hopes to See you all in the cours of 7 or 8 months no more. This from your loving son Till Death

The Market Revolution, 1800-1840

Documents

The American Frugal Housewife (1829)

Media Worksheet

In this selection from Lydia Maria Child's book, *The American Frugal Housewife*, the author compared the different fates of two women under adverse conditions. As you read this selection, take note of the qualities that the successful woman possessed. During this period of American history, the middle and working classes embraced the cult of domesticity, a model of female behavior, education, and moral strength that limited women to exercise their influence only as mothers and wives.

HOW TO ENDURE POVERTY.

THAT a thorough, religious, *useful* education is the best security against misfortune, disgrace and poverty, is universally believed and acknowledged; and to this we add the firm conviction, that, when poverty comes (as it sometimes will) upon the prudent, the industrious, and the well-informed, a judicious education is all-powerful in enabling them to *endure* the evils it cannot always *prevent*. A mind full of piety and knowledge is always rich; it is a bank that never fails; it yields a perpetual dividend of happiness.

In a late visit to the alms-house at ---, we saw a remarkable evidence of the truth of this doctrine. Mrs. -- was early left an orphan. She was educated by an uncle and aunt, both of whom had attained the middle age of life. Theirs was an industrious, well-ordered, and cheerful family. Her uncle was a man of sound judgment, liberal feelings, and great knowledge of human nature. This he showed by the education of the young people under his care. He allowed them to waste no time; every moment must be spent in learning something, or in doing something. He encouraged an entertaining, lively style of conversation, but discountenanced all remarks about persons, families, dress, and engagements; he used to say, parents were not aware how such topics frittered away the minds of young people, and what inordinate importance they learned to attach to them, when they heard them constantly talked about.

In his family, Sunday was a happy day; for it was made a day of religious instruction, without any unnatural constraint upon the gayety of the young. The Bible was the text book; the places mentioned in it were traced on maps; the manners and customs of different nations were explained; curious phenomena in the natural history of those countries were read; in a word, everything was done to cherish a spirit of humble, yet earnest inquiry. In this excellent family Mrs.-- remained till her marriage. In the course of fifteen years, she lost her uncle, her aunt, and her husband. She was left destitute, but supported herself comfortably by her own exertions, and

retained the respect and admiration of a large circle of friends. Thus she passed her life in cheerfulness and honor during ten years; at the end of that time, her humble residence took fire from an adjoining house in the night time, and she escaped by jumping from the chamber window. In consequence of the injury received by this fall, her right arm was amputated, and her right leg became entirely useless. Her friends were very kind and attentive; and for a short time she consented to live on their bounty; but, aware that the claims on private charity are very numerous, she, with the genuine independence of a strong mind, resolved to avail herself of the public provision for the helpless poor. The name of going to the alms-house had nothing terrifying or disgraceful to *her*; for she had been taught that *conduct* is the real standard of respectability. She is there, with a heart full of thankfulness to the Giver of all things; she is patient, pious, and uniformly cheerful. She instructs the young, encourages the old, and makes herself delightful to all, by her various knowledge and entertaining conversation. Her character reflects dignity on her situation; and those who visit the establishment, come away with sentiments of respect and admiration for this voluntary resident of the alms-house.

What a contrast is afforded by the character of the woman who occupies the room next hers! She is so indolent and filthy, that she can with difficulty be made to attend to her own personal comfort; and even the most patient are worn out with her perpetual fretfulness. Her mind is continually infested with envy, hatred, and discontent. She thinks Providence has dealt hardly with her; that all the world are proud and ungrateful; and that every one despises her because she is in the alms-house. This pitiable state of mind is the natural result other education.

Her father was a respectable mechanic, and might have been a wealthy one, had he not been fascinated by the beauty of a thoughtless, idle, showy girl, whom he made his wife. The usual consequences followed—he could not earn money so fast as she could spend it; the house became a scene of discord; the daughter dressed in the fashion; learned to play on the piano; was taught to think that being engaged in any useful employment was very ungentee; and that to be engaged to be married was the chief end and aim of woman; the father died a bankrupt; the weak and frivolous mother lingered along in beggary, for a while, and then died of vexation and shame.

