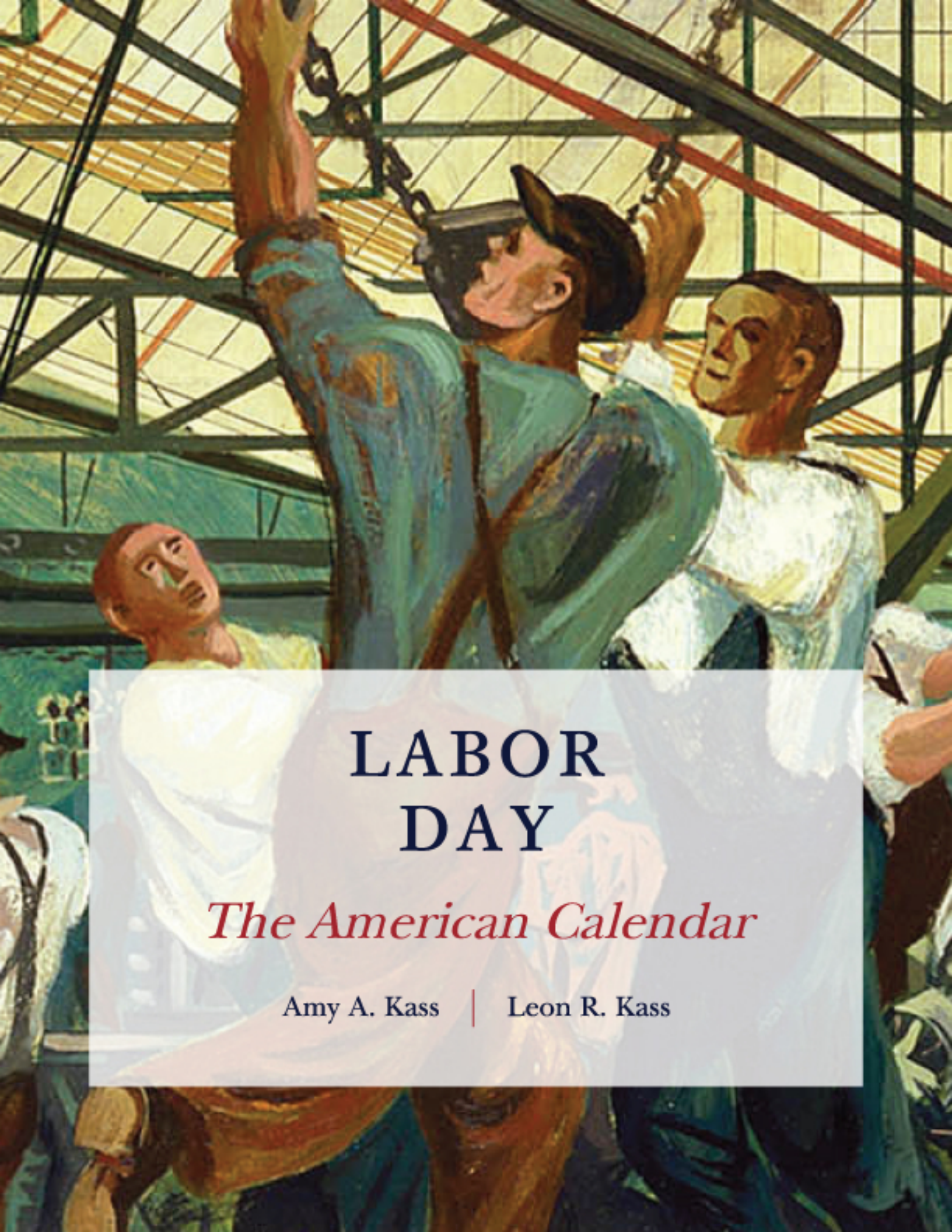

LABOR DAY

The American Calendar

Amy A. Kass | Leon R. Kass

THE MEANING OF LABOR DAY

The American Calendar

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[*] *Suitable for students grades 5–8*

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Labor Day:
An American Holiday

The Origins and Traditions of Labor Day

Just as Memorial Day has become embedded in American culture as the day marking the beginning of summer, Labor Day, celebrated annually on the first Monday of September, has come to signify summer's end. Serving as bookends to the summer season, both holidays are celebrated with three-day weekends that include traveling to visit friends and family, barbecues and picnics, swimming, and parades. Although it may seem strange to celebrate the value of labor by taking time off from work, these leisurely pursuits have long been regarded as fitting for a holiday meant to honor the "contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country."[1]

While Labor Day is one of today's most celebrated federal holidays—at least as indicated by yearly travel statistics—its connections with its political roots and historical purposes have become rather attenuated. In fact, the origins of the holiday are somewhat murky. Labor Day is more the product of evolution than federal fiat, and there is still some doubt as to who first proposed a holiday for workers. Some attribute Labor Day's founding to Peter J. McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, who proposed a celebration to honor those "who from rude nature have delved and carved all the grandeur we behold."[2] Others, however, attribute the founding of Labor Day to Matthew Maguire of the Central Labor Union in New York.

Though Labor Day was officially declared a national holiday on June 28, 1894, celebrations of the holiday began more than a decade before. Throughout the nineteenth century, labor leaders held parades and picnics to win support for labor reforms such as shorter working hours and to rally strikers. In May 1882, New York City's Central Labor Union proposed that all union members join together for a protest rally in early September. They chose Wendel's Elm Park, then the largest park in the city, as their location, and on September 5, 1882, more than 10,000 marchers joined a parade carrying signs reading, "Labor Creates All Wealth" and "Eight Hours for Work, Eight Hours for Rest, Eight Hours for Recreation." After walking past City Hall, Union Square, and Uptown, the marchers returned the park to picnic and listen to speeches from union leaders. The evening was devoted to dancing and fireworks.

For the next several years, Labor Day was celebrated as an unofficial holiday by labor unions. The celebration continued to be held each September 5 until the Central Labor Union moved its celebration to the first Monday of September and urged other unions to do the same. (Some unions even fined workers for not showing up to Labor Day rallies and parades.) In 1885 and 1886, municipal ordinances made Labor Day an official holiday in some cities around the country. A movement soon began to secure state legislation. New York State filed the first bill, but the first state to make it a law was Oregon, on February 21, 1887. Legislative enactments in Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York created the Labor Day holiday shortly after Oregon. Within ten

[1] "The History of Labor Day," US Department of Labor, www.dol.gov/opa/aboutdol/laborday.htm (accessed September 12, 2012).
[2] Ibid.

years, Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania also joined in with Labor Day laws. In 1893, workers in New York City took an unpaid day off to march around Union Square in support of a national Labor Day. By 1894, twenty-three additional states had adopted the holiday.

Labor Day was not the only holiday dedicated to America's working men and women. May Day, recognized as the International Labor Day, had also developed a large following throughout the United States. In some cities, the size of May Day events rivaled those of Labor Day. Despite the popularity of May Day and the appeal of an international holiday, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) pushed to secure Labor Day as America's primary celebration of its workers. This was due to the more radical tone that May Day had taken. Especially after the 1886 Haymarket Square Riot, where several police officers and union members were killed in Chicago,[3] May Day had become a day to protest the arrests of anarchists, socialists, and unionists, as well as an opportunity to push for better working conditions. Samuel Gompers and the AFL saw that the presence of more radical elements of the labor movement would be detrimental to perception of the festival. To solve this, the AFL worked to elevate Labor Day over May Day and also made an effort to bring a more moderate attitude to the Labor Day festivities. The AFL, whose city labor councils sponsored many of the Labor Day celebrations, banned radical speakers, red flags, internationalist slogans, and anything else that could shed an unfavorable light on Labor Day or organized labor. The subsequent push to make Labor Day a national holiday was an extension of these efforts to keep American labor free of the more radical, internationalist, and anticapitalist elements whose ideas were (and still are) given voice in May Day rallies.

These efforts were successful, and Labor Day eventually became a federal holiday, signed into law by President Grover Cleveland in 1894. However, Cleveland was by no means a pro-labor president. Just six days before he signed the bill to make Labor Day a national holiday, Cleveland had ordered the brutal suppression of the Pullman railcar workers' strike by 12,000 US Army troops,[4] an act that demonized him in the eyes of organized labor. Fearing a primary challenge from the populist William Jennings Bryan, Cleveland recognized that a conciliatory effort was necessary. The political maneuver did not achieve its desired effect, however: Cleveland lost the Democratic Party's 1896 presidential nomination to Bryan.

[3] For more details, see "The Labor Movement in America," Section 2.
[4] For more details, see "The Labor Movement in America," Section 2.

The Significance of Labor Day

SAMUEL GOMPERS

Samuel Gompers (1850–1924) was the first and longest serving president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), holding the office nearly continuously from 1886 until his death in 1924. Gompers was born in England and put to work at the age of ten as a cigar maker. The young Gompers continued in this trade as a teenager when his family immigrated to New York City, where he soon became involved in the labor movement. In 1875, at the age of twenty-five, he was elected president of his local union, and, in 1896, was made the first vice-president of the Cigarmakers' International Union—a position he held until his death. Gompers became an early advocate of a national Labor Day celebration, and in this selection, originally published on September 4, 1910, in The New York Times*, he explains the day's significance.*

What, according to Gompers, is the significance of Labor Day? What does it celebrate? What, specifically, does it hope to promote for the American worker and for America? Does Labor Day today have the same meaning and purpose?

Labor Day marks a new epoch in the annals of human history. It differs essentially from some of the other holidays of the year in that it glorifies no armed conflicts or battles of man's prowess over man.

It is a deep-seated propensity of human nature to observe with appropriate ceremonies the periodical return of certain times, suspending the ordinary business of life on certain days for the purpose of preserving the recollection of some important event or principle. The observance of such festivals is an evidence of growing civilization. Our inferior fellow-animals pursue an unvaried course from day to day, but man varies his life by elevating some days above others.

The institution of the weekly rest day or festival called Sunday has been of incalculable benefit to mankind, and in comparatively recent times there were numerous other holidays to give needed relaxation to the laborers and cheer the heart of man.

Among all the festive days of the year, of all the days commemorative of great epochs in the world's history, of all the days celebrated for one cause or another, there is not one which stands so conspicuously for social advancement of the common people as the first Monday in September of each recurring year—Labor Day.

Labor Day is the day conceded by no one class or set of people to another; it is the day of the workers, secured by the workers for the workers, and for all. Its observance now is sanctioned by law in thirty-three States, in the District of Columbia, and in the United States Territories.

But Labor Day—labor’s holiday—was celebrated by organized labor years before its recognition as a legal holiday by the enactment of law. It appears that a beneficent purpose must be demonstrated by the people before our legislators give it the dignity of the law’s authority.

No martial glory or warlike pomp signals Labor Day. The marching host of workers manifest their growing intelligence and unalterable determination for the effacement of the unnatural and brutal causes that impel man to raise his hand against his brother. Labor Day stands for industrial peace and for the toiler’s economic, political, social, and moral advancement.

Organized labor in its essence presents a rational, hence a peaceful, means for the introduction of normal, fair and just conditions for all; so there ought not to be, and in the near future will not be, conflicts other than those which are conducted normally, peacefully, and rightly. It is in the best sense the modern knighthood in defense of the toiling men, women, and children of our day and of the future.

The struggle of labor is to free man from his own weakness, from his own cupidity, from his own unfair, unjust, and unnecessarily cruel environments. The struggle is for home and fireside, for a higher life, a nobler manhood, womanhood, and childhood, which may look forward to the day of deliverance from absurd economic conditions and cruel burdens. The future will substitute the college and forum for the arsenal and jail; the home, and not the factory, for motherhood; the playground, school, and sunlight, and not the mill or workshop, for childhood.

In our time, when so many look upon the dark side of the progress of the labor movement, and predict worse things in store for the laborer, it is not amiss to call attention to the fact that the life of the human family is one vast struggle, and that though the progress is not so swift as I, as well as some of my impatient brothers and sisters of labor, would like it to be, yet the fact is that in our decade we can see the rights of labor more clearly defined, the vantage ground obtained, and obtaining a clearer insight into existing wrongs, the more intelligent perception of and determination to achieve labor’s rights.

There is only one danger of the failure of constant and peaceful evolution for the elimination of all abnormal conditions under which workers are compelled to toil, and this danger is the possible failure of the wage earners to realize the necessity of more general and thorough organization in the unions of their respective trades. Such a failure, beyond doubt, would be taken advantage of by all the elements which prey upon and take advantage of the weak, and it is a source of great gratification that the workers have organized and federated so largely and comprehensively that there is little fear of a step backward.

On the contrary, every evidence is shown that the toilers have awakened to the new-found power of organized effort. Never before in the history of our country have they been so well organized as they are to-day, and the good work is going on day by day.

In spite of the fact that occasionally we have great industrial disputes, yet the organized labor movement in its essence stands for industrial peace, and presents a rational method for the inauguration of fairer and more just conditions for all. The trade-union movement carries the scars of many cruel battles of the past. It exemplifies all tenderness and genuine sympathy with the sufferer of the present. It voices the hopes and aspirations of the masses for future freedom and justice.

