Dear Mary: You complain that I do not keep my promise of being a good correspondent, but if you could know how sultry it is here, and how fatigued I am by my work this warm weather, you would not blame me. It is now that I begin to dislike these hot brick pavements, and glaring buildings. I want to be at home--to go down to the brook over which the wild grapes have made a natural arbor, and to sit by the cool spring around which the fresh soft brakes cluster so lovingly. I think of the time when, with my little bare feet, I used to follow in aunt Nabby's footsteps through the fields of corn--stepping high and long till we came to the bleaching ground; and I remember--but I must stop, for I know you wish me to write of what I am now doing, as you already know of what I have done.

Well; I go to work every day--not earlier than I should at home, nor do I work later, but I mind the confinement more than I should in a more unpleasant season of the year. I have extra work now--I take care of three looms; and when I wrote you before I could not well take care of two. But help is very scarce now, and they let us do as much work as we please: and I am highly complimented upon my "powers of execution." Many of the girls go to their country homes in the summer. The majority of the operatives are country girls. These have always the preference, because, in the fluctuations to which manufactures are liable, there would be much less distress among a population who could resort to other homes, than if their entire interest was in the city. And in the summer these girls go to rest, and recruit themselves for another "yearly campaign"--not a bad idea in them either. I shall come home next summer; I have been here too short a time to make it worth while now. I wish they would have a vacation in "dog days"--stop the mills, and make all the girls rest; and let their "men-folks" do up their "ditching," or whatever else it is they now do Sundays.

But these mills are not such dreadful places as you imagine them to be. You think them dark damp holes; as close and black as--as the Black Hole at Calcutta. Now, dear M., it is no such thing. They are high spacious well-built edifices, with neat paths around them, and beautiful plots of greensward. These are kept fresh by the "force-pumps" belonging to every corporation. And some of the corporations have beautiful flower gardens connected with the factories. One of the overseers, with whom I am acquainted, gave me a beautiful bouquet the other morning, which was radiant with all the colors of the rainbow, and fragrant with the sweet perfume of many kinds of mints and roses. He has a succession of beautiful blossoms from spring till "cold weather." He told me that he could raise enough to bring him fifty dollars if he chose to sell them; and this from a little
bit of sand not larger than our front yard, which you know is small for a country house. But it is so full--here a few dollars have brought on a fresh soil, and "patience has done its perfect work," What might not be accomplished in the country with a little industry and taste.

But I have said enough of the outside of our mills--now for the inside. The rooms are high, very light, kept nicely whitewashed, and extremely neat; with many plants in the window seats, and white cotton curtains to the windows. The machinery is very handsomely made and painted, and is placed in regular rows; thus, in a large mill, presenting a beautiful and uniform appearance. I have sometimes stood at one end of a row of green looms, when the girls were gone from between them, and seen the lathes moving back and forth, the harnesses up and down, the white cloth winding over the rollers, through the long perspective; and I have thought it beautiful.

Then the girls dress so neatly, and are so pretty. The mill girls are the prettiest in the city. You wonder how they can keep neat. Why not? There are no restrictions as to the number of pieces to be washed in the boarding-house. And, as there is plenty of water in the mill, the girls can wash their laces and muslins and other nice things them-selves, and no boarding woman ever refuses the conveniences for starching and ironing. You say too that you do not see how we can have so many conveniences and comforts at the price we pay for board. You must remember that the boarding-houses belong to the companies, and are let to the tenants far below the usual city rent--sometimes the rent is remitted. Then there are large families, so that there are the profits of many individuals. The country farmers are quite in the habit of bringing their produce to the boarding-houses for sale, thus reducing the price by the omission of the market-man's profit. So you see there are many ways by which we get along so well.

You ask me how the girls behave in the mill, and what are the punishments. They behave very well while about their work, and I have never heard of punishments, or scoldings, or anything of that sort. Sometimes an overseer finds fault, and sometimes offends a girl by refusing to let her stay out of the mill, or some deprivation like that; and then, perhaps, there are tears and pouts on her part, but, in general, the tone of intercourse between the girls and overseers is very good--pleasant, yet respectful. When the latter are fatherly sort of men the girls frequently resort to them for advice and assistance about other affairs than their work. Very seldom is this confidence abused; but, among the thousands of overseers who have lived in Lowell, and the tens of thousands of girls who have in time been here, there are legends still told of wrong suffered and committed. "To err is human," and when the frailties of humanity are exhibited by a factory girl it is thought of for worse than are the errors of any other persons.