The friends of the family were very kind to the daughter; but her extreme indolence, her vanity, pertness, and ingratitude, finally exhausted the kindness of the most generous and forbearing; and as nothing could induce her to personal exertion, she was at length obliged to take shelter in the alms-house. Here her misery is incurable. She has so long been accustomed to think dress and parade the necessary elements of happiness, that she despises all that is done for her comfort; her face has settled into an expression which looks like an imbodyed growl; every body is tired of listening to her complaints; and even the little children run away, when they see her coming.

May not those who have children to educate, learn a good lesson from these women? Those who have wealth, have recently had many and bitter lessons to prove how suddenly riches may take to themselves wings; and those who certainly have but little to leave, should indeed beware how they bestow upon their children, the accursed inheritance of indolent and extravagant habits.

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The Long Journey West in 1825 - Document 3

In the first half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of New Englanders moved "West"-to New York state and Ohio, and later to Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin-in search of better land and greater opportunities for their children. In 1825 Samuel Freeman, his wife, and ten children left Sturbridge, Massachusetts for northern Ohio. Their son Lyndon, who was 22 at the time of the move, described the long and difficult journey in a reminiscence written for his grandchildren in 1877.

Transcription of Primary Source

I propose now to sketch somewhat more fully our early experience in the early days of that place and also to mention something peculiar to new settlements. My parents with ten of their thirteen children left Sturbridge, Ms.[Massachusetts], I think on the 20th of April 1825. They were about 20 days en route. The same distance could now be traveled in as many hours by rail. [We] went by a hired team to Schenectady, thence by Canal to Rochester, as far as the Erie Canal was at that time finished. Thence by team again about 70 ms[miles] to Buffalo. At this time there was only one Steam Boat, and but few sail vessels plying on Lake Erie: hence we had [to] stop in this place several days. At length we took passage in the schooner "Red Jacket" for Cleveland, O[hio] where we arrived in about 24 hours. We began to feel that we had at length arrived near to our new home in the wilds of O. There was really at that time no harbour at Cleveland. On account of a sand-bar across the mouth of the Cuyahoga River vessels could not enter it-hence all freight discharged for Cleveland was carried ashore in "lighters."

My parents had borne nearly all the care and responsibility incident to our journey. They now began to realize the fatigue of body and mind as they had not before. Cleveland in 1825 was only a village of a few hundred inhabitants. When we arrived in C[leveland] we had yet before us the worst part of our journey. After considerable time spent in finding them, two ox teams were hired to carry the family and our effects to our final stopping place in "Greenbrier." In the meantime myself and one or two of the younger boys were sent on to notify Mr. Fay at whose "Inn" we expected to put up-to prepare bed & board for fifteen (including our teamsters and [a] young man that Came with us from

Sturbridge). Weary and dispirited, yet we rejoiced when we espied an oval-shaped thing inscribed upon it in plain English "B. Fay Inn." Our landlord seemed utterly astonished when we made our announcement. The teams had not succeeded in leaving Cleveland as soon as they expected to. We boys waited long and anxiously for their arrival. At length we heard as much noise as would seem necessary to drive 40 yokes of oxen. It had become quite dark when the teams hauled up at the aforesaid "Inn." A more dispirited, besaddened and forlorn company I never beheld.

