“An Account of a Visitor to Lowell” (1936)

SOURCE: *The Harbinger*, November 14, 1836

(The Harbinger is a weekly publication from Brook Farm, a utopian commune in Massachusetts)

Excerpts from the document:

**We have lately visited the cities of Lowell [Massachusetts] and Manchester [New Hampshire] and have had an opportunity of examining the factory system.**  **We went through many of the mills, talked particularly to a large number of the operatives**,

In Lowell live between **seven and eight thousand young women**,

The operatives work **thirteen hours a day** in the summer time, and from **daylight to dark in the winter. At half past four in the morning the factory bell rings, and at five the girls must be in the mills. A clerk, placed as a watch, observes those who are a few minutes behind** the time, and effectual means are taken to stimulate to punctuality. This is the morning commencement of the **industrial discipline (should we not rather say industrial tyranny?)** which is established in these associations of this moral and Christian community.

**Thus thirteen hours per day of close attention and monotonous labor are exacted from the young women in these manufactories. . . . So fatigued--we should say, exhausted and worn out,**

**When capital has got thirteen hours of labor daily out of a being, it can get nothing more.**

**The din and clatter of these five hundred looms, under full operation, struck us on first entering as something frightful and infernal, for it seemed such an atrocious violation of one of the faculties of the human soul, the sense of hearing.**

 On entering the room, **although the day was warm, we remarked that the windows were down. We asked the reason, and a young woman answered very naïvely, and without seeming to be in the least aware that this privation of fresh air was anything else than perfectly natural, that "when the wind blew, the threads did not work well."**

Questions about this document:

* What does this source tell us about factory life in Lowell Textile Mills?
* Why do you think the author has written this document?
* What information about factory work is missing from the document?
* How can historians use this source to understand textile work in the Northeastern United States?