
Labor, the Genius of Civilization

by Eugene V. Debs

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If all the money in the world were heaped together in one vast pile it would be as powerless to do good for man as is the nerveless hand of death. Labor is the power that moves the world. Labor has brought us out of the darkness of the past into the noonday light of the 19th Century. To labor, our country is indebted for its magical development of the past 100 years.

Labor has built our cities, scooped out our canals, bound ocean to ocean with bands of iron, over which rush the commerce of millions; wiped out time and space by girdling the earth with electric wires, and she has made it possible to send not only the messages, but the very tones of love across continents by means of the wonderful telephone.

Labor brings to the feet of man the minerals of every zone. Ships come home to him laden with the fruits of every climate. The diamond of Brazil reflects the beauty of woman and the gold of the Urals and Sierra Nevada form her ornaments. The wool of Cashmere is woven into the beautiful textures of the Orient, while the iron of the Occident is welded into locomotives and steamships. The wheat of Dakota feeds the hungry millions of Europe, while the trained laborers of Europe manufacture the cloth which clothes the Western farmer. Over all this the genius of labor presides. Her magic wand touches the rough unhewn things of earth and shapes them into forms of beauty and use.

The deft hand of the sculptor turns the forbidding block of marble into shapes of historic beauty. The Apollo Belvedere slept for ages a shapeless mass in the quarries of Carrara. Labor forced it from its dark and damp resting place and formed it into lines of beauty that have been wondrous for centuries. The genius of the painter shapes

itself into immortal images on canvas out of the common clay and pigments of the earth.

Art, science, religion, government, cannot exist without labor; she makes all these things possible. The king cannot wear his crown till labor gives him the power to do so. The pampered beauty cannot array herself in jewels and silks till labor has fitted them for things of adornment.

The world recognizes the value of the laborer more as the years go by. The days of lords and ladies, the days of feudal barons and kings, by right divine, are surely passing away. The lines which have been so cruelly drawn between the rich and titled on one side, and the laboring classes on the other, are being rapidly obliterated. The newer, brighter day is dawning; the day wherein the laborers of all kinds, from the skilled artisan down to the shoveler upon the streets, will be justly rewarded. Civilization has placed her hand trustingly in the hand of her mother Labor, and together they walk with majestic step along the highway of Progress, drawing after them all the honored laborers of earth and trampling to death the drones and the worthless.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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