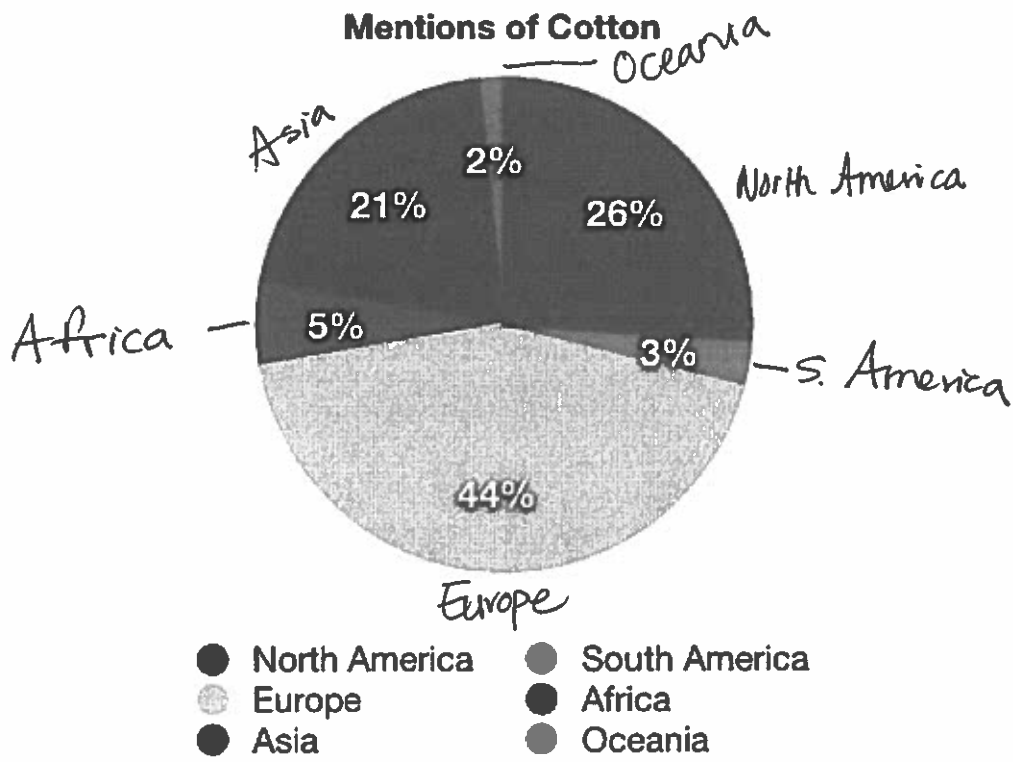
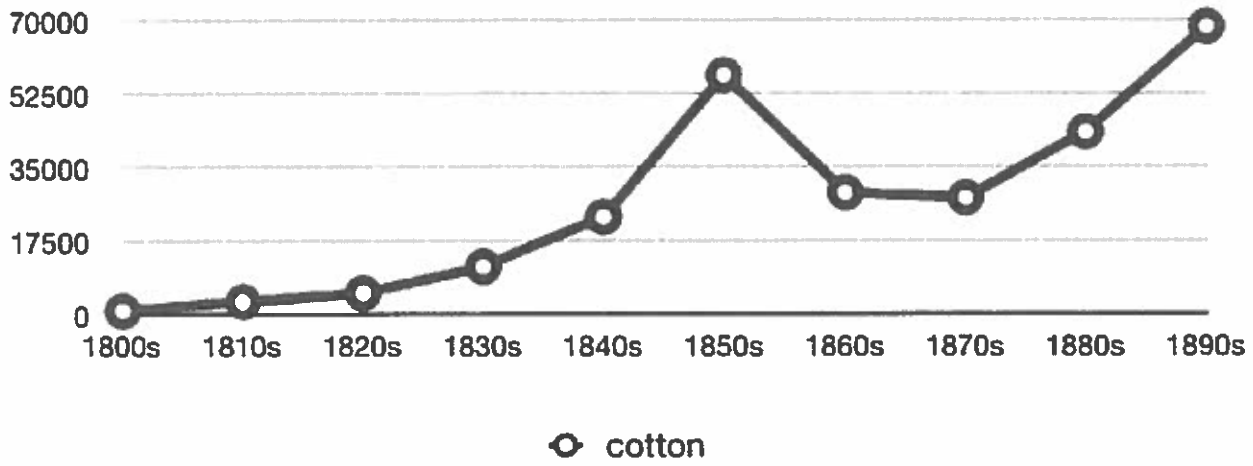
The season was unusually rainy and the roads awful. B. Fay's Inn was a double log-house of two principal rooms-one was the kitchen or living room-the other the bar or whiskey room. The reader may be sure we were not disposed to criticise our accommodations. "Aunt Ruth," our hostess, was a kind, genial and sympathetic old lady. She saw at once our need of comfort and sympathy and began to make a practical use of her virtues. As we were all huddled into the one room Aunt Ruth among many questions asked mother how many children have you? Mother replied-I have ten with me and three left in Mass. Whereupon Mrs. F. began counting-a she could make only 9-It was even so, but where was the tenth? Had she fallen into one of those bottomless mud-holes? Enquiry and search solved the mystery. She (Clarinda I think) had been left out on the wagon fast asleep...

