***Lyddie***

***Chapter 12 – “I Will Not Be A Slave”***

As the weeks [wore on](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85959#curr) , Lyddie could feel herself become better and better at her work.  She could work quickly and did not make many mistakes.  She could even work through the heat and [exhaustion](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85960#curr)  and seemed to be [indefatigable](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85961#curr) .

Lyddie could tell that Mr. Marsden, the overseer, noticed how well she was doing.  One day, Mr. Marsden even brought visitors in to see her work.  Lyddie was nervous, but knew that he would not have brought them to see her unless she was good. She even heard Mr. Marsden say, "one of our best girls, our very best".

Lyddie's pay [reflected](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85962#curr)  how well she was doing. She was making almost .50 a week after paying her room and board.



As she worked, Lyddie continued to read Oliver Twist.  At first, it was very hard to read but the longer Lyddie worked at it the easier the story became to understand.  Lyddie started to think about the characters.  Mr. Bumble, Fagin, Nancy, and Bill Sikes.  As she thought about the characters she also began to think about her own family.

That next day, Lyddie [recieved](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85963" \l "curr)  a letter in the mail.  She was [nervous](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85964#curr)  to open it.

The letter said:

Dear Datter,

I was surpriz to get your letter abt yur move to Lowell.  I do not no to say.  I you can send muny it will be to help Judah and Clarissa.  Baby Agnes is gone to God.   Rachel is porely and sick.  Miny have died.

Yr. loving mother,

Mattie M. Worthen.



Lyddie felt very sad thinking about the death of her youngest sister, Agnes.  She could barely even remember what her little face looked like because it had been so long since she had seen her.

The more Lyddie thought about it, the more she felt she needed to earn as much money as possible so that she could pay her family debts and get everyone back together again.



The Concord Corporation [sped](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85965#curr)  up the looms again.  For Lyddie, this was good because she could work more looms and earn more money.  However, many girls went home for good because they could not keep up with the fast [pace](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85966#curr) .

Prudence was the first of Lyddie's roommates to leave for good. Prudence had become sick from the factory, at night she would cough a dry, painful cough that would keep Lyddie and the other girls up.



One night when Lyddie and Betsy and Amelia were sitting in their room the girls got into an argument.

Amelia wanted to talk to Lyddie but Lyddie was busy reading her book.

Amelia said, "Lyddie! Get your nose out of that book and come take a walk with me"

Lyddie replied, "I'm busy", she just wanted Amelia to leave her alone.

Suddenly, Amelia snatched Oliver Twist out of Lyddie's hands.

Lyddie yelled, "That's my book!"

Amelia said, "Come on Lyddie, just a short walk by the river before supper!".

Lyddie began to get more and more upset.

Amelia said, "Besides, this book isn't fit to read on the Sabbath, it's a sin!"

Lyddie felt the anger build up inside her.  "You ain't read it! How can you know??"

Lyddie didn't understand, how come Amelia didn't understand how important this book was? It was about life and death.

Finally, Amelia said, "I know about novels, they are the devil's instrument to make young girls think about things they shouldn't".



After arguing for a while, Amelia broke down and cried.  She apologized and said she didn't mean anything that she said but she was just so [stressed out](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85967#curr)  and tired from all of the hard work she couldn't help it.

Betsy said, "I understand what you mean, we're all working like black slaves is what.  I've half a mind to sign the petition!"

Amelia looked at Betsy shocked and said, " You wouldn't sign the [petition](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85969#curr) would you?!"

Betsy said, "I might.  I used to work hard, but now I work twice as hard as I used to and get paid even less"

Lyddie didn't even want to listen to the conversation.  She couldn't think anything except that if the girls signed the [petition](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85968#curr)  they would work less hours and therefore get paid less.  Lyddie didn't want to get paid less because then it would take her longer to pay off her [debts](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85970#curr) .

Also, Lyddie was worried that if Betsty signed the petition, Betsy would be blacklisted, which meant no other corporation would hire her.  How could she survive without a job??



As the girls kept talking, Betsy began to sing:

"Oh! Isn't it a [pity](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85971#curr)  such a pretty girl as I

Should be sent to the factory to [pine](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85972#curr)  away and die?