At no time in the history of the world have the workers demonstrated more clearly their purpose not only to be just, but to demand justice. They realize that without organization in this day of concentrated wealth and industry their lives and their liberties are doomed. They have organized, and are organizing, with greater rapidity than ever. The earnestness of their expressions, the sincerity of their actions, the solidarity of their movements, the fraternity which they engender, all bespeak a brighter future for all who toil, for all who are dependent upon them.

Our labor movement has no system to crush. It has nothing to overturn. It purposes to build up, to develop, to rejuvenate humanity.

It stands for the right. It is the greatest protestant against wrong. It is the defender of the weak.

Its members make the sacrifices and bear the brunt of battle to obtain more equitable and humane conditions in the everyday lives of all the people.

It may be true that here and there a setback is encountered in the battle of labor; but it is simply a skirmish, for the grand army is ever moving onward and forward. One column in our ranks may be defeated, yet it is only a retreat for greater organization, better preparation for a more propitious time.

Splendid as has been the progress in organization and federation within the recent past, yet there is much to do to convince the yet unorganized workers that their duty to themselves, their wives and children, their fellow-workers, their fellow-men is to organize and help in the great cause. We must win or regain the confidence of the indifferent, negligent, or ignorant non-unionists, to impress on his mind that he who will not stand with his brother for the right is equally responsible with the wrongdoer for any wrong done. The excuse and justification for tyranny is the servility and indifference of the slaves.

By the organization of the workers we not only quicken the conscience of those inclined to the wrong, but we create a healthier public opinion regarding the great cause for which we stand. Hence, our fellow-unionists, rank and file, officers, organizers, leaders, in fact all, are devoting themselves unfalteringly and persistently to the work of bringing the non-unionists within the fold of organization.

The workers can be free. Justice and right can and must be proclaimed, established, and maintained.

The full realization of these principles and potent purposes can come only by the work, and if necessary, the sacrifices, of the hosts of unionists through whose earnest effort must be fulfilled the mission to unite the world of workers and usher in the dawn of that bright day of which the poets have sung, philosophers dreamed, and the workmen struggled and yearned to achieve for the human family.

The High Place of Labor

CALVIN COOLIDGE

In this speech, delivered to a delegation of labor leaders on September 1, 1924, President Calvin Coolidge (1872–1933) emphasizes the esteem Americans have for hard work and the dignity of honest labor. Coolidge was not commonly regarded as a friend of labor. While governor of Massachusetts in 1919, he had earned national attention for using the National Guard to break up a strike by the Boston police; and in a letter to Samuel Gompers, he justified his action thus: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime." Yet in this speech as president, he celebrates both the American worker and the nation's entrepreneurial spirit, and encourages American workers to become "independent masters of their own destiny."

Why does President Coolidge regard Labor Day as "a peculiarly American holiday"? What does it celebrate? What is the connection between work and what Coolidge calls our nation's "main problem, the character of the men and women it [America] shall produce"? What does he regard as the proper goals and policies of government with respect to the well-being of the American worker? Do you agree?

Labor Day is more entitled than any other to be called a national holiday. Other holidays had their origin in state legislative action. Labor Day had its origin in national legislative action. After Congress had taken the lead the states followed. It is moreover a peculiarly American holiday. It is a most characteristic representation of our ideals. No other country, I am told, makes a like observance. But in America this high tribute is paid in recognition of the worth and dignity of the men and women who toil.

You come here as representative Americans. You are true representatives. I cannot think of anything characteristically American that was not produced by toil. I cannot think of any American man or woman preeminent in the history of our Nation who did not reach their place through toil. I cannot think of anything that represents the American people as a whole so adequately as honest work. We perform different tasks, but the spirit is the same. We are proud of work and ashamed of idleness. With us there is no task which is menial, no service which is degrading. All work is ennobling and all workers are ennobled.

To my mind America has but one main problem, the character of the men and women it shall produce. It is not fundamentally a Government problem, although the Government can be of a great influence in its solution. It is the real problem of the people themselves. They control its property, they have determined its government, they manage its business. In all things they are the masters of their own destiny. What they are, their intelligence, their fidelity, their courage, their faith, will determine our material prosperity, our successes and happiness at home, and our place in the world abroad.

If anything is to be done then, by the Government, for the people who toil, for the cause of labor, which is the sum of all other causes, it will be by continuing its efforts to provide healthful surroundings, education, reasonable conditions of employment, fair wages for fair work, stable business prosperity, and the encouragement of religious worship. This is the general American policy which is working out with a success more complete for humanity, with its finite limitations, than was ever accomplished anywhere else in the world. The door of opportunity swings wide open in our country. Through it, in constant flow, go those who toil. America recognizes no aristocracy save those who work. The badge of service is the sole requirement for admission to the ranks of our nobility.

These American policies should be continued. We have outlawed all artificial privilege. We have had our revolution and our reforms. I do not favor a corporation government, a bank government, a farm government or a labor government. I am for a common sense government by all the people according to the American policy and under the American Constitution. I want all the people to continue to be partakers in self government. We never had a government under our Constitution that was not put into office by the votes of the toilers.

It is only necessary to look about you to observe the practical effect of this policy. It is somewhat difficult to find men in important Government positions who did not in their beginnings live by the work of their hands. Of those who sit at the Cabinet table of the Nation none were born to the purple, save only as they were born to become American citizens, and nearly all in early life earned their living by actual manual labor. . . .

But the Government of the United States is not for the gratification of the people who happen to hold office. It is established to promote the general welfare of all the people. That is the American ideal. No matter how many officeholders there may be, or what their origin, our institutions are a failure unless they serve all the citizens in their own homes. It is always necessary to find out what effect the institutions of Government and society have on the wage earner, in order to judge of the desirability of their continuation. One of the outstanding features of the present day, is that American wage earners are living better than at any other time in our history. They have not only retained, but actually increased, the gains they made during the war [World War I]. The cost of living has been high, but the increase in wages has been greater. Compilations of the Department of Labor demonstrate that the wages of an hour, or a day, buy more now than it ever did before. Not only are the American wage earners now receiving more money, and more of the things that money will buy, for their work, than any other wage earners in the world, but more than was ever before received by any community of wage earners. We have here in the United States not only the best paid workers in the world, but the best paid workers that ever lived in this world . . . .

These are some of the material results of present American policies. We have enacted many laws to protect the health of those who are employed in the industries. Especial efforts have been made in this direction in behalf of women and children. We are attempting at the present time to secure a constitutional amendment giving Congress

jurisdiction over child labor. The efforts of the states and Nation to provide and encourage education have been such that it is fair to claim that any youth, no matter how humble his circumstances, can unaided secure a college education by the exercise of his own efforts. We have achieved an equality of opportunity which has opened up the avenues of a more abundant life to all the people.

There are two sides to every bargain. It is not only human nature, but necessary to progress, that each side should desire to secure a good trade. This is the case in contracts for employment. In order to give wage earners reasonable advantages, their right has been established to organize, to bargain collectively, and to negotiate through their own chosen agents. The principle also of voluntary arbitration has come to exist almost as a right. Compulsory arbitration has sometimes been proposed, but to my mind it cannot be reconciled with the right of individual freedom. Along with the right to organize goes the right to strike, which is recognized in all private employment. The establishment of all these principles has no doubt been productive of industrial peace, which we are at the present time enjoying to a most unusual degree. This has been brought about by the general recognition that on the whole labor leaders are square, and on the whole employers intend to be fair. When this is the case, mutual conference is the best method of adjusting differences in private industry. Of course employment affecting public safety or public necessity is not private employment, and requires somewhat different treatment. In this field we have been making an interesting experiment in relation to railroad labor.[1]This has no doubt been a step in advance. It could probably be modified, through mutual agreement, to the benefit of all concerned.

As a result of all these fortunate circumstances, organized labor is fast becoming one of the powers of capital in this country. Its cooperative enterprises and its entrance into the field of banking and investment have given it not only a new power of influence, but a new point of view. It is learning the problems of enterprise and management by actual experience. This again is the working out of the American ideal in industry. It is the beginning of a more complete economic equality among all the people. I believe it to be the beginning of an era of better understanding, more sympathy, and more fellowship, among those who serve the common welfare through investment and management, and those who serve as wage earners. We have yet a long way to go, but progress has begun and the way lies open to a more complete understanding that will mark the end of industrial strife . . . .

These are some of the policies which I believe we should support, in order that our country may not fail in the character of the men and women which it produces. I want to see our institutions more and more humane. But I do not want to see any of the people cringing suppliants for the favor of the Government, when they should all be independent masters of their own destiny. I want to encourage business, that it may provide profitable employment. I want to see jobs hunting for men, rather than men hunting for jobs. I want the factory able to consume at a fair price the products of the farm. I want every

[1] *In 1924, President Coolidge urged railroad companies and unions to work together to reduce the threat of shutdowns due to striking workers. The result was the Railway Labor Act of 1926, which sought to use arbitration and mediation to settle disputes.*

individual, no matter how humble, to know that over him is the protection of public law. I want to raise the economic condition and increase the moral and spiritual well-being of our country. The foundation for a new era is being steadily and surely laid. Whether we shall enter upon it, depends upon the attitude of our fellow countrymen. I have an abiding faith in the American people.

Fireside Chat, Labor Day 1936

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Having just returned from a trip across nine states to see the effects of the then-ongoing Dust Bowl and drought, on September 6, 1936—two months before the next election, and with the country still in the midst of the Great Depression—President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) spoke directly to the American people in one his famous evening radio addresses. In his eighth "fireside chat," he acknowledges the nation's dire economic condition and outlines government relief efforts. Roosevelt also reminds "brain workers and manual workers" of their mutual reliance upon one another, urging Americans to join together to secure their "economic freedom"—just as our forefathers had fought to secure our "political freedom."

According to President Roosevelt, Labor Day is a national holiday, not a class holiday. Americans insist, he says, that the relation between employer and employee should be "one between free men and equals." Can you explain what he means by these claims? He ends by comparing Labor Day and the Fourth of July and by discussing the relation between economic freedom and political freedom. Which holiday—and which freedom—is more important for you as an American citizen?

Tomorrow is Labor Day. Labor Day in this country has never been a class holiday. It has always been a national holiday. It has never had more significance as a national holiday than it has now. In other countries the relationship of employer and employee has been more or less accepted as a class relationship not readily to be broken through. In this country we insist, as an essential of the American way of life, that the employer-employee relationship should be one between free men and equals. We refuse to regard those who work with hand or brain as different from or inferior to those who live from their property. We insist that labor is entitled to as much respect as property. But our workers with hand and brain deserve more than respect for their labor. They deserve practical protection in the opportunity to use their labor at a return adequate to support them at a decent and constantly rising standard of living, and to accumulate a margin of security against the inevitable vicissitudes of life.

The average man must have that twofold opportunity if we are to avoid the growth of a class-conscious society in this country.

There are those who fail to read both the signs of the times and American history. They would try to refuse the worker any effective power to bargain collectively, to earn a decent livelihood and to acquire security. It is those shortsighted ones, not labor, who threaten this country with that class dissension which in other countries has led to dictatorship and the establishment of fear and hatred as the dominant emotions in human life.

All American workers, brain workers and manual workers alike, and all the rest of us whose well-being depends on theirs, know that our needs are one in building an orderly economic democracy in which all can profit and in which all can be secure from the kind of faulty economic direction which brought us to the brink of common ruin seven years ago.

There is no cleavage between white-collar workers and manual workers, between artists and artisans, musicians and mechanics, lawyers and accountants and architects and miners.

Tomorrow, Labor Day, belongs to all of us. Tomorrow, Labor Day, symbolizes the hope of all Americans. Anyone who calls it a class holiday challenges the whole concept of American democracy.

The Fourth of July commemorates our political freedom—a freedom which without economic freedom is meaningless indeed. Labor Day symbolizes our determination to achieve an economic freedom for the average man which will give his political freedom reality.

2

Defending the Workers: The Role of Labor Unions

The Labor Movement in America

In 1768, before the United States was even a nation, a group of journeymen tailors working in New York went on strike to protest a wage reduction, marking the first time in American history that workers joined together in a common labor movement. Twenty-six years later, the first formal labor union was established in Philadelphia when shoemakers came together to form the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers. In 1805, the union workers went on strike in an effort to secure higher wages, but the union's leaders were indicted and convicted under criminal conspiracy charges and the strike collapsed.

Despite the failure of the union's strike, other craft labor unions soon began to form in cities across America. These unions, mainly composed of skilled workers, set prices for their members' work, defended their trade against cheaper, unskilled labor, and advocated for a shorter, ten-hour workday. These early unions pursued a relatively narrow strategy, focused on the immediate material interests of their members while largely ignoring broader social issues—or even labor issues affecting other unions and nonorganized unskilled workers. Their efforts typically took the form of small, local strikes in which key workers refused to work until the union's demands were met.