The only punishment among the girls is dismission from their places. They do not, as many think, withhold their wages; and as for corporal punishment--mercy on me! To strike a female would cost any overseer his place. If the superintendents did not take the affair into consideration the girls would turn out, as they did at the Temperance celebration, "Independent day;" and if they didn't look as pretty, I am sure they would produce as deep an impression. By the way, I almost forgot to tell you that we had a
"Fourth of July" in Lowell, and a nice one it was too. The Temperance celebration was the chief dish in the entertainment. The chief, did I say? It was almost the whole. It was the great turkey that Scroggs sent for Bob Cratchet's Christmas dinner. But, perhaps you don't read Dickens, so I will make no more "classical allusions." In the evening we had the Hutchinsons, from our own Granite State, who discoursed sweet music so sweetly. They have become great favorites with the public. It is not on account of their fine voices only, but their pleasant modest manners—the perfect sense of propriety which they exhibit in all their demeanor; and I think they are not less popular here because they sing the wrongs of the slave, and the praises of cold water.

But, dear Mary, I fear I have tired you with this long letter, and yet I have not answered half your questions. Do you wish to hear anything more about the overseers? Once for all, then, there are many very likely intelligent public-spirited men among them. They are interested in the good movements of the day; teachers in the Sabbath schools; and some have represented the city in the State Legislature. They usually marry among the factory girls, and do not connect themselves with their inferiors either. Indeed, in almost all the matches here the female is superior in education and manner, if not in intellect, to her partner. The overseers have good salaries, and their families live very prettily. I observe that in almost all cases the mill girls make excellent wives. They are good managers, orderly in their households, and neat as waxwork." It seems as though they were so delighted to have houses of their own to take care of that they would never weary of the labor and the care. The boarding women you ask about. They are usually widows or single women from the country; and many questions are always asked, and references required, before a house is given to a new applicant. It is true that mistakes are sometimes made, and the wrong person gets into the pew, but

"Things like this you know must be,"
Where'er there is a factory.

I see I have given you rhyme; it is not all quotation, nor entirely original.

I think it requires quite a complication of good qualities to make up a good boarding woman. "She looks well to the ways of her household," and must be even more than all that King Solomon describes in the last chapter of Proverbs. She not only in winter "riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, a portion to her maidens," but she sitteth up far into the night, and seeth that her maidens are asleep, and that their lamps are gone out. Perhaps she doth not "consider a field to buy it," but she considereth every piece of meat, and bushel of potatoes, and barrel of flour, and load of wood, and box of soap, and every little thing, whether its quantity, quality, and price are what discretion would recommend her to purchase. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household," for she maketh them wear rubber overshoes, and thick cloaks and hoods, and seeth that the paths are broken out. "Her clothing is silk and purple," and she looketh neat and comely. It may be that her husband sitteth not "in the gates," for it is too often the case that he hath abandoned her, or loafeth in the streets. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Her maidens go to her for counsel and sympathy, if a decayed tooth begins to jump, or a lover proves faithless; and to keep
twoscore young maidens in peace with them-selves, each other, and her own self, is no slight task. The price of such a woman is, indeed, above rubies. "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her."

I have now told you of mill girls, overseers and their wives, and boarding-housekeepers and I feel that I have won forgiveness for neglecting you so long. You think that I have too high an opinion of our superintendents. I hope not. I do think that many of them are chosen as combining, in their characters, many excellent qualities. Some of them may be as selfish as you suppose. But we must remember that they owe a duty to their employers, as well as to those they employ. They are agents of the companies, as well as superintendents of us. Where those duties conflict I hope the sympathies of the man will always be with the more dependent party.

Country people are very suspicious. I do not think them perfect. A poet will look at a wood-cutter, and say "there is an honest man;" and as likely as not the middle of his load is rotten punk, and crooked sticks make many interstices, while all looks well without. A rustic butcher slays an animal that is dying of disease, and carries his meat to the market. The butcher and the woodman meet, and say all manner of harsh things against the "grandeens" of the city, and quote such poetry as,

"GOD made the country--
Man made the town," &c.

It is true that with the same disposition for villany the man of influence must do the most harm. But, where there is most light, may there not be most true knowledge? And, even if there is no more principle, may there not be, with more cultivation of mind, a feeling of honor and of self-respect which may be of some benefit in its stead.

But I have written till I am fairly wearied. Good by.
Yours always, Susan