Oh! I cannot be a slave,

I will not be a slave,

For I'm so [fond](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85973#curr)  of [liberty](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85974#curr)

That I cannot be a slave!"

After Betsy finished singing Lyddie called out, "I ain't a slave! I ain't a slave!"

The girls agreed that they weren't slaves, but that with how hard they were working and how little they were being paid they didn't feel much better than one.



Finally, the bell for bedtime rang and Betsy and Amelia's argument was coming to an end.

Betsy told Amelia that it was time to fight for justice and for equal pay and treatment in the factory and Amelia told Betsy that it was against the Bible to fight back.  Amelia also said it was [unladylike](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85975#curr)  to [rebel](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85976#curr)  against [authority](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85977#curr)  and be a [radical](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=110936&word=85978#curr) .

As the girls finally stopped talking and turned out the lights, Lyddie was glad that it was quiet, but her mind was still full of thoughts after the discussion the girls had just had.

Chapter 12 is titled "I Will Not Be a Slave." The chapter begins with [Lyddie](https://www.enotes.com/topics/lyddie?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhats-summary-chapter-12-lyddie-1709697%23answer-850089&en_category=internal_campaign) working on the mill floor. Conditions are terrible, but Lyddie is working above and beyond what other girls are doing. She is doing so well that Mr. Marsden shows her and her work to some visiting foreign dignitaries. Mr. Marsden says that she is "one of our best girls." Readers are then told that all of her unceasing, good work is paying off financially too. Lyddie is making almost $2.50 per week above her $1.75 board rate. She is still working her way through Oliver Twist, and she reads each copied page so often that she practically has them memorized. We get a little narration about how Lyddie is starting to be able to analyze the text and do basic character breakdowns.

About a third of the way into the chapter, Lyddie receives a letter from her mother. The letter is full of bad news and is extremely depressing. It asks Lyddie for money, saying that Agnes and many others have died and Rachel is also not doing well. The letter causes Lyddie to decide to work even harder to earn even more money in order to pay back the family debt. The goal is that the family can eventually be reunited. She takes on four looms all by herself, and she is able to keep up with the increased pace when other girls are not. Prudence, one of Lyddie's roommates, goes home for good. It is mainly for health reasons.

Readers are also told in this chapter that roommate tensions are running a bit higher. Betsy is studying like crazy, and Amelia is driving everybody crazy with her continual talk about the Sabbath and "stretching your souls." Tensions are stretched to the breaking point when Amelia claims that novels, including Oliver Twist, are the "devil's instrument." The conversation eventually moves to working conditions, and Betsy claims that they are all working "like black slaves." Betsy also expresses a possible desire to sign the petition. Lyddie is appalled at the very thought. Girls that sign the petition are blacklisted, and they no longer can earn any money. Lyddie is adamant that she keeps the job and the pace, and she defends the idea that she is not a slave. The argument ends when the curfew bell rings, and the chapter ends at that point too.

In chapter twelve, the book describes how [Lyddie](https://www.enotes.com/topics/lyddie?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-happens-chapter-12-lyddie-16321%23answer-672737&en_category=internal_campaign) is now tending the same number of looms, yet they run much faster, increasing the workload significantly.  She doesn't mind, though, since she is paid well, at least in her opinion.  She reads Oliver Twist when she has time, to improve her reading skills.

She receives a letter from her mother saying that her little sister Agnes has died and asking her to send money to help support the other two children.  She struggles a bit with hearing that Agnes died, and resolves to work harder so she can pay off the family's debts.

She also gets into an argument with her roommates.  Amelia feels that they should all be more religious and criticizes Lyddie for reading Oliver Twist on the Sabbath.  Betsy feels that the girls are being treated like slaves at the factory and is determined to stage a walk-out and then leave to go West.  She also toys with the idea of signing the petition that has been circulating.  Lyddie, of course, feels desperately that either of these is the wrong course of action because it would leave them without a job.  They argue for some time about it without coming to any conclusion.  The chapter ends as the curfew bell clangs and they settle in to sleep for the night.