Beginning with the New York Workingmen's Party (founded in 1829), however, unions began to take on broader goals and work with one another to achieve them. In 1833, for example, carpenters in New York went on strike for higher wages and were supported throughout their strike by donations from other tradesmen. This cooperative strike led to the formation of the General Trades' Union of New York in the same year, formally bringing together delegates from nine different craft unions.

A central aim of these union organizations was the adoption of the eight-hour workday—a demand first voiced in Great Britain by Robert Owen in 1817 (the year before, he had pioneered a shorter workday by instituting a ten-hour day in his factories at New Lanark, Scotland). In America, Boston carpenters first achieved the eight-hour day in 1842, and Illinois passed a law in 1867 that, although largely ineffective, guaranteed workers in the state an eight-hour day. The following year, the US Congress granted federal workers the limited workday as well.

The Rise of National Labor Organizations

As the Civil War drew to a close, national labor organizations such as the National Labor Union (est. 1866) and the Knights of Labor (est. 1869) began to form, turning their attention to nationwide labor reform. The Knights of Labor, for instance, welcomed nearly all workers (with the exception of members of the professional classes, such as lawyers, bankers, and stockbrokers), and in the mid-1880s, as membership rose to nearly a million, led national strikes against the Union Pacific and Missouri Pacific railroad companies. In 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions—the precursor to the American Federation of Labor (AFL)—passed a resolution declaring that

"eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labour from and after May 1, 1886" and called on labor organizations across the country to host parades and strikes on that day.

Though hundreds of thousands of workers participated in these events, success was limited. The Knights' national railroad strike failed because the railroads were able to hire other unskilled workers to replace those on strike, and many of the skilled workers—such as the Brotherhood of Engineers—refused to strike altogether. The May Day strike of 1886 collapsed in the wake of the disastrous Haymarket Affair in Chicago. There, striking workers rallied outside the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company factory at the end of the workday on May 3, as strikebreakers (workers not participating in the strike) left the building. When strikers confronted these new workers, police gunfire erupted and killed at least two McCormick workers. In retaliation, local anarchists called a rally for the following day at the Haymarket Square. After a day of speeches by labor leaders, at about 10:30 p.m., the police sought to disperse the crowd, and an anonymous protester threw a homemade dynamite bomb in the path of the advancing police, killing seven policemen and wounding at least sixty men.

In response to the increasingly radical and violent character of the labor movement, union leaders met in December 1886 in Columbus, Ohio, to create an alliance organization with more moderate leadership than the Knights of Labor. Under the presidency of Samuel Gompers, head of the Cigarmakers' International Union, the American Federation of Labor rejected the radical politics of other labor activists and sought to work within the American economic system to seek reform. Because the AFL was mainly composed of craft unions, their collective bargaining efforts were much more successful than those attempted by the unskilled workers in the Knights of Labor.

Frustration with the slow pace of reform led some union leaders to adopt more aggressive methods. In May 1894, roughly 4,000 workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company began to strike to protest reductions to their wages. The American Railway Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, a future five-time Socialist Party of America candidate for president, supported the strikers by calling for railroad workers across the country to boycott any work involving Pullman train cars. By the end of June, 125,000 railroad workers had quit their jobs in protest, and railways across the nation were severely hindered by the strike. As railroad companies began hiring replacement workers, protesters became increasingly desperate, physically assaulting the strikebreakers and, in some cases, even derailing locomotives from their tracks and setting buildings on fire. The railroad companies turned to the federal government for help. President Grover Cleveland sent in 12,000 troops to break the strike—an action the AFL supported—and Debs himself was sent to prison and the American Railway Union was dissolved.

Labor Conditions Exposed

In the early 1900s, muckraker journalists and government officials began to expose the terrible working conditions faced by many day-laborers in American factories. Between 1902 and 1907, *The Factory Inspector*—the unofficial journal of the International Association of Factory Inspectors—recorded numerous cases of workers who were

burned alive by molten steel or of machinists who lost arms and legs in factory equipment. In a 1907 investigation of the steel industry, writer William B. Hard estimated that roughly 1,200 men—about 10 percent of the steel industry's workforce—were killed or injured each year on the job. Of these, fewer than 250 of the men or their families were compensated for the loss of life or limb.

Working conditions were often poor for women and children as well. According to a 1906 study by the Association of Neighborhood Workers, more than 130,000 women were working in roughly 39,000 factories in New York City. Although a city law capped the workweek for women at sixty hours (allotted over six days), nonenforcement of the statute was the norm, and employers remained confident that any government attempt to limit their employees' working hours would be held unconstitutional. Women and children frequently reported that if they refused to work overtime when their employer requested, they would be fired. At times, when garment producers received time-sensitive orders for new dresses and other clothing, the seamstresses would be held in the factories until the early morning hours to complete their part of the sewing.

In addition to working in garment mills, children were regularly employed in industrial factories, coal mines, newspapers, and, of course, on farms. By the year 1900, nearly 20 percent of American workers were under the age of sixteen, and in many southern cotton mills, a quarter of the workers were below the age of fifteen—and half of these were younger than twelve. In 1904, the *New York Times* estimated that nearly three million children ages ten to fifteen worked for wages every day. The National Child Labor Committee, formed in 1904, sought to raise awareness about the plight of working children. One of their first actions was to hire sociologist Lewis Wickes Hine to photograph child laborers. Hine's heart-wrenching portraits of young children working in coal mines, meatpacking houses, textile mills, and other industries did much to advance the cause of child labor reform and led to the establishment of a Children's Bureau in both the US Department of Commerce and the US Department of Labor.

Tragedy and Reform

In 1909 and 1910, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union organized strikes by New York City's garment workers and cloakmakers to protest the sweatshop conditions, long hours, and low pay. These strikes, involving roughly 80,000 workers—mostly immigrant women—were largely successful, and working conditions were set to improve in much of the industry. Although the strikes of 1909 and 1910 were a watershed moment for the labor movement, the new protections were difficult to enforce and many workers continued to labor in dehumanizing and dangerous conditions.

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, the story of the American laborer arguably took its most tragic turn when someone dropped a match or a burning cigarette onto a heap of fabric on the floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Within minutes, the entire building was engulfed in flames. Because many of the doors on the building's eighth and ninth floors were locked, 146 women were either consumed in the fire or jumped from the building to their deaths. Although the owners of the Triangle Waist

Company were put on trial and eventually acquitted of wrongdoing (the prosecution was unable to prove they knew the doors were locked), the horrifying memory of the fire and its victims convinced Americans as never before of the need for more vigorous labor reforms.

In 1914, Congress passed the Clayton Antitrust Act, which for the first time specifically provided safe harbor under the law for union activities, including boycotts, peaceful strikes, picketing, and collective bargaining. Also in 1914, the Ford Motor Company shifted its workers to the eight-hour workday—a decision many of its competitors soon followed. Two years later, in the first federal act legislating hours worked by employees of private companies, Congress passed the Adamson Act, establishing an eight-hour day for all railroad workers. After years of lobbying by the National Child Labor Committee and the National Consumers League, in 1916, Congress passed the Keating-Owen Act, which sought to curtail child labor by prohibiting the interstate commerce of goods made in factories in which children were employed. This act, however, was struck down two years later by the Supreme Court, and it would be another twenty years before the federal government succeeded in limiting child labor.

Following a decline in labor union participation in the 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s forced businesses to lay off many workers and curtail the benefits that labor had won for employees. As the Depression dragged on, workers continued to lose confidence in the promises of private employers, and they once again turned to the government for assistance. In the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed through Congress his New Deal package to provide aid to workers—including the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which for the first time established a national minimum wage, severely curtailed and regulated many forms of child labor, and guaranteed "time and a half" pay for any time worked beyond the newly-established eight-hour day. It was this act that fulfilled many of the foundational aims that America's organized labor movements had been working toward since the beginning of the nation's history.

World War II and Beyond

World War II fueled another upswing in labor activity, with union membership nearly doubling between 1940 and 1945 as Americans—including women—went to the factories to produce war goods. Labor unions continued to grow in the 1950s, creating a quarter-century-long "golden age" in which workers' wages grew steadily and union workers earned an average of 20 percent more than their nonunion counterparts. Labor leaders like John L. Lewis (United Mine Workers of America), James "Jimmy" Hoffa (International Brotherhood of Teamsters), George Meany and Lane Kirkland (American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations), and Walter Reuther (United Automobile Workers) became household names, leading a labor movement that by 1953 included nearly a third of America's private-sector workers. The movement won another victory in 1962 when President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10988, allowing, for the first time, the creation of public-sector unions in the federal government.

The post-war labor movement was not without its fights, however. In 1947, following an active year of post-war strikes involving more than five million American workers, Congress overrode President Harry S. Truman's veto and passed the Taft-Hartley Act, limiting as "unfair labor practices" certain types of strikes, picketing, and boycotts by unions. Five years later, in the midst of the Korean War, when the United Steelworkers of America led a strike, President Truman nationalized the steel industry in order to prevent a stoppage. The case soon reached the Supreme Court, which ruled that the president did not have the authority to seize the steel mills. On August 3, 1981, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization declared a strike, demanding better pay and a thirty-two-hour workweek. That afternoon, President Ronald Reagan warned the strikers that they were "in violation of the law and [that] if they do not report for work within forty-eight hours they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated." Two days later, with only 10 percent of the striking workers having returned, the president fired 11,345 air traffic controllers, banning them from federal service for life.

Although organized labor is still a political force, recent decades have seen a decline in the frequency and duration of major strikes and other public actions, as well as a decline in the percentage of Americans who belong to labor unions. (In 2011, only 12 percent of American workers did—and only 7 percent of private-sector workers.)

This short history provides useful background for the selections that follow, each of which illustrates concretely and powerfully some of the evils against which organized labor did battle—in the end, largely successfully.

Labor Speaks

UNKNOWN WORKER

This poem of unknown origin (c. 1909) was used by the Industrial Workers of the World (also known as the Wobblies) to encourage laborers to join the cause and "ask for [their] due."

The poet, speaking for all workers ("I am Labor"), asserts sole responsibility for the creation of all material progress in America. How do you respond to these claims? To what extent are they justifiable? What about the role of inventors, architects, and investors? What is Labor's "due"?

I built your ships and your railroads,
And worked in your factories and mines;
I built the good roads that you ride on,
And crushed your ripe grapes into wine.

I built the fine house that you live in,
And gathered the grain for your bread;
I worked late at nights on your garments,
And printed the fine books that you read.

I linked two great oceans together,
And spanned your rivers with steel,
I built your towering skyscrapers,
And also your automobile.

Wherever there is progress you will find me,
For the world without me could not live,
And yet you seek to destroy me
With the meager pittance you give.

I am master of field and of factories,
I am mighty and you are but few,
So, no longer will I bow into submission,
I am Labor and I ask for my due.

Triangle Memorial Speech

ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN

On March 25, 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City erupted in flames when a pile of fabric caught fire. When locked factory doors made escape impossible, 146 women perished in the fire. At a memorial meeting held in the Metropolitan Opera House on April 2, Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972), the founder of the Jewish Socialist United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union and a key leader in the strikes by New York's women workers, memorably expressed the anger many felt at the plight of the American worker. Schneiderman was later elected president of the New York Women's Trade Union League and was the only woman to serve on Franklin D. Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration Labor Advisory Board.

What does Schneiderman mean by comparing the machines and conditions of the modern factory to the instruments of torture of the Inquisition? What means does she advocate for attaining better and safer conditions for the workers? What is a "strong working-class movement"? And how does Schneiderman see its relation to the rest of American society ("you good people of the public")?

I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting.

The old Inquisition had its rack and its thumbscrews and its instruments of torture with iron teeth. We know what these things are today; the iron teeth are our necessities, the thumbscrews are the high-powered and swift machinery close to which we must work, and the rack is here in the firetrap structures that will destroy us the minute they catch on fire.

This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death.

We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers, brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us.

Public officials have only words of warning to us—warning that we must be intensely peaceable, and they have the workhouse just back of all their warnings. The strong hand of the law beats us back, when we rise, into the conditions that make life unbearable.

I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.

A Groundhog's Death

JACK CONROY

Jack Conroy (1898–1990) was a "worker-writer" best known for his contributions—both fiction and nonfiction—about the life of the American worker during the early decades of the twentieth century. Born to Irish immigrants in a coal-mining camp in Moberly, Missouri, Conroy lost his father and a brother in work accidents. As a young man, he worked at different times as a railroad foreman, auto factory worker, construction worker, and secretary for the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America. He drew upon these searing personal experiences in his writing—and in this essay, first published in The New Masses *in 1937, which looks at the hazards faced by mine workers.*

What is "a groundhog," and what is implied by the use of this name? What does the story suggest is the relation between the tragedy of the Moberly mine and the way it is reported to and received by the larger world? How do you respond to Conroy's story? Can mining the earth ever be made completely safe?

