***Lyddie***

***Chapter 13 – Speed Up***

Lyddie coud not help but keep thinking about the argument she had had the day before with Amelia and Betsy.  Lyddie even found herself [avoiding](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86218#curr)  Diana at work because she was one of the girls leading the others to sign the [petition](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86219#curr) .  Lyddie could even tell that Mr. Marsden was keeping an eye on whichever girls were friends with Diana or stopped to talk to her at her loom.  Lyddie did not want Mr. Marsden, her boss, to think that she was trying to start any problems.



The girls who wanted the ten-hour workday (which is what would happen if they signed the petition) even started putting out a newspaper which explained their opinions.  It was called The Voice of Industry.  Lyddie tried her best to not even look at it so she would not get in trouble.

One night, Betsy tried to get her to read it and said "Oh Lyddie, it won't hurt you to read something you disagree with".  But Lyddie ignored her and decided to write a letter to Mama instead.

She wrote:

Dear Mother,

I was made quite sad by your letter telling of Agnes' death.  I am consern that you are not taking proper care of your health.  I have enclosed one dollar.  Please get yourself and Rachel some food.  I will send more money next paycheck.  I try to save the rest of the money to pay back the debts.  Where should I send the money?

Your loving daughter,

Lydia Worthen



After finishing her letter to Mama, Lyddie decided she should write a letter to Charlie.  However, Lyddie was nervous because she had not spoken to him in so long.  She didn't even know if she should call him Charlie or Charles.  Finally, Lyddie started writing.

She wrote:

Dear Charles,

I have heard from mother that little Agnes has died.  Did she write to you as well this sad news? We must get mother and Rachel home soon.  I am saving most of my [wages](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86220#curr)  for the [debt.](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86221#curr)   I am working hard and making good pay.  We can go home soon I still hop (ha ha).  I trust you are well.

I am as ever your loving sister,

Lydia Worthen.

Just as Lyddie finished the letter a big [blob](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86222#curr) of [ink](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86223#curr) spilled on the paper.  Lyddie was so upset she threw out the letter and did not even write another one.



As the days went on in the factory, the speed of the looms continued to [increase](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86224#curr) .  But, no matter how fast they went Lyddie was somehow able to keep up.  She did so well with her two and then three looms that Mr. Marsden gave her a fourth.  Once she had the fourth loom Lyddie was so busy that she barely noticed anyone or anything around her.  All she did was work and eat and then go back to working.



One night, just as Lyddie was about to fall asleep she heard Betsy and Amelia having a [discussion](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86225#curr) .

"It's like being a [racehorse](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86226#curr) " Betsy was saying.  "the harder we work, the bigger prize our bosses get".

Amelia said something quietly in response to Betsy but Lyddie could not hear her.   Then Lyddie heard Betsy say, "I've made up my mind to sign the next petition!"

"You wouldn't" Said Amelia.

"Wouldn't I just?" Betsy laughed "I am almost finished with all of my classes and so is the man that I am sure to marry.  I am so close to getting out of this crazy place, what do I have to lose if I sign the petition now?"

Even though Lyddie was about to fall asleep she still felt upset by these words.

"But where would you go if you left?" Asked Amelia.

"I would go to Ohio! I would go to college" Betsy said.

Lyddie finally sat up and said to Betsy, "I would really hate if you left".

Betsy said "Oh Lyddie, you are so busy now I bet you wouldn't even notice".

Then, all of the girls drifted off to sleep.



In the factory, the [overseers](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86227#curr)  were now being offered prizes for whichever of their girls [produced](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86228#curr)  the most cloth.  This was one of the reasons that the looms had gotten so much faster.  Many of the girls could not handle it and they went home and were [replaced](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86229#curr)  with new girls.

Down the street at another factory, the machines were going so fast that girls were getting [seriously](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86230#curr)  hurt, or even killed.

So far, no one had died at the Concord Corporation.  But, one of the new Irish girls had gotten her hair stuck in the loom and had been hurt very badly.



It was now Christmas time and although it was not a time for the girls to celebrate, Lyddie did get a letter from Triphena telling her how things were going at the Tavern.  Lyddie was happy to have heard from at least one friend during the holidays.

On that same day that Lyddie got the letter from Triphena, Lyddie was working hard in the factory.  Everything seemed normal, but then suddenly, Lyddie was in a lot of pain and had fallen to the floor bleeding.  Lyddie tried to stand up but could not.  Soon, Diana was by her side.  Diana tried to put a [handkerchief](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86231#curr)  on her head to stop the bleeding, but instead her hand just filled with blood.

Diana finally said, "She was hit by a shuttle"

Diana took Lyddie back to the boardinghouse carefully where Mrs. Bedlow helped put her in bed.  Then, Diana called for Dr. Craven to come and see to her injury.

Lyddie was dizzy and in a lot of pain.  When Dr. Craven finally came to see her Lyddie [flinched](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86232#curr)  when he touched her head.  But, she realized she did not [flinch](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=111144&word=86233#curr)  because of the pain, it was because she had seen Dr. Craven before.

He was the mysterious man who had been with Diana on the street last summer!

In chapter 13, Lyddie avoids Diana and Betsy. They are trying to persuade the mill owner to shorten their work days, saying that they are little more than slaves. Lyddie is happy with her job and is adamant that she is not a slave, so she spends as little time as possible with them. But when Lyddie gets hurt on the job, she realizes that Diana is truly her friend because Diana tends to her wound and arranges for her to see a doctor at no cost to herself.

Lyddie has become very good at her work and is begins to operate four looms by herself. She is proud of her efforts, and writes to tell her family that she is saving to help pay off their debts.

Betsy decides to sign the petition calling for a shorter work day, which results in her being fired. So she makes plans to apply to Oberlin College.

In Chapter 13, Lyddie is becoming more acquainted with being a factory worker.  Lyddie is responding to Betsy’s comment that they are all slaves.

She wasn’t a slave. She was a free woman of the state of Vermont, earning her own way in the world. … Lyddie, was far less a slave than most any girl she knew of. (Ch. 13)

Lyddie is proud of her work at the textile mill.  She writes home that she is working to pay off her family’s debts.  As she gets more accustomed to the mill work, she learns to operate four looms at a time.  She is proud of this, and pays little attention when Betsy wants to sign the petition for workers’ rights, and if she is fired for it she will go to college.  Unfortunately, Lyddie gets hurt.  Diana helps her see a doctor for free.

The company began speeding up the looms.  Lyddie was given more looms, because she was a good worker.  Unfortunately, she was only human.  Lyddie was exhausted.  The pace was too much and she got hurt.

One of the elements this chapter shows us is that conditions at the factories were unsafe, especially when the factory managers or owners got greedy and tried to speed up production.  As the author points out, they treated the girls like slaves.  Some of them, like Betsy, dreamed of getting an education and being more than just factory workers.  Lyddie is dependably caught up in her own world, and just trying to get by.  She does not think about what Betsy or any of the other girls are thinking.  Instead, she is worrying only about herself.  Yet, she is also caught up in a vicious cycle of exhaustion that leads to danger.  She was only slightly hurt, but it could have been much worse.