I have been making, since my arrival, several excursions in the neighbourhood; amongst others one (by railroad) to Lowell, a manufacturing town on the Merrimac, twenty miles from Boston. It has sprung up entirely within the last nineteen years, and now contains upwards of 20,000 inhabitants, and produces about one sixth part of the cotton manufacture of the whole Union: there is also a considerable woollen manufacture carried on there. The land on which it stands was taken by a company with a view to this manufacturing speculation in 1823, in consequence of their having observed its peculiar advantages; namely, a water fall of thirty-one feet, and of sufficient power to work all the mills now in operation, and a canal, the oldest in the Union, by which, till the railroad was made, all the trade of Lowell was carried on. The plan succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations of the projectors, who have consequently realised large fortunes.

I went round one of the mills belonging to Messrs. Lawrence, and was much pleased with the comfort and cleanliness of the whole establishment, as well as with the appearance of the work-people. They were 700 in number (almost all adults and unmarried); the wages of the men averaging about eighty cents (3s. 6d.), those of the women half a dollar per day. They work from five A. M. to seven P. M., with the intermission of half an hour for breakfast and three quarters of an hour for dinner. They live in boarding houses connected with the mill, belonging to the master manufacturer, and kept by persons whom he employs, and who are responsible to him for the order and regularity of their establishment: a strict police is enforced, and drunkenness and immorality punished by immediate dismissal. The same system is pursued by the other mill owners, and the result is such as they may justly be proud of. At the same time, when the example of Lowell is quoted to show that the evils which have in Europe universally attended the manufacturing system are not inevitable in it, I cannot admit it to be at all conclusive. The experiment has been tried under eminently favourable circumstances, and in a country where the working-class has advantages unknown elsewhere: nor can I conceive that when it shall be fully peopled, when the wages of labour shall have fallen, and when the manufacturing shall come to bear an important numerical proportion to the agricultural population, the favourable contrast which the New England factories now present to those of England, France, and Germany, can possibly continue.

At present the factories are supplied by a perpetual immigration from the agricultural districts; farmers' children come in from the surrounding states, spend three or four years here, accumulate a small capital, and go off to marry, settle, or embark in other pursuits, leaving their places to be supplied by a fresh influx of healthy rural blood. Thus no permanent urban population has as yet been formed, while the comparatively small size of the town enables the capitalists to whom it almost exclusively belongs, to manage and regulate its police at will, and neither of these advantages are likely to be other than local and temporary.
Again: there can be no physical destitution while land is so cheap, and labour so dear as in the case of America; and we all know how intimately connected are extreme poverty and that kind of immorality, the absence of which is so remarkable at Lowell. The circumstances of the country enable the operatives to ask, and protective tariffs alone enable the manufacturers to give, such wages as I have mentioned. If these were to fall below a certain point, the former would betake themselves to their homes and their fields, where they would be sure of employment and subsistence till it were worth their while to return to the mills. It is obvious that under a high-pressure system of competition such as ours, where the labourers are struggling to outbid each other, and the manufacturers to undersell the rest of the world, such a free-and-easy mode of proceeding could not possibly exist. A stationary population, devoted from their very childhood to the one pursuit which they are to follow through life, with faculties sharpened by attention to it, thoroughly impressed by its influences, and in possession of a hereditary or at least traditionally aptitude for it, will necessarily outbid one such as I have described to exist in New England, and will therefore ultimately (with the extension of the manufacturing system and the depression of wages) prevail over it. It cannot be supposed that all manufacturers will be so conscientious and far-sighted as those who have had the care of Lowell, or that they will not generally look merely to the greatest possible production upon the cheapest and easiest terms. New England, from the traditional and habitual observance of external morality and decency which prevails, is the most favourable spot which could be selected for the experiment of a well-disciplined factory system; yet even here I have been informed by good authority that the evils characteristic of manufacturing districts in Europe have begun to appear, and that the example of Lowell has not been adhered to elsewhere. If the factory system were to be engrafted upon the undisciplined habits and lax morality of the South, I feel convinced that even now the worst results would follow. The experience of all ages and countries ought surely to outweigh that which rests upon the solitary instance of this town.