> Near the little town of Moberly
> In Dear Old Missouri State
> There four brave miners labored
> And their lives were all at stake;
> It was in the month of August
> On one Tuesday afternoon
> That they were all imprisoned
> There within this gassy tomb.
>
> *—from "The Moberly Mine Disaster," composed by Carl Haden and sung by him from Station WIBW, Topeka, Kan.*

The lean old miners of Moberly remember the good old days when the U.M.W.A. [United Mine Workers of America] was strong and the veins of coal rich and deep, free from soapstone and sulphur. It's hard to make a mine pay these days. Most of the rich and high veins have been gutted long ago, and in the slope mines you have to wriggle on your belly in pursuit of the dwindling streaks, pushing a low, flat car before you or dragging it behind you. Two years ago there was an attempt at a revival of the union. The deep shaft and slope diggers marched on the strip mine, intending to sign it up or close it down. But the militia was there with modern machine guns, tear gas, and trucks that could tear up and down the roads lickety-split. The miners had only pick handles and stones.

Last summer Ed Stoner opened an abandoned shaft near Moberly. He couldn't afford the proper fans, air shafts, and so on, but the state mine inspector and his deputies, lenient fellows, knew that enforcing the safety regulations would mean the closing of most small

mines. In some of the hollows nobody had seen hide nor hair of a mine inspector for years. So the groundhogs were not bothered.

Ed Stoner hired Jack McCann, Demmer Sexton, George Dameron, and another fellow to help him. They wouldn't get rich, but they might sell enough of the coal to buy cornbread on week days, sow tits and hominy on Sundays.

The old mine was full of gas and falling in where the timbering had rotted away, but McCann and Sexton were experienced miners, knew when to jump from beneath a falling rock, could tell where the deadly pockets of white damp and black damp gas might be located. The miners did need, most of all, a barrel of water to set on the tipple, for the wheezing Buick engine used in hoisting belched sparks that lived an ominous length of time on the greasy planks. Stoner didn't have the $1.65 required to fill the barrel, so there was no use worrying one's head over it.

On the afternoon of August 17 the tipple caught fire and the shaft caved in with Stoner, McCann, Sexton, and Dameron entombed a hundred feet below the grass roots; the other man, who was operating the hoist, spread the alarm.

> Their friends and loved ones labored
> Thru the night the same as day,
> Trying to move the mighty timbers
> And clear the stumps away
> To save the lives of their beloved ones,
> This was their battle's aim;
> They knew well that those embedded
> If were them would do the same.

Before another twenty-four hours had passed, thousands of people had gathered around the caved-in shaft. Many of them were experienced miners, and they set to digging in an abandoned airshaft with only a short distance to go until the main shaft could be reached. When the state mine inspector arrived, he decided it was too dangerous to dig any longer in the airshaft. The main shaft must be dug out, said the inspector, and he was *giving* orders, not *taking* them. Movie cameramen arrived, the rescuers having to stumble over them and push them out of the way. Newspapermen darted about like beetles on a mill pond. C.C.C. [Civilian Conservation Corps] boys directed traffic; the American Legion served sandwiches and coffee. Enterprising boys hawked soda pop from tubs in which chunks of ice were floating. The state mine inspector read prepared manuscripts over the radio. He posed in a tub for the benefit of the sound cameras, and told his men he was descending into perhaps deadly damps but he insisted upon taking the first risk. There was almost no chance the men below would be unearthed alive, he said.

All this time the old-timers who had flocked in with their tools from every camp within a score of miles cursed loudly and bitterly. There were muttered threats of pushing

the inspector down the shaft, or at least knocking him cold so that the work might proceed without wasted time in grandstanding for the newspapers, radio, and movies.

> There were dear old gray-haired mothers.
> All their heads in sorrow hung,
> Awaiting news from down below them
> Of their own, beloved sons.
> Three long days and nights they waited
> Until Friday afternoon
> When the rescue parties entered,
> Found that two had met their doom.

A newspaper man is calling in to Kansas City over the phone line strung through the scrub-oak brush to a rural line half a mile away. The rewrite man on the other end is both sore and playful, insists upon playing knock! knock! "Aw right," says the youth covering the mine disaster, "Who's there? . . . Sheba who? . . . Now, listen, Ches . . . Hey!" Jiggling the receiver hook. "Hey, Ches! Get some of this color here. A truck pulling the tub up and down. Pulley on a tripod over the hole. Guess you'd call it a tripod . . . Three legs, yeah, and made of telephone poles. Yeah! Yeah! . . . Listen, grimy fiends in an inferno toiling like mad . . . Tub comes up, exhausted men step out, are quickly replaced by a new crew . . . Got it? Okay! . . . Mothers, wives, and sweethearts, clutching shawls around their throats, babies clinging to their skirts. No babies clinging to the sweethearts' skirts? That's what *you* think. Okay, for our refined readers, no babies a-holt of sweethearts' skirts . . . Go to hell, you bastard! Maybe I ain't pooped out, too; my tail is dragging my tracks out . . . Torches like fireflies in the brush, like a lynching scene, like a, what-ya-call-it, Walpurgee Night, look that up and check on it . . . Hey, you bastard! Hey, Ches, for Chrissakes! Okay! Okay! Who's there? . . . Frieda who? . . . This is the last one, now. I'm gonna take my step-ins and go home, the party's gettin' too rough . . . Something in the air here, see? Tenseness, determination, the will of men of iron, dark men out of the womb of Mother Earth . . . Listen, Ches! Hey! Hey!" Jiggling the hook and scratching his behind . . . .

* * *

On a mound of soapstone and slag beside the shaft, movie cameramen and newspaper men and women are rolling in the gray dust, heads jerking with drowsiness. They reach for gin and cigarettes, swear piteously. There is a blonde bedraggled sob-sister snoring on the flat of her back, legs wide apart, skirts high. Every time a party of rescue workers ascend in the tub, they sweep her with a glance. The rescuers work silently but swiftly.

There is an ambulance-hearse waiting, and inside it is a pile of the brightly artificial grass used to disguise raw grave mounds. The green stuff looks queer among the blasted buck brush and scrub oaks. The dead wagon is needed for two of the men when they're finally brought up. McCann is able to wave to the madly cheering crowd. Sexton is unconscious but alive. Stoner and Dameron have been dead since a few hours after the cave-in.

Another one had fell unconscious
Only one had stood the test
Even Spot, their faithful pony,
Lay beside them, cold in death.
And so must we all heed warning
All precautions we must take
And get right with our Dear Maker
Now before it is too late.

The people around Moberly collected about $600 for McCann, Sexton, and the widows of Stoner and Dameron. McCann spoke at a few of the small theaters, but the story was soon an old one that no one would pay a cent to hear about. Sexton and McCann have bad lungs from the gas and exposure, and the hospital bills were high. A week or so after the Moberly mine disaster, four brothers were entombed near Fulton, and all of them killed. The state mine inspector has issued a warning that all safety regulations must be strictly observed from now on. But other groundhogs are working in perilous holes in the hollows around Moberly. How in the world is a man who has been a miner all his life going to eat if he doesn’t dig coal? How are the small operators to observe the regulations? The mine inspectors are good fellows, men of understanding, and most of them have been miners at one time or other. They won’t make it too hard on a man who has to root hog or die.

The Apostate: A Child Labor Parable

JACK LONDON

Perhaps most famous for his writing on the Klondike Gold Rush, Jack London (1876–1916) also wrote much about his experience working in factories as a child. Born illegitimate and poor, he was sent to work at the age of eight, and by age fourteen was working twelve-hour days at a cannery for ten cents an hour. After spending seven months as a seaman aboard a ship, London returned to the factory—this time, a jute mill—where he quickly became disenchanted, later writing that "despite my increase in strength and general efficiency, I was receiving no more than when I worked in the cannery several years before." This vivid account of child labor was published in Woman's Home Companion *in 1906.*

Collecting as many details as you can, describe Johnny (his appearance, his mind, his hopes and aspirations) and his life at home and at work. Examine the meaning of these descriptions of him: "perfect worker . . . perfect machine," "patient little angel," "worked faithful," "machine consciousness." Why does he finally quit work and leave home? Can you understand his "inordinate hunger for rest"? Why does his mother regard him as an "Apostate"? Do you have any sympathy for her? What makes this story a parable? A child labor *parable? What thoughts and feelings does this parable evoke in you?*

> *Now I wake me up to work;*
> *I pray the Lord I may not shirk.*
> *If I should die before the night,*
> *I pray the Lord my work's all right.*
> *Amen.*

"If you don't git up, Johnny, I won't give you a bite to eat!"

The threat had no effect on the boy. He clung stubbornly to sleep, fighting for its oblivion as the dreamer fights for his dream. The boy's hands loosely clenched themselves, and he made feeble, spasmodic blows at the air. These blows were intended for his mother, but she betrayed practised familiarity in avoiding them as she shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Lemme 'lone!"

It was a cry that began, muffled, in the deeps of sleep, that swiftly rushed upward, like a wail, into passionate belligerence, and that died away and sank down into an inarticulate whine. It was a bestial cry, as of a soul in torment, filled with infinite protest and pain.

But she did not mind. She was a sad-eyed, tired-faced woman, and she had grown used to this task, which she repeated every day of her life. She got a grip on the bed-clothes and tried to strip them down; but the boy, ceasing his punching, clung to them

desperately. In a huddle, at the foot of the bed, he still remained covered. Then she tried dragging the bedding to the floor. The boy opposed her. She braced herself. Hers was the superior weight, and the boy and bedding gave, the former instinctively following the latter in order to shelter against the chill of the room that bit into his body.

As he toppled on the edge of the bed it seemed that he must fall head-first to the floor. But consciousness fluttered up in him. He righted himself and for a moment perilously balanced. Then he struck the floor on his feet. On the instant his mother seized him by the shoulders and shook him. Again his fists struck out, this time with more force and directness. At the same time his eyes opened. She released him. He was awake.

"All right," he mumbled.

She caught up the lamp and hurried out, leaving him in darkness.

"You'll be docked," she warned back to him.

He did not mind the darkness. When he had got into his clothes, he went out into the kitchen. His tread was very heavy for so thin and light a boy. His legs dragged with their own weight, which seemed unreasonable because they were such skinny legs. He drew a broken-bottomed chair to the table.

"Johnny!" his mother called sharply.

He arose as sharply from the chair, and, without a word, went to the sink. It was a greasy, filthy sink. A smell came up from the outlet. He took no notice of it. That a sink should smell was to him part of the natural order, just as it was a part of the natural order that the soap should be grimy with dish-water and hard to lather. Nor did he try very hard to make it lather. Several splashes of the cold water from the running faucet completed the function. He did not wash his teeth. For that matter he had never seen a tooth-brush, nor did he know that there existed beings in the world who were guilty of so great a foolishness as tooth washing.

"You might wash yourself wunst a day without bein' told," his mother complained

She was holding a broken lid on the pot as she poured two cups of coffee. He made no remark, for this was a standing quarrel between them, and the one thing upon which his mother was hard as adamant. "Wunst" a day it was compulsory that he should wash his face. He dried himself on a greasy towel, damp and dirty and ragged, that left his face covered with shreds of lint.

"I wish we didn't live so far away," she said, as he sat down. "I try to do the best I can. You know that. But a dollar on the rent is such a savin', an' we've more room here. You know that."

He scarcely followed her. He had heard it all before, many times. The range of her thought was limited, and she was ever harking back to the hardship worked upon them by living so far from the mills.

"A dollar means more grub," he remarked sententiously. "I'd sooner do the walkin' an' git the grub."

He ate hurriedly, half chewing the bread and washing the unmasticated chunks down with coffee. The hot and muddy liquid went by the name of coffee. Johnny thought it was coffee—and excellent coffee. That was one of the few of life's illusions that remained to him. He had never drunk real coffee in his life.

In addition to the bread, there was a small piece of cold pork. His mother refilled his cup with coffee. As he was finishing the bread, he began to watch if more was forthcoming. She intercepted his questioning glance.

"Now, don't be hoggish, Johnny," was her comment. "You've had your share. Your brothers an' sisters are smaller'n you."

He did not answer the rebuke. He was not much of a talker. Also, he ceased his hungry glancing for more. He was uncomplaining, with a patience that was as terrible as the school in which it had been learned. He finished his coffee, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and started to rise.

"Wait a second," she said hastily. "I guess the loaf kin stand you another slice—a thin un."

There was legerdemain in her actions. With all the seeming of cutting a slice from the loaf for him, she put loaf and slice back in the bread box and conveyed to him one of her own two slices. She believed she had deceived him, but he had noted her sleight-of-hand. Nevertheless, he took the bread shamelessly. He had a philosophy that his mother, what of her chronic sickliness, was not much of an eater anyway.

She saw that he was chewing the bread dry, and reached over and emptied her coffee cup into his.

"Don't set good somehow on my stomach this morning," she explained.

A distant whistle, prolonged and shrieking, brought both of them to their feet. She glanced at the tin alarm-clock on the shelf. The hands stood at half-past five. The rest of the factory world was just arousing from sleep. She drew a shawl about her shoulders, and on her head put a dingy hat, shapeless and ancient.

"We've got to run," she said, turning the wick of the lamp and blowing down the chimney.