Those of us who could climb the ladder were ushered into the loft to lodge. "Sweet restorer balmy sleep" soon brought rest to our weary bodies and minds. The next morning [was] the sabbath of the Lord our God. It hardly seemed as if the same God could be invoked there as in refined and christianized New England.

The tinkling of the cow-bells reminded us of the factory-bells at whose ring we were accustomed to rise in Sturbridge. A few day cast into the background much of our despondency as we applied ourselves to preparing a new home on the tract of land that my father had bot [bought] for that purpose. We obtained permission of Mr. Fay to occupy a new frame barn of his until we could build a domicile of our own. The rains subsided. The roads improved. The birds sang the sun shone and we were all measurably happy and contented.

Document 4

Mentions of Cotton



Document 5

Source: *Voice of Industry*, January 2, 1846
"Slaver" Wagons.

We were not aware, until within a few days, of the *modus operandi* of the factory powers in this village of forcing poor girls from their quiet homes to become their tools and, like the Southern slaves, to give up their life and liberty to the heartless tyrants and taskmasters.

Observing a singular-looking "long, low, black" wagon passing along the street, we made inquiries respecting it, and were informed that it was what we term a "slaver." She makes regular trips to the north of the state [Massachusetts], cruising around in Vermont and New Hampshire, with a "commander" whose heart must be as black as his craft, who is paid a dollar a head for all he brings to the market, and more in proportion to the distance—if they bring them from such a distance that they cannot easily get back.

This is done by "hoisting false colors," and representing to the girls that they can tend more machinery than is possible, and that the work is so very neat, and the wages such that they can dress in silks and spend half their time in reading. Now, is this true? Let those girls who have been thus deceived, answer.

Let us say a word in regard to the manner in which they are stowed in the wagon, which may find a similarity only in the manner in which slaves are fastened in the hold of a vessel. It is long, and the seats so close that it must be very inconvenient.

Is there any humanity in this? Philanthropists may talk of Negro slavery, but it would be well first to endeavor to emancipate the slaves at home. Let us not stretch our ears to catch the sound of the lash on the flesh of the oppressed black while the oppressed in our very midst are crying out in thunder tones, and calling upon us for assistance.

[SLAVER Question:

2. How does this author compare "slaves" in the North and South? (think about how this description is meant to resemble the Middle Passage and the slave trade)]

The Demand for a 10 Hour Day (1835) Document 6

The 1830s and 1840s saw a major movement arise for the restriction of labor hours -- limiting the working day to 10 hours. Boston artisans were in the forefront of this movement. Below is an excerpt from a circular they issued.

In the name of the Carpenters, Masons, and Stone Cutters [we] do respectfully represent--

That we are now engaged in a cause which is not only of vital importance to ourselves, our families, and our children, but is equally interesting and equally important to every mechanic in the United States and the whole world. We are contending for the recognition of the natural right to dispose of our own time in such quantities as we deem and believe to be most conducive to our own happiness and the welfare of all those engaged in manual labor.

The work in which we are now engaged is neither more nor less than a contest between money and labor. Capital, which can only be made productive by labor, is endeavoring to crush labor, the only source of all wealth.

We have been too long subjected to the odious, cruel, unjust, and tyrannical system which compels the operative mechanic to exhaust his physical and mental powers by excessive toil, until he has no desire to eat and sleep, and in many cases he has no power to do either from extreme debility. . . .

It is for the rights of humanity we contend. Our cause is the cause of philanthropy. Our opposers resort to the most degrading obloquy to injure us--not degrading to us, but to the authors of such unmerited opprobrium which they attempt to cast upon us. They tell us, "We shall spend all our hours of leisure in drunkenness and debauchery if the hours of labor are reduced." We hurl from us the base, ungenerous, ungrateful, detestable, cruel, malicious slander, with scorn and indignation. . . .

