Lowell, September 1844

Dear Mary: You say that you wish to come to Lowell, and that some others of my old acquaintance wish to come, if I think it advisable; and, as I have but a few moments to write, I will devote all my letter to this subject.

There are girls here for every reason, and for no reason at all. I will speak to you of my acquaintances in the family here. One, who sits at my right hand at table, is in the factory because she hates her mother-in-law. She has a kind father, and an otherwise excellent home, but, as she and her mama agree about as well as cat and mouse, she has come to the factory. The one next her has a wealthy father, but, like many of our country farmers, he is very penurious, and he wishes his daughters to maintain themselves. The next is here because there is no better place for her, unless it is a Shaker settlement. The next has a "well-off" mother, but she is a very pious woman, and will not buy her daughter so many pretty gowns and collars and ribbons and other etceteras of "Vanity Fair" as she likes; so she concluded to "help herself." The next is here because her parents and family are wicked infidels, and she cannot be allowed to enjoy the privileges of religion at home. The next is here because she must labor somewhere, and she has been ill treated in so many families that she has a horror of domestic service. The next has left a good home because her lover, who has gone on a whaling voyage, wishes to be married when he returns, and she would like more money than her father will give her. The next is here because her home is in a lonesome country village, and she cannot bear to remain where it is so dull. The next is here because her parents are poor, and she wishes to acquire the means to educate herself. The next is here because her beau came, and she did not like to trust him alone among so many pretty girls. And so I might go on and give you the variety of reasons, but this is enough for the present. I cannot advise you to come. You must act according to your own judgment. Your only reasons are a desire to see a new place, a city, and to be with me. You have now an excellent home, but, dear M., it may not seem the same to you after you have been here a year or two--for it is not advisable to come and learn a new occupation unless you can stay as long as that. The reasons are that you may become unaccustomed to your present routine of home duties, and lose your relish for them, and also for the very quiet pleasures of our little village. Many, who are dissatisfied here, have also acquired a dissatisfaction for their homes, so that they cannot be contented any where, and wish they had never seen Lowell.

But tell Hester that I advise her to come. She has always lived among relatives who have treated her as a slave, and yet they would not allow her to go away and be a slave in any other family. I think I can make her happier here, and I see no better way for her to do
than to break all those ties at once, by leaving her cheerless drudgery and entering the
mill.

I don't know what to say to Miriam, so many pleasant and unpleasant things are mingled
in her lot now. There she lives with Widow Farrar, and every thing about them looks so
nice and comfortable that people think she must be happy. The work is light, but every
thing must be just as the old lady says, and she has strange vagaries at times. Miriam has
to devote a great deal of time to her whims and fancies which is not spent in labor. Yet
she would find it unpleasant to leave her nice large chamber, with its bureau and strip
carpet and large closets, for the narrow accommodations of a factory boarding-house.
And the fine great garden, in which she now takes so much pleasure, would be parted
from with much sadness. But then her wages are so low that she says she can lay aside
nothing and still dress herself suitably, for she is always expected to receive and help
entertain the old lady's company. When the widow dies, Miriam will have nothing, unless
she leaves her a legacy, which, on account of the many needy relatives, is not to be
expected. So you had better tell her to make all arrangements for coming here, and then if
the old lady will retain her by "raising her salary," tell her to stay with her.

As for Lydia I think she had better not come. I know how disagreeable her home is in
many respects, but it is her home after all. She has to be up at four o'clock in the morning,
and to be "on her feet," as she says, till nine o'clock at night, unless she sits down for an
hour to patch the boys' clothes or keep her father's accounts. She has to be every body's
waiter, and says that all seem to think she was born for that occupation. Then she has no
accommodations but a little crowded attic, which she shares with old Jenny and three or
four little ones, and she has told me that she never knew what it was to have a dollar of
her own to spend as she might like. Yet there she is an important personage in the family,
while here it would be quite different. She enjoys excellent health, and her varied
employment appears to suit her. It might be very different here in that respect also. She
has nothing of her own now, but she is sure of care and comforts in case of sickness, and
necessaries always. When her father dies, or when she marries, she will probably have
something of her own. "But," you will reply, "her father may live as long as she will, and
she may never marry." True; but tell her to consider all things, and, before she decides to
leave home, to request her father to pay her a stated sum as wages. If he will give her a
dollar a week I should advise her to stay with him and her mother. Here she would have
as many of the comforts and accommodations of life as there, but perhaps no more. She
could dress better here, but not better compared with others. That is something to
consider.

Nancy wishes also to come, because her trade does not suit her. If she is losing her health
by a sedentary employment, I certainly advise her to change it. I think she could do well
here, and then she has a voice like a nightingale. It would gain for her notice and perhaps
emolument.

But I have hardly room to say good-by. Yours, as ever, Susan