They groped their way out and down the stairs. It was clear and cold, and Johnny shivered at the first contact with the outside air. The stars had not yet begun to pale in the sky, and the city lay in blackness. Both Johnny and his mother shuffled their feet as they walked. There was no ambition in the leg muscles to swing the feet clear of the ground.

After fifteen silent minutes, his mother turned off to the right.

“Don’t be late,” was her final warning from out of the dark that was swallowing her up.

He made no response, steadily keeping on his way. In the factory quarter, doors were opening everywhere, and he was soon one of a multitude that pressed onward through the dark. As he entered the factory gate the whistle blew again. He glanced at the east. Across a ragged sky-line of housetops a pale light was beginning to creep. This much he saw of the day as he turned his back upon it and joined his work gang.

He took his place in one of many long rows of machines. Before him, above a bin filled with small bobbins, were large bobbins revolving rapidly. Upon these he wound the jute-twine of the small bobbins. The work was simple. All that was required was celerity. The small bobbins were emptied so rapidly, and there were so many large bobbins that did the emptying, that there were no idle moments.

He worked mechanically. When a small bobbin ran out, he used his left hand for a brake, stopping the large bobbin and at the same time, with thumb and forefinger, catching the flying end of twine. Also, at the same time, with his right hand, he caught up the loose twine-end of a small bobbin. These various acts with both hands were performed simultaneously and swiftly. Then there would come a flash of his hands as he looped the weaver’s knot and released the bobbin. There was nothing difficult about weaver’s knots. He once boasted he could tie them in his sleep. And for that matter, he sometimes did, toiling centuries long in a single night at tying an endless succession of weaver’s knots.

Some of the boys shirked, wasting time and machinery by not replacing the small bobbins when they ran out. And there was an overseer to prevent this. He caught Johnny’s neighbor at the trick, and boxed his ears.

“Look at Johnny there—why ain’t you like him?” the overseer wrathfully demanded.

Johnny’s bobbins were running full blast, but he did not thrill at the indirect praise. There had been a time . . . but that was long ago, very long ago. His apathetic face was expressionless as he listened to himself being held up as a shining example. He was the perfect worker. He knew that. He had been told so, often. It was a commonplace, and besides it didn’t seem to mean anything to him any more. From the perfect worker he had evolved into the perfect machine. When his work went wrong, it was with him as with the machine, due to faulty material. It would have been as possible for a perfect nail-die to cut imperfect nails as for him to make a mistake.

And small wonder. There had never been a time when he had not been in intimate relationship with machines. Machinery had almost been bred into him, and at any rate he had been brought up on it. Twelve years before, there had been a small flutter of excitement in the loom room of this very mill. Johnny's mother had fainted. They stretched her out on the floor in the midst of the shrieking machines. A couple of elderly women were called from their looms. The foreman assisted. And in a few minutes there was one more soul in the loom room than had entered by the doors. It was Johnny, born with the pounding, crashing roar of the looms in his ears, drawing with his first breath the warm, moist air that was thick with flying lint. He had coughed that first day in order to rid his lungs of the lint; and for the same reason he had coughed ever since.

The boy alongside of Johnny whimpered and sniffed. The boy's face was convulsed with hatred for the overseer who kept a threatening eye on him from a distance; but every bobbin was running full. The boy yelled terrible oaths into the whirling bobbins before him; but the sound did not carry half a dozen feet, the roaring of the room holding it in and containing it like a wall.

Of all this Johnny took no notice. He had a way of accepting things. Besides, things grow monotonous by repetition, and this particular happening he had witnessed many times. It seemed to him as useless to oppose the overseer as to defy the will of a machine. Machines were made to go in certain ways and to perform certain tasks. It was the same with the overseer.

But at eleven o'clock there was excitement in the room. In an apparently occult way the excitement instantly permeated everywhere. The one-legged boy who worked on the other side of Johnny bobbed swiftly across the floor to a bin truck that stood empty. Into this he dived out of sight, crutch and all. The superintendent of the mill was coming along, accompanied by a young man. He was well dressed and wore a starched shirt—a gentleman, in Johnny's classification of men, and also, "the Inspector."

He looked sharply at the boys as he passed along. Sometimes he stopped and asked questions. When he did so, he was compelled to shout at the top of his lungs, at which moments his face was ludicrously contorted with the strain of making himself heard. His quick eye noted the empty machine alongside of Johnny's, but he said nothing. Johnny also caught his eye, and he stopped abruptly. He caught Johnny by the arm to draw him back a step from the machine; but with an exclamation of surprise he released the arm.

"Pretty skinny," the superintendent laughed anxiously.

"Pipe stems," was the answer. "Look at those legs. The boy's got the rickets—incipient, but he's got them. If epilepsy doesn't get him in the end, it will be because tuberculosis gets him first."

Johnny listened, but did not understand. Furthermore he was not interested in future ills. There was an immediate and more serious ill that threatened him in the form of the inspector.

“Now, my boy, I want you to tell me the truth,” the inspector said, or shouted, bending close to the boy’s ear to make him hear. “How old are you?”

“Fourteen,” Johnny lied, and he lied with the full force of his lungs. So loudly did he lie that it started him off in a dry, hacking cough that lifted the lint which had been settling in his lungs all morning.

“Looks sixteen at least,” said the superintendent.

“Or sixty,” snapped the inspector.

“He’s always looked that way.”

“How long?” asked the inspector, quickly.

“For years. Never gets a bit older.”

“Or younger, I dare say. I suppose he’s worked here all those years?”

“Off and on—but that was before the new law was passed,” the superintendent hastened to add. “Machine idle?” the inspector asked, pointing at the unoccupied machine beside Johnny’s, in which the part-filled bobbins were flying like mad.

“Looks that way.” The superintendent motioned the overseer to him and shouted in his ear and pointed at the machine. “Machine’s idle,” he reported back to the inspector.

They passed on, and Johnny returned to his work, relieved in that the ill had been averted. But the one-legged boy was not so fortunate. The sharp-eyed inspector haled him out at arm’s length from the bin truck. His lips were quivering, and his face had all the expression of one upon whom was fallen profound and irremediable disaster. The overseer looked astounded, as though for the first time he had laid eyes on the boy, while the superintendent’s face expressed shock and displeasure.

“I know him,” the inspector said. “He’s twelve years old. I’ve had him discharged from three factories inside the year. This makes the fourth.”

He turned to the one-legged boy. “You promised me, word and honor, that you’d go to school.”

The one-legged boy burst into tears. “Please, Mr. Inspector, two babies died on us, and we’re awful poor.”

“What makes you cough that way?” the inspector demanded, as though charging him with crime.

And as in denial of guilt, the one-legged boy replied: “It ain’t nothin’. I jes’ caught a cold last week, Mr. Inspector, that’s all.”

In the end the one-legged boy went out of the room with the inspector, the latter accompanied by the anxious and protesting superintendent. After that monotony settled down again. The long morning and the longer afternoon wore away and the whistle blew for quitting time. Darkness had already fallen when Johnny passed out through the factory gate. In the interval the sun had made a golden ladder of the sky, flooded the world with its gracious warmth, and dropped down and disappeared in the west behind a ragged sky-line of housetops.

Supper was the family meal of the day—the one meal at which Johnny encountered his younger brothers and sisters. It partook of the nature of an encounter, to him, for he was very old, while they were distressingly young. He had no patience with their excessive and amazing juvenility. He did not understand it. His own childhood was too far behind him. He was like an old and irritable man, annoyed by the turbulence of their young spirits that was to him arrant silliness. He glowered silently over his food, finding compensation in the thought that they would soon have to go to work. That would take the edge off of them and make them sedate and dignified—like him. Thus it was, after the fashion of the human, that Johnny made of himself a yardstick with which to measure the universe.

During the meal, his mother explained in various ways and with infinite repetition that she was trying to do the best she could; so that it was with relief, the scant meal ended, that Johnny shoved back his chair and arose. He debated for a moment between bed and the front door, and finally went out the latter. He did not go far. He sat down on the stoop, his knees drawn up and his narrow shoulders drooping forward, his elbows on his knees and the palms of his hands supporting his chin. As he sat there, he did no thinking. He was just resting. So far as his mind was concerned, it was asleep. His brothers and sisters came out, and with other children played noisily about him. An electric globe on the corner lighted their frolics. He was peevish and irritable, that they knew; but the spirit of adventure lured them into teasing him. They joined hands before him, and, keeping time with their bodies, chanted in his face weird and uncomplimentary doggerel. At first he snarled curses at them—curses he had learned from the lips of various foremen. Finding this futile, and remembering his dignity, he relapsed into dogged silence.

His brother Will, next to him in age, having just passed his tenth birthday, was the ring-leader. Johnny did not possess particularly kindly feelings toward him. His life had early been embittered by continual giving over and giving way to Will. He had a definite feeling that Will was greatly in his debt and was ungrateful about it. In his own playtime, far back in the dim past, he had been robbed of a large part of that playtime by being compelled to take care of Will. Will was a baby then, and then, as now, their mother had spent her days in the mills. To Johnny had fallen the part of little father and little mother as well.

Will seemed to show the benefit of the giving over and the giving way. He was well-built, fairly rugged, as tall as his elder brother and even heavier. It was as though the life-blood of the one had been diverted into the other’s veins. And in spirits it was the same. Johnny was jaded, worn out, without resilience, while his younger brother seemed bursting and spilling over with exuberance.

The mocking chant rose louder and louder. Will leaned closer as he danced, thrusting out his tongue. Johnny’s left arm shot out and caught the other around the neck. At the same time he rapped his bony fist to the other’s nose. It was a pathetically bony fist, but that it was sharp to hurt was evidenced by the squeal of pain it produced. The other children were uttering frightened cries, while Johnny’s sister, Jennie, had dashed into the house.

He thrust Will from him, kicked him savagely on the shins, then reached for him and slammed him face downward in the dirt. Nor did he release him till the face had been rubbed into the dirt several times. Then the mother arrived, an anaemic whirlwind of solicitude and maternal wrath.

“Why can’t he leave me alone?” was Johnny’s reply to her upbraiding. “Can’t he see I’m tired?”

“I’m as big as you,” Will raged in her arms, his face a mess of tears, dirt, and blood. “I’m as big as you now, an’ I’m goin’ to git bigger. Then I’ll lick you—see if I don’t.”

“You ought to be to work, seein’ how big you are,” Johnny snarled. “That’s what’s the matter with you. You ought to be to work. An’ it’s up to your ma to put you to work.”

“But he’s too young,” she protested. “He’s only a little boy.”

“I was younger’n him when I started to work.”

Johnny’s mouth was open, further to express the sense of unfairness that he felt, but the mouth closed with a snap. He turned gloomily on his heel and stalked into the house and to bed. The door of his room was open to let in warmth from the kitchen. As he undressed in the semi-darkness he could hear his mother talking with a neighbor woman who had dropped in. His mother was crying, and her speech was punctuated with spiritless sniffles.

“I can’t make out what’s gittin’ into Johnny,” he could hear her say. “He didn’t used to be this way. He was a patient little angel.

“An’ he *is* a good boy,” she hastened to defend. “He’s worked faithful, an’ he did go to work too young. But it wasn’t my fault. I do the best I can, I’m sure.”

Prolonged sniffling from the kitchen, and Johnny murmured to himself as his eyelids closed down, “You betcher life I’ve worked faithful.”

The next morning he was torn bodily by his mother from the grip of sleep. Then came the meagre breakfast, the tramp through the dark, and the pale glimpse of day across the housetops as he turned his back on it and went in through the factory gate. It was another day, of all the days, and all the days were alike.

And yet there had been variety in his life—at the times he changed from one job to another, or was taken sick. When he was six, he was little mother and father to Will and the other children still younger. At seven he went into the mills—winding bobbins. When he was eight, he got work in another mill. His new job was marvelously easy. All he had to do was to sit down with a little stick in his hand and guide a stream of cloth that flowed past him. This stream of cloth came out of the maw of a machine, passed over a hot roller, and went on its way elsewhere. But he sat always in the one place, beyond the reach of daylight, a gas-jet flaring over him, himself part of the mechanism.

He was very happy at that job, in spite of the moist heat, for he was still young and in possession of dreams and illusions. And wonderful dreams he dreamed as he watched the streaming cloth streaming endlessly by. But there was no exercise about the work, no call upon his mind, and he dreamed less and less, while his mind grew torpid and drowsy. Nevertheless, he earned two dollars a week, and two dollars represented the difference between acute starvation and chronic underfeeding.

But when he was nine, he lost his job. Measles was the cause of it. After he recovered, he got work in a glass factory. The pay was better, and the work demanded skill. It was piece-work, and the more skilful he was, the bigger wages he earned. Here was incentive. And under this incentive he developed into a remarkable worker.

It was simple work, the tying of glass stoppers into small bottles. At his waist he carried a bundle of twine. He held the bottles between his knees so that he might work with both hands. Thus, in a sitting position and bending over his own knees, his narrow shoulders grew humped and his chest was contracted for ten hours each day. This was not good for the lungs, but he tied three hundred dozen bottles a day.