To show the utter fallacy of their idiotic reasoning, if reasoning it may be called, we have only to say they employ us about eight months in the year during the longest and the hottest days, and in short days hundreds of us remain idle for want of work for three or four months, when our expenses must of course be the heaviest during winter. When the long days again appear, our guardians set us to work, as they say, "to keep us from getting drunk." No fear has ever been expressed by these benevolent employers respecting our morals while we are idle in short days, through their avarice. . . . Further, they threaten to starve us into submission to their will. Starve us to prevent us from getting drunk!! Wonderful wisdom!! Refined benevolence!! Exalted philanthropy!!

* * *

Source: Quoted in Irving Mark and E. I. Schwaab, The Faith of Our Fathers (1952), 342-343.

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Document 7

“Are We Nothing But Living Machines?” A New York Sewing Woman Protests Wages and Working Conditions, 1863

Since at least the 1830s, New York working women endured low pay, long hours, and difficult working conditions. Concerned observers noted that some were even forced to turn to prostitution to supplement their meager incomes. During the Civil War, poor men flocked to the army (wealthier men could purchase substitutes for \$300). The women left behind were now responsible for supporting families on their own. While wartime production created additional opportunities for women to work, it also led to even greater exploitation as factory owners pushed their workers to turn out more goods. Under these conditions, some women, such as this one, suggested that collective action might provide a solution.

When this Rebellion broke out, my brothers joined the Army, and then I must work for myself and help support my mother and my little sister. I would read the advertisements in the paper and go answer them....

A well-known hat manufactory on Broadway wanted five hundred hands. I applied for work. The proprietor...promised me 62 cents per dozen. I knew I could not make a dozen per day; but what was I to do? I wanted work, and must get it, or starve. My mother and myself worked from early morning until late at night, but could not make more than \$2.50 each per week... Are we nothing but living machines, to be driven at will for the accommodation of a set of heartless, yes, I may say soulless people...? They ought to read the commandment, “Thou shall not kill.” But they are murderers that die on feather beds....

Men join the army and leave us with our employers to battle with. I trust that we will have kind friends to aid us; it is a good work. If we were paid better it would save many young girls from worse than poverty. Let us act as one, and I feel sure that with the blessings of God, and assistance of our fellow beings, we will succeed.

E.S.P., A Working Girl

Source: *New York Sun*, November 17, 1863.

When Boston capitalists, making use of the new canal system, began building textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the early nineteenth century, they recruited young women from rural New England as their labor force. They assumed these "girls" would be docile and easily managed. Instead, the young women in the Lowell mills formed reading circles, organized to demand their rights as laborers and as women, and agitated for better workplace conditions. They printed leaflets and published their own newspaper, the *Lowell Offering*. Here, Harriet Hanson Robinson, who started work in the mills when she was only ten, recounts a "turn out," or strike, of the Lowell women, and describes the conditions of women factory workers in the 1830s.

Document 8

Harriet Hanson Robinson, "Characteristics of the Early Factory Girls" (1898)³

When I look back into the factory life of fifty or sixty years ago, I do not see what is called "a class" of young men and women going to and from their daily work, like so many ants that cannot be distinguished one from another; I see them as individuals, with personalities of their own. This one has about her the atmosphere of her early home. That one is impelled by a strong and noble purpose. The other,—what she is, has been an influence for good to me and to all womankind.

Yet they were a class of factory operatives, and were spoken of (as the same class is spoken of now) as a set of persons who earned their daily bread, whose condition was fixed, and who must continue to spin and to weave to the end of their natural existence. Nothing but this was expected of them, and they were not supposed to be capable of social or mental improvement. That they could be educated and developed into something more than work-people, was an idea that had not yet entered the public mind. So little does one class of persons really know about the thoughts and aspirations of another! It was the good fortune of these early mill-girls to teach the people of that time that this sort of labor is not degrading; that the operative is not only "capable of virtue," but also capable of self-cultivation.

At the time the Lowell cotton-mills were started, the factory girl was the lowest among women. In England, and in France particularly, great injustice had been done to her real character; she was represented as subjected to influences that could not fail to destroy her purity and self-respect. In the eyes of her overseer she was but a brute, slave, to be beaten, pinched, and pushed about.

It was to overcome this prejudice that such high wages had been offered to women that they might be induced to become mill-girls, in spite of the opprobrium that still clung to this "degrading occupation." At first only a few came; for, though tempted by the high wages to be regularly paid in "cash," there were many who

still preferred to go on working at some more genteel employment at seventy-five cents a week and their board.

But in a short time the prejudice against the factory labor wore away, and the Lowell mills became filled with blooming and energetic New England women. They were naturally intelligent, had mother-wit, and fell easily into the ways of their new life. They soon began to associate with those who formed the community in which they had come to live, and were invited to their houses. They went to the same church, and sometimes married into some of the best families. Or if they returned to their secluded homes again, instead of being looked down upon as "factory girls" by the squire's or lawyer's family, they were more often welcomed as coming from the metropolis, bringing new fashions, new books, and new ideas with them.

In 1831 Lowell was little more than a factory village. Several corporations were started, and the cotton-mills belonging to them were building. Help was in great demand; and the stories were told all over the country of the new factory town, and the high wages that were offered to all classes of work-people,—stories that reached the ears of mechanics' and farmers' sons, and gave new life to lonely and dependent women in distant towns and farmhouses. Into this Yankee El Dorado, these needy people began to pour by the various modes of travel known to those slow old days. The stage-coach and the canal-boat came every day, always filled with the new recruits for this army of useful people. The mechanic and machinist came, each with his home-made chest of tools, and oftentimes his wife and little ones. The widow came with her little flock of scanty housekeeping goods to open a boarding-house or variety store, and so provided a home for her fatherless children. Many farmers' daughters came to earn money to complete their wedding outfit, or buy the bride's share of housekeeping articles.

Women with past histories came, to hide their griefs and their identity, and to earn an honest living in the "sweat of their brow." Single young men came, full of hope and life, to get money for an education, or to lift the mortgage from the home-farm. Troops of young girls came by stages and baggage-wagons, men often being employed to go to other States and to Canada, to collect them at so much a head, and deliver them to the factories. . . .

These country girls had queer names, which added to the singularity of their appearance. Samantha, Triphena, Plumy, Kezia, Aseneth, Elgardy, Leafy, Ruhamah, Lovey, Almaretta, Sarepta, and Florilla were among them.

Their dialect was also very peculiar. On the broken English and Scotch of their ancestors was ingrafted the nasal Yankee twang; so that many of them, when they had just come down, spoke a language almost unintelligible. But the severe discipline and ridicule which met them was as good as a school education, and they were soon taught the "city way of speaking." . . .

One of the first strikes of the cotton-factory operatives that ever took place in

this country was that in Lowell, in October, 1836. When it was announced that wages were to be cut down, great indignation was felt, and it was decided to strike, en masse. This was done. The mills were shut down, and the girls went in procession from their several corporations to the "grove" on Chapel Hill, and listened to "incendiary" speeches from early labor reformers.

One of the girls stood on a pump, and gave vent to the feelings of her companions in a neat speech, declaring that it was their duty to resist all attempts at cutting down the wages. This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience.

Cutting down the wages was not their only grievance, nor the only cause of this strike. Hitherto the corporations had paid twenty-five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay the sum; and this, in addition to the cut in wages, would make a difference of at least one dollar a week. It was estimated that as many as twelve or fifteen hundred girls turned out, and walked in procession through the streets. . . .

My own recollection of this first strike (or "turn out" as it was called) is very vivid. I worked in a lower room, where I had heard the proposed strike fully, if not vehemently, discussed; I had been an ardent listener to what was said against this attempt at "oppression" on the part of the corporation, and naturally I took sides with the strikers. When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do, asking each other, "Would you?" or "Shall we turn out?" and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, "I don't care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not;" and I marched out, and was followed by the others.

As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been at any success I may have achieved. step here

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In 1845, Margaret Fuller published the groundbreaking work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, an expanded version of an essay she had written for *The Dial* in 1843, called "The Great Lawsuit—Man versus Men; Woman versus Women." The book, part of which is excerpted here, had a profound impact on the women's rights movement in the United States.