The superintendent was very proud of him, and brought visitors to look at him. In ten hours three hundred dozen bottles passed through his hands. This meant that he had attained machine-like perfection. All waste movements were eliminated. Every motion of his thin arms, every movement of a muscle in the thin fingers, was swift and accurate. He worked at high tension, and the result was that he grew nervous. At night his muscles twitched in his sleep, and in the daytime he could not relax and rest. He remained keyed up and his muscles continued to twitch. Also he grew sallow and his lint-cough grew worse. Then pneumonia laid hold of the feeble lungs within the contracted chest, and he lost his job in the glass-works.

Now he had returned to the jute mills where he had first begun with winding bobbins. But promotion was waiting for him. He was a good worker. He would next go on the starcher, and later he would go into the loom room. There was nothing after that except increased efficiency.

The machinery ran faster than when he had first gone to work, and his mind ran slower. He no longer dreamed at all, though his earlier years had been full of dreaming. Once he had been in love. It was when he first began guiding the cloth over the hot roller, and it was with the daughter of the superintendent. She was much older than he, a young woman, and he had seen her at a distance only a paltry half-dozen times. But that made no difference. On the surface of the cloth stream that poured past him, he pictured radiant futures wherein he performed prodigies of toil, invented miraculous machines, won to the mastership of the mills, and in the end took her in his arms and kissed her soberly on the brow.

But that was all in the long ago, before he had grown too old and tired to love. Also, she had married and gone away, and his mind had gone to sleep. Yet it had been a wonderful experience, and he used often to look back upon it as other men and women look back upon the time they believed in fairies. He had never believed in fairies nor Santa Claus; but he had believed implicitly in the smiling future his imagination had wrought into the steaming cloth stream.

He had become a man very early in life. At seven, when he drew his first wages, began his adolescence. A certain feeling of independence crept up in him, and the relationship between him and his mother changed. Somehow, as an earner and breadwinner, doing his own work in the world, he was more like an equal with her. Manhood, full-blown manhood, had come when he was eleven, at which time he had gone to work on the night shift for six months. No child works on the night shift and remains a child.

There had been several great events in his life. One of these had been when his mother bought some California prunes. Two others had been the two times when she cooked custard. Those had been events. He remembered them kindly. And at that time his mother had told him of a blissful dish she would sometime make—“floating island,” she had called it, “better than custard.” For years he had looked forward to the day when he would sit down to the table with floating island before him, until at last he had relegated the idea of it to the limbo of unattainable ideals.

Once he found a silver quarter lying on the sidewalk. That, also, was a great event in his life, withal a tragic one. He knew his duty on the instant the silver flashed on his eyes, before even he had picked it up. At home, as usual, there was not enough to eat, and home he should have taken it as he did his wages every Saturday night. Right conduct in this case was obvious; but he never had any spending of his money, and he was suffering from candy hunger. He was ravenous for the sweets that only on red-letter days he had ever tasted in his life.

He did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew it was sin, and deliberately he sinned when he went on a fifteen-cent candy debauch. Ten cents he saved for a future orgy; but not being accustomed to the carrying of money, he lost the ten cents. This occurred at the time when he was suffering all the torments of conscience, and it was to him an act of divine retribution. He had a frightened sense of the closeness of an awful and wrathful

God. God had seen, and God had been swift to punish, denying him even the full wages of sin.

In memory he always looked back upon that event as the one great criminal deed of his life, and at the recollection his conscience always awoke and gave him another twinge. It was the one skeleton in his closet. Also, being so made and circumstanced, he looked back upon the deed with regret. He was dissatisfied with the manner in which he had spent the quarter. He could have invested it better, and, out of his later knowledge of the quickness of God, he would have beaten God out by spending the whole quarter at one fell swoop. In retrospect he spent the quarter a thousand times, and each time to better advantage.

There was one other memory of the past, dim and faded, but stamped into his soul everlasting by the savage feet of his father. It was more like a nightmare than a remembered vision of a concrete thing—more like the race-memory of man that makes him fall in his sleep and that goes back to his arboreal ancestry.

This particular memory never came to Johnny in broad daylight when he was wide awake. It came at night, in bed, at the moment that his consciousness was sinking down and losing itself in sleep. It always aroused him to frightened wakefulness, and for the moment, in the first sickening start, it seemed to him that he lay crosswise on the foot of the bed. In the bed were the vague forms of his father and mother. He never saw what his father looked like. He had but one impression of his father, and that was that he had savage and pitiless feet.

His earlier memories lingered with him, but he had no late memories. All days were alike. Yesterday or last year were the same as a thousand years—or a minute. Nothing ever happened. There were no events to mark the march of time. Time did not march. It stood always still. It was only the whirling machines that moved, and they moved nowhere—in spite of the fact that they moved faster.

* * *

When he was fourteen, he went to work on the starcher. It was a colossal event. Something had at last happened that could be remembered beyond a night's sleep or a week's pay-day. It marked an era. It was a machine Olympiad, a thing to date from. "When I went to work on the starcher," or, "after," or "before I went to work on the starcher," were sentences often on his lips.

He celebrated his sixteenth birthday by going into the loom room and taking a loom. Here was an incentive again, for it was piece-work. And he excelled, because the clay of him had been moulded by the mills into the perfect machine. At the end of three months he was running two looms, and, later, three and four.

At the end of his second year at the looms he was turning out more yards than any other weaver, and more than twice as much as some of the less skilful ones. And at home

things began to prosper as he approached the full stature of his earning power. Not, however, that his increased earnings were in excess of need. The children were growing up. They ate more. And they were going to school, and school-books cost money. And somehow, the faster he worked, the faster climbed the prices of things. Even the rent went up, though the house had fallen from bad to worse disrepair.

He had grown taller; but with his increased height he seemed leaner than ever. Also, he was more nervous. With the nervousness increased his peevishness and irritability. The children had learned by many bitter lessons to fight shy of him. His mother respected him for his earning power, but somehow her respect was tinctured with fear.

There was no joyousness in life for him. The procession of the days he never saw. The nights he slept away in twitching unconsciousness. The rest of the time he worked, and his consciousness was machine consciousness. Outside this his mind was a blank. He had no ideals, and but one illusion; namely, that he drank excellent coffee. He was a work-beast. He had no mental life whatever; yet deep down in the crypts of his mind, unknown to him, were being weighed and sifted every hour of his toil, every movement of his hands, every twitch of his muscles, and preparations were making for a future course of action that would amaze him and all his little world.

It was in the late spring that he came home from work one night aware of unusual tiredness. There was a keen expectancy in the air as he sat down to the table, but he did not notice. He went through the meal in moody silence, mechanically eating what was before him. The children um’d and ah’d and made smacking noises with their mouths. But he was deaf to them.

“D’ye know what you’re eatin’?” his mother demanded at last, desperately.

He looked vacantly at the dish before him, and vacantly at her.

“Floatin’ island,” she announced triumphantly.

“Oh,” he said.

“Floating island!” the children chorused loudly.

“Oh,” he said. And after two or three mouthfuls, he added, “I guess I ain’t hungry to-night.”

He dropped the spoon, shoved back his chair, and arose wearily from the table.

“An’ I guess I’ll go to bed.”

His feet dragged more heavily than usual as he crossed the kitchen floor. Undressing was a Titan’s task, a monstrous futility, and he wept weakly as he crawled into bed, one shoe still on. He was aware of a rising, swelling something inside his head that made his

brain thick and fuzzy. His lean fingers felt as big as his wrist, while in the ends of them was a remoteness of sensation vague and fuzzy like his brain. The small of his back ached intolerably. All his bones ached. He ached everywhere. And in his head began the shrieking, pounding, crashing, roaring of a million looms. All space was filled with flying shuttles. They darted in and out, intricately, amongst the stars. He worked a thousand looms himself, and ever they speeded up, faster and faster, and his brain unwound, faster and faster, and became the thread that fed the thousand flying shuttles.

He did not go to work next morning. He was too busy weaving colossally on the thousand looms that ran inside his head. His mother went to work, but first she sent for the doctor. It was a severe attack of la grippe, he said. Jennie served as nurse and carried out his instructions.

It was a very severe attack, and it was a week before Johnny dressed and tottered feebly across the floor. Another week, the doctor said, and he would be fit to return to work. The foreman of the loom room visited him on Sunday afternoon, the first day of his convalescence. The best weaver in the room, the foreman told his mother. His job would be held for him. He could come back to work a week from Monday.

"Why don't you thank 'im, Johnny?" his mother asked anxiously.

"He's ben that sick he ain't himself yet," she explained apologetically to the visitor.

Johnny sat hunched up and gazing steadfastly at the floor. He sat in the same position long after the foreman had gone. It was warm outdoors, and he sat on the stoop in the afternoon. Sometimes his lips moved. He seemed lost in endless calculations.

Next morning, after the day grew warm, he took his seat on the stoop. He had pencil and paper this time with which to continue his calculations, and he calculated painfully and amazingly.

"What comes after millions?" he asked at noon, when Will came home from school. "An' how d'ye work 'em?"

That afternoon finished his task. Each day, but without paper and pencil, he returned to the stoop. He was greatly absorbed in the one tree that grew across the street. He studied it for hours at a time, and was unusually interested when the wind swayed its branches and fluttered its leaves. Throughout the week he seemed lost in a great communion with himself. On Sunday, sitting on the stoop, he laughed aloud, several times, to the perturbation of his mother, who had not heard him laugh in years.

Next morning, in the early darkness, she came to his bed to rouse him. He had had his fill of sleep all week, and awoke easily. He made no struggle, nor did he attempt to hold on to the bedding when she stripped it from him. He lay quietly, and spoke quietly.

"It ain't no use, ma."

"You'll be late," she said, under the impression that he was still stupid with sleep.

"I'm awake, ma, an' I tell you it ain't no use. You might as well lemme alone. I ain't goin' to git up."

"But you'll lose your job!" she cried.

"I ain't goin' to git up," he repeated in a strange, passionless voice.

She did not go to work herself that morning. This was sickness beyond any sickness she had ever known. Fever and delirium she could understand; but this was insanity. She pulled the bedding up over him and sent Jennie for the doctor.

When that person arrived, Johnny was sleeping gently, and gently he awoke and allowed his pulse to be taken.

"Nothing the matter with him," the doctor reported. "Badly debilitated, that's all. Not much meat on his bones."

"He's always been that way," his mother volunteered.

"Now go 'way, ma, an' let me finish my snooze."

Johnny spoke sweetly and placidly, and sweetly and placidly he rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

At ten o'clock he awoke and dressed himself. He walked out into the kitchen, where he found his mother with a frightened expression on her face.

"I'm goin' away, ma," he announced, "an' I jes' want to say good-by." She threw her apron over her head and sat down suddenly and wept. He waited patiently.

"I might a-known it," she was sobbing.

"Where?" she finally asked, removing the apron from her head and gazing up at him with a stricken face in which there was little curiosity.

"I don't know—anywhere."

As he spoke, the tree across the street appeared with dazzling brightness on his inner vision. It seemed to lurk just under his eyelids, and he could see it whenever he wished.

"An' your job?" she quavered.

"I ain't never goin' to work again."

"My God, Johnny!" she wailed, "don't say that!"

What he had said was blasphemy to her. As a mother who hears her child deny God, was Johnny's mother shocked by his words.

"What's got into you, anyway?" she demanded, with a lame attempt at imperativeness.

"Figures," he answered. "Jes' figures. I've ben doin' a lot of figurin' this week, an' it's most surprisin'."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," she sniffled.

Johnny smiled patiently, and his mother was aware of a distinct shock at the persistent absence of his peevishness and irritability.

"I'll show you," he said. "I'm plum' tired out. What makes me tired? Moves. I've ben movin' ever since I was born. I'm tired of movin', an' I ain't goin' to move any more. Remember when I worked in the glass-house? I used to do three hundred dozen a day. Now I reckon I made about ten different moves to each bottle. That's thirty-six thousan' moves a day. Ten days, three hundred an' sixty thousan' moves a day. One month, one million an' eighty thousan' moves. Chuck out the eighty thousan'—" he spoke with the complacent beneficence of a philanthropist—"chuck out the eighty thousan', that leaves a million moves a month—twelve million moves a year.

"At the looms I'm movin' twic'st as much. That makes twenty-five million moves a year, an' it seems to me I've ben a movin' that way 'most a million years.

"Now this week I ain't moved at all. I ain't made one move in hours an' hours. I tell you it was swell, jes' settin' there, hours an' hours, an' doin' nothin'. I ain't never ben happy before. I never had any time. I've ben movin' all the time. That ain't no way to be happy. An' I ain't goin' to do it any more. I'm jes' goin' to set, an' set, an' rest, an' rest, and then rest some more."

"But what's goin' to come of Will an' the children?" she asked despairingly.

"That's it, 'Will an' the children,'" he repeated.

But there was no bitterness in his voice. He had long known his mother's ambition for the younger boy, but the thought of it no longer rankled. Nothing mattered any more. Not even that.

"I know, ma, what you've ben plannin' for Will—keepin' him in school to make a bookkeeper out of him. But it ain't no use, I've quit. He's got to go to work."

“An’ after I have brung you up the way I have,” she wept, starting to cover her head with the apron and changing her mind.

“You never brung me up,” he answered with sad kindliness. “I brung myself up, ma, an’ I brung up Will. He’s bigger’n me, an’ heavier, an’ taller. When I was a kid, I reckon I didn’t git enough to eat. When he come along an’ was a kid, I was workin’ an’ earnin’ grub for him too. But that’s done with. Will can go to work, same as me, or he can go to hell, I don’t care which. I’m tired. I’m goin’ now. Ain’t you goin’ to say good-by?”

She made no reply. The apron had gone over her head again, and she was crying. He paused a moment in the doorway.

“I’m sure I done the best I knew how,” she was sobbing.

He passed out of the house and down the street. A wan delight came into his face at the sight of the lone tree. “Jes’ ain’t goin’ to do nothin’,” he said to himself, half aloud, in a crooning tone. He glanced wistfully up at the sky, but the bright sun dazzled and blinded him.

It was a long walk he took, and he did not walk fast. It took him past the jute-mill. The muffled roar of the loom room came to his ears, and he smiled. It was a gentle, placid smile. He hated no one, not even the pounding, shrieking machines. There was no bitterness in him, nothing but an inordinate hunger for rest.

The houses and factories thinned out and the open spaces increased as he approached the country. At last the city was behind him, and he was walking down a leafy lane beside the railroad track. He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible.

He passed by a small railroad station and lay down in the grass under a tree. All afternoon he lay there. Sometimes he dozed, with muscles that twitched in his sleep. When awake, he lay without movement, watching the birds or looking up at the sky through the branches of the tree above him. Once or twice he laughed aloud, but without relevance to anything he had seen or felt.

After twilight had gone, in the first darkness of the night, a freight train rumbled into the station. When the engine was switching cars on to the side-track, Johnny crept along the side of the train. He pulled open the side-door of an empty box-car and awkwardly and laboriously climbed in. He closed the door. The engine whistled. Johnny was lying down, and in the darkness he smiled.

The March of the Mill Children from *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*

MOTHER JONES

Mary Harris "Mother" Jones (1837–1930) was a prominent labor and community activist, once called "the most dangerous woman in America" for her success in organizing workers and their families against the powerful. Misfortunes scarred her early life. She lost her husband and four children to the yellow fever epidemic and her dressmaking business to the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. After the fire, Jones began to travel across the country as a full-time labor organizer, helping to found the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905. She became known as "Mother Jones" for her matronly black dresses and her fond habit of calling the workers she fought for "her boys." In this excerpt from her autobiography (1925), Mother Jones recounts her 1903 "Children's Crusade," in which she led child laborers in a march from Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, New York, where then-President Theodore Roosevelt lived. Though Jones and "her boys" did not meet with the president, the publicity the march received brought much needed attention to the working conditions of America's child laborers.

Describe Mother Jones and the cause for which she worked. What, exactly, is wrong with child labor? What do you think of Mother Jones' tactics for trying to end it? How do you account for her success?

In the spring of 1903 I went to Kensington, Pennsylvania, where seventy-five thousand textile workers were on strike. Of this number at least ten thousand were little children. The workers were striking for more pay and shorter hours. Every day little children came into Union Headquarters, some with their hands off, some with the thumb missing, some with their fingers off at the knuckle. They were stooped things, round shouldered and skinny. Many of them were not over ten years of age, although the state law prohibited their working before they were twelve years of age.

The law was poorly enforced and the mothers of these children often swore falsely as to their children's age. In a single block in Kensington, fourteen women, mothers of twenty-two children all under twelve, explained it was a question of starvation or perjury. That the fathers had been killed or maimed at the mines.

I asked the newspaper men why they didn't publish the facts about child labor in Pennsylvania. They said they couldn't because the mill owners had stock in the papers.

"Well, I've got stock in these little children," said I, "and I'll arrange a little publicity."

We assembled a number of boys and girls one morning in Independence Park and from there we arranged to parade with banners to the court house where we would hold a meeting.

A great crowd gathered in the public square in front of the city hall. I put the little boys with their fingers off and hands crushed and maimed on a platform. I held up their mutilated hands and showed them to the crowd and made the statement that Philadelphia's mansions were built on the broken bones, the quivering hearts and drooping heads of these children. That their little lives went out to make wealth for others. That neither state or city officials paid any attention to these wrongs. That they did not care that these children were to be the future citizens of the nation.

The officials of the city hall were standing in the open windows. I held the little ones of the mills high up above the heads of the crowd and pointed to their puny arms and legs and hollow chests. They were light to lift.

I called upon the millionaire manufacturers to cease their moral murders, and I cried to the officials in the open windows opposite, "Some day the workers will take possession of your city hall, and when we do, no child will be sacrificed on the altar of profit."

The officials quickly closed the windows, as they had closed their eyes and hearts.

The reporters quoted my statement that Philadelphia mansions were built on the broken bones and quivering hearts of children. The Philadelphia papers and the New York papers got into a squabble with each other over the question. The universities discussed it. Preachers began talking. That was what I wanted. Public attention on the subject of child labor.

The matter quieted down for a while and I concluded the people needed stirring up again. The Liberty Bell that a century ago rang out for freedom against tyranny was touring the country and crowds were coming to see it everywhere. That gave me an idea. These little children were striking for some of the freedom that childhood ought to have, and I decided that the children and I would go on a tour.

I asked some of the parents if they would let me have their little boys and girls for a week or ten days, promising to bring them back safe and sound. They consented. A man named Sweeny was marshal for our "army." A few men and women went with me to help with the children. They were on strike and I thought they might as well have a little recreation.

The children carried knapsacks on their backs in which was a knife and fork, a tin cup and plate. We took along a wash boiler in which to cook the food on the road. One little fellow had a drum and another had a fife. That was our band. We carried banners that said, "We want more schools and less hospitals." "We want time to play." "Prosperity is here. Where is ours?"

We started from Philadelphia where we held a great mass meeting. I decided to go with the children to see President Roosevelt to ask him to have Congress pass a law prohibiting the exploitation of childhood. I thought that President Roosevelt might see

these mill children and compare them with his own little ones who were spending the summer on the seashore at Oyster Bay. I thought too, out of politeness, we might call on [J.P.] Morgan in Wall Street who owned the mines where many of these children's fathers worked.

The children were very happy, having plenty to eat, taking baths in the brooks and rivers every day. I thought when the strike is over and they go back to the mills, they will never have another holiday like this. All along the line of march the farmers drove out to meet us with wagon loads of fruit and vegetables. Their wives brought the children clothes and money. The interurban trainmen would stop their trains and give us free rides.

Marshal Sweeny and I would go ahead to the towns and arrange sleeping quarters for the children, and secure meeting halls. As we marched on, it grew terribly hot. There was no rain and the roads were heavy with dust. From time to time we had to send some of the children back to their homes. They were too weak to stand the march.

We were on the outskirts of New Trenton, New Jersey, cooking our lunch in the wash boiler, when the conductor on the interurban car stopped and told us the police were coming down to notify us that we could not enter the town. There were mills in the town and the mill owners didn't like our coming.

I said, "All right, the police will be just in time for lunch."

Sure enough, the police came and we invited them to dine with us. They looked at the little gathering of children with their tin plates and cups around the wash boiler. They just smiled and spoke kindly to the children, and said nothing at all about not going into the city.

We went in, held our meeting, and it was the wives of the police who took the little children and cared for them that night, sending them back in the morning with a nice lunch rolled up in paper napkins.

Everywhere we had meetings, showing up with living children, the horrors of child labor.

At one town the mayor said we could not hold a meeting because he did not have sufficient police protection. "These little children have never known any sort of protection, your honor," I said, "and they are used to going without it." He let us have our meeting.

One night in Princeton, New Jersey, we slept in the big cool barn on Grover Cleveland's great estate. The heat became intense. There was much suffering in our ranks, for our little ones were not robust. The proprietor of the leading hotel sent for me. "Mother," he said "order what you want and all you want for your army, and there's nothing to pay."

I called on the mayor of Princeton and asked for permission to speak opposite the campus of the University. I said I wanted to speak on higher education. The mayor gave me permission. A great crowd gathered, professors and students and the people; and I told them that the rich robbed these little children of any education of the lowest order that they might send their sons and daughters to places of higher education. That they used the hands and feet of little children that they might buy automobiles for their wives and police dogs for their daughters to talk French to. I said the mill owners take babies almost from the cradle. And I showed those professors children in our army who could scarcely read or write because they were working ten hours a day in the silk mills of Pennsylvania.

"Here's a text book on economics," I said pointing to a little chap, James Ashworth, who was ten years old and who was stooped over like an old man from carrying bundles of yarn that weighed seventy-five pounds. "He gets three dollars a week and his sister who is fourteen gets six dollars. They work in a carpet factory ten hours a day while the children of the rich are getting their higher education."

That night we camped on the banks of Stony Brook where years and years before the ragged Revolutionary Army camped, Washington's brave soldiers that made their fight for freedom.

From Jersey City we marched to Hoboken. I sent a committee over to the New York Chief of Police, Ebstein, asking for permission to march up Fourth Avenue to Madison Square where I wanted to hold a meeting. The chief refused and forbade our entrance to the city.

I went over myself to New York and saw Mayor Seth Low. The mayor was most courteous but he said he would have to support the police commissioner. I asked him what the reason was for refusing us entrance to the city and he said that we were not citizens of New York.

"Oh, I think we will clear that up, Mr. Mayor," I said. "Permit me to call your attention to an incident which took place in this nation just a year ago. A piece of rotten royalty came over here from Germany, called Prince Henry. The Congress of the United States voted $45,000 to fill that fellow's stomach three weeks and to entertain him. His highness was getting $4,000,000 dividends out of the blood of the workers in this country. Was he a citizen of this land?"

"And it was reported, Mr. Mayor, that you and all the officials of New York and the University Club entertained that chap." And I repeated, "Was he a citizen of New York?"

"No, Mother," said the mayor, "he was not."

"And a Chinaman called Lee Woo was also entertained by the officials of New York. Was he a citizen of New York?"

"No, Mother, he was not."

"Did they ever create any wealth for our nation?"

"No, Mother, they did not," said he.

"Well, Mr. Mayor, these are the little citizens of the nation and they also produce its wealth. Aren't we entitled to enter your city?"

"Just wait" says he, and he called the commissioner of police over to his office.

Well, finally they decided to let the army come in. We marched up Fourth Avenue to Madison Square and police officers, captains, sergeants, roundsmen and reserves from three precincts accompanied us. But the police would not let us hold a meeting in Madison Square. They insisted that the meeting be held in Twentieth Street.

I pointed out to the captain that the single taxers were allowed to hold meetings in the square. "Yes," he said, "but they won't have twenty people and you might have twenty thousand."

We marched to Twentieth Street. I told an immense crowd of the horrors of child labor in the mills around the anthracite region and I showed them some of the children. I showed them Eddie Dunphy, a little fellow of twelve, whose job it was to sit all day on a high stool, handing in the right thread to another worker. Eleven hours a day he sat on the high stool with dangerous machinery all about him. All day long, winter and summer, spring and fall, for three dollars a week.

And then I showed them Gussie Rangnew, a little girl from whom all the childhood had gone. Her face was like an old woman's. Gussie packed stockings in a factory, eleven hours a day for a few cents a day.

We raised a lot of money for the strikers and hundreds of friends offered their homes to the little ones while we were in the city.

The next day we went to Coney Island at the invitation of Mr. Bostick who owned the wild animal show. The children had a wonderful day such as they never had in all their lives. After the exhibition of the trained animals, Mr. Bostick let me speak to the audience. There was a back drop to the tiny stage of the Roman Coliseum with the audience painted in and two Roman emperors down in front with their thumbs down. Right in front of the emperors were the empty iron cages of the animals. I put my little children in the cages and they clung to the iron bars while I talked.

I told the crowd that the scene was typical of the aristocracy of employers with their thumbs down to the little ones of the mills and factories, and people sitting dumbly by.

“We want President Roosevelt to hear the wail of the children who never have a chance to go to school but work eleven and twelve hours a day in the textile mills of Pennsylvania; who weave the carpets that he and you walk upon and the lace curtains in your windows, and the clothes of the people. Fifty years ago there was a cry against slavery and men gave up their lives to stop the selling of black children on the block. Today the white child is sold for two dollars a week to the manufacturers. Fifty years ago the black babies were sold C.O.D. Today the white baby is sold on the installment plan.

“In Georgia where children work day and night in the cotton mills they have just passed a bill to protect song birds. What about little children from whom all song is gone?

“I shall ask the president in the name of the aching hearts of these little ones that he emancipate them from slavery. I will tell the president that the prosperity he boasts of is the prosperity of the rich wrung from the poor and the helpless.

“The trouble is that no one in Washington cares. I saw our legislators in one hour pass three bills for the relief of the railways but when labor cries for aid for the children they will not listen.

“I asked a man in prison once how he happened to be there and he said he had stolen a pair of shoes. I told him if he had stolen a railroad he would be a United States Senator.

“We are told that every American boy has the chance of being president. I tell you that these little boys in the iron cages would sell their chance any day for good square meals and a chance to play. These little toilers whom I have taken from the mills—deformed, dwarfed in body and soul, with nothing but toil before them—have never heard that they have a chance, the chance of every American male citizen, to become the president.

“You see those monkeys in those cages over there.” I pointed to a side cage. “The professors are trying to teach them to talk. The monkeys are too wise for they fear that the manufacturers would buy them for slaves in their factories.”

I saw a stylishly dressed young man down in the front of the audience. Several times he grinned. I stopped speaking and pointing to him I said, “Stop your smiling, young man! Leave this place! Go home and beg the mother who bore you in pain, as the mothers of these little children bore them, go home and beg her to give you brains and a heart.”

He rose and slunk out, followed by the eyes of the children in the cage. The people sat stone still and out in the rear a lion roared.

The next day we left Coney Island for Manhattan Beach to visit Senator Platt, who had made an appointment to see me at nine o’clock in the morning. The children got stuck in the sand banks and I had a time cleaning the sand off the littlest ones. So we

started to walk on the railroad track. I was told it was private property and we had to get off. Finally a saloon keeper showed us a short cut into the sacred grounds of the hotel and suddenly the army appeared in the lobby. The little fellows played "Hail, hail, the gang's all here" on their fifes and drums, and Senator Platt when he saw the little army ran away through the back door to New York.

I asked the manager if he would give the children breakfast and charge it up to the Senator as we had an invitation to breakfast that morning with him. He gave us a private room and he gave those children such a breakfast as they had never had in all their lives. I had breakfast too, and a reporter from one of the Hearst papers and I charged it all up to Senator Platt.

We marched down to Oyster Bay but the president refused to see us and he would not answer my letters. But our march had done its work. We had drawn the attention of the nation to the crime of child labor. And while the strike of the textile workers in Kensington was lost and the children driven back to work, not long afterward the Pennsylvania legislature passed a child labor law that sent thousands of children home from the mills, and kept thousands of others from entering the factory until they were fourteen years of age.

What Does the Working Man Want?

SAMUEL GOMPERS

In this International May Day address delivered in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1890 (twenty years before his speech on "The Significance of Labor Day," included above), Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), argues for the importance of the eight-hour workday. Like many labor leaders, Gompers protests the injustices of the industrial process, which treats workers as nothing more than "a veritable machine." However, he also makes an appeal to business owners' self-interest, noting that "men under the short-hour system not only have opportunity to improve themselves, but to make a greater degree of prosperity for their employers." In contrast to more revolutionary May Day appeals by socialists and communists, Gompers's rhetoric reflected the AFL's more moderate strategy of working within the existing capitalist system to achieve its aims for bettering the lives of workers.

What case does Gompers make for shortening the workday for labor? Is it convincing? Gompers says that the workers' first need is time—time, among other things, "to raise men to a higher plane." In today's age of television and other ready amusements, what do you make of Gompers's claims about time for self-improvement? At the end of his speech, Gompers gives a simple answer to the goal of the labor movement: "More." If he is right, can the desires and demands of organized labor ever be satisfied?

My friends, we have met here today to celebrate the idea that has prompted thousands of working-people of Louisville and New Albany to parade the streets of y[our city]; that prompts the toilers of Chicago to turn out by their fifty or hundred thousand of men; that prompts the vast army of wage-workers in New York to demonstrate their enthusiasm and appreciation of the importance of this idea; that prompts the toilers of England, Ireland, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Austria to defy the manifestos of the autocrats of the world and say that on May the first, 1890, the wage-workers of the world will lay down their tools in sympathy with the wage-workers of America, to establish a principle of limitations of hours of labor to eight hours for sleep, eight hours for work, and eight hours for what we will.

It has been charged time and again that were we to have more hours of leisure we would merely devote it to debauchery, to the cultivation of vicious habits—in other words, that we would get drunk. I desire to say this in answer to that charge: As a rule, there are two classes in society who get drunk. One is the class who has no work to do, in consequence of too much money; the other class, who also has no work to do because it can't get any, and gets drunk on its face. I maintain that that class in our social life that exhibits the greatest degree of sobriety is that class who are able, by a fair number of hours of day's work to earn fair wages—not overworked. The man who works twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day requires some artificial stimulant to restore the life ground out of him in the drudgery of the day. . . .

We ought to be able to discuss this question on a higher ground, and I am pleased to say that the movement in which we are engaged will stimulate us to it. They tell us that the eight-hour movement can not be enforced, for the reason that it must check industrial and commercial progress. I say that the history of this country, in its industrial and commercial relations, shows the reverse. I say that is the plane on which this question ought to be discussed—that is the social question. As long as they make this question an economic one, I am willing to discuss it with them. I would retrace every step I have taken to advance this movement did it mean industrial and commercial stagnation. But it does not mean that. It means greater prosperity; it means a greater degree of progress for the whole people; it means more advancement and intelligence, and a nobler race of people. . . .

They say they can't afford it. Is that true? Let us see for one moment. If a reduction in the hours of labor causes industrial and commercial ruination, it would naturally follow increased hours of labor would increase the prosperity, commercial and industrial. If that were true, England and America ought to be at the tail end, and China at the head of civilization.

Is it not a fact that we find laborers in England and the United States, where the hours are eight, nine and ten hours a day—do we not find that employers and laborers are more successful? Don't we find them selling articles cheaper? We do not need to trust the modern moralist to tell us those things. In all industries where the hours of labor are long, there you will find the least development of the power of invention. Where the hours of labor are long, men are cheap, and where men are cheap there is no necessity for invention. How can you expect a man to work ten or twelve or fourteen hours at his calling and then devote any time to the invention of a machine or discovery of a new principle or force? If he be so fortunate as to be able to read a paper he will fall asleep before he has read through the second or third line.

Why, when you reduce the hours of labor, say an hour a day, just think what it means. Suppose men who work ten hours a day had the time lessened to nine, or men who work nine hours a day have it reduced to eight hours; what does it mean? It means millions of golden hours and opportunities for thought. Some men might say you will go to sleep. Well, some men might sleep sixteen hours a day; the ordinary man might try that, but he would soon find he could not do it long. He would have to do something. He would probably go to the theater one night, to a concert another night, but could not do that every night. He would probably become interested in some study and the hours that have been taken for manual labor are devoted to mental labor, and the mental labor of one hour will produce for him more wealth than the physical labor of a dozen hours.

I maintain that this is a true proposition—that men under the short-hour system not only have opportunity to improve themselves, but to make a greater degree of prosperity for their employers. Why, my friends, how is it in China, how is it in Spain, how is it in India and Russia, how is it in Italy? Cast your eye throughout the universe and observe the industry that forces nature to yield up its fruits to man's necessities, and you will find that where the hours of labor are the shortest the progress of invention in machinery and

the prosperity of the people are the greatest. It is the greatest impediment to progress to hire men cheaply. Wherever men are cheap, there you find the least degree of progress. It has only been under the great influence of our great republic, where our people have exhibited their great senses, that we can move forward, upward and onward, and are watched with interest in our movements of progress and reform. . . .

The man who works the long hours has no necessities except the barest to keep body and soul together, so he can work. He goes to sleep and dreams of work; he rises in the morning to go to work; he takes his frugal lunch to work; he comes home again to throw himself down on a miserable apology for a bed so that he can get that little rest that he may be able to go to work again. He is nothing but a veritable machine. He lives to work instead of working to live.

My friends, the only thing the working people need besides the necessities of life, is time. Time. Time with which our lives begin; time with which our lives close; time to cultivate the better nature within us; time to brighten our homes. Time, which brings us from the lowest condition up to the highest civilization; time, so that we can raise men to a higher plane.

My friends, you will find that it has been ascertained that there is more than a million of our brothers and sisters—able-bodied men and women—on the streets, and on the highways and byways of our country willing to work but who cannot find it. You know that it is the theory of our government that we can work or cease to work at will. It is only a theory. You know that it is only a theory and not a fact. It is true that we can cease to work when we want to, but I deny that we can work when we will, so long as there are a million idle men and women tramping the streets of our cities, searching for work. The theory that we can work or cease to work when we will is a delusion and a snare. It is a lie.

What we want to consider is, first, to make our employment more secure, and, secondly, to make wages more permanent, and thirdly, to give these poor people a chance to work. The laborer has been regarded as a mere producing machine . . . but the back of labor is the soul of man and honesty of purpose and aspiration. Now you can not, as the political economists and college professors [do], say that labor is a commodity to be bought and sold. I say we are American citizens with the heritage of all the great men who have stood before us; men who have sacrificed all in the cause except honor. Our enemies would like to see this movement thrust into Hades, they would like to see it in a warmer climate, but I say to you that this labor movement has come to stay. Like Banquo's ghost, it will not down. I say the labor movement is a fixed fact. It has grown out of the necessities of the people, and, although some may desire to see it fail, still the labor movement will be found to have a strong lodgment in the hearts of the people, and we will go on until success has been achieved.

We want eight hours and nothing less. We have been accused of being selfish, and it has been said that we will want more; that last year we got an advance of ten cents and now we want more. We do want more. You will find that a man generally wants more.

Go and ask a tramp what he wants, and if he doesn't want a drink, he wants a good, square meal. You ask a workingman, who is getting two dollars a day, and he will say that he wants ten cents more. Ask a man who gets five dollars a day and he will want fifty cents more. The man who receives five thousand dollars a year wants six thousand dollars a year, and the man who owns eight or nine hundred thousand dollars will want a hundred thousand dollars more to make it a million, while the man who has his millions will want everything he can lay his hands on and then raise his voice against the poor devil who wants ten cents more a day. We live in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the age of electricity and steam that has produced wealth a hundred fold, we insist that it has been brought about by the intelligence and energy of the workingmen, and while we find that it is now easier to produce it is harder to live. We do want more, and when it becomes more, we shall still want more. And we shall never cease to demand more until we have received the results of our labor.

3

The Working Life

The Utility of Work

To Be of Use

MARGE PIERCY

Born in Detroit, Michigan, in the midst of the Great Depression, Marge Piercy (b. 1936) is an American poet and novelist, perhaps most famous for her New York Times *best-selling novel* Gone to Soldiers *(1988). The first in her family to attend college, Piercy published her first book of poems in 1968. Since then, she has authored seventeen novels, a play, and eighteen volumes of poetry. In this poem, first published in a volume of the same name in 1973, Piercy suggests* how *people work is as important as* what *they do.*

Examine the images the poem uses to describe admirable ways of working: jumping into work head first; harnessing oneself, an ox to a heavy cart; submerging oneself in the task. What idea of working do these images convey? What does Piercy mean by "real work"? Is it true that everyone wants it? What is the meaning of the poem's title? Do you aspire "to be of use"?

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

The Little Red Hen

Told by FLORENCE WHITE WILLIAMS

The story of the Little Red Hen has been retold many times. First published in 1874, this folk tale teaches children the value of hard work and self-reliance. In the story, a hen finds a seed of wheat, which she decides to plant to make bread. Though she seeks the help of other farm animals, they refuse, and the hen must do all the work herself. When the bread is finally made, the other animals wish to partake—but because they did not help the hen along the way, they are refused the fruits of her labor. The story has been featured as part of the popular "Little Golden Books" series and as a Walt Disney animated film, The Wise Little Hen *(1938). This version, by Florence White Williams, was published in 1918.*

Do you approve of the Little Red Hen's conduct in this story? Is it really true that only those who work are entitled to the fruits of labor? As the bread was baking, the story tells us, the Little Red Hen was extremely excited, because she had done all the work in making the bread. Do you appreciate food (or anything else) more if you have made it yourself? Is the value of working hard to be found (only or mainly) in the resulting product or (also or mainly) in the activity of doing the work yourself?

A Little Red Hen lived in a barnyard. She spent almost all of her time walking about the barnyard in her picketty-pecketty fashion, scratching everywhere for worms.

She dearly loved fat, delicious worms and felt they were absolutely necessary to the health of her children. As often as she found a worm she would call "Chuck-chuck-chuck!" to her chickies.

When they were gathered about her, she would distribute choice morsels of her tid-bit. A busy little body was she!

A cat usually napped lazily in the barn door, not even bothering herself to scare the rat who ran here and there as he pleased. And as for the pig who lived in the sty—he did not care what happened so long as he could eat and grow fat.

One day the Little Red Hen found a Seed. It was a Wheat Seed, but the Little Red Hen was so accustomed to bugs and worms that she supposed this to be some new and perhaps very delicious kind of meat. She bit it gently and found that it resembled a worm in no way whatsoever as to taste although because it was long and slender, a Little Red Hen might easily be fooled by its appearance.

Carrying it about, she made many inquiries as to what it might be. She found it was a Wheat Seed and that, if planted, it would grow up and when ripe it could be made into flour and then into bread.

When she discovered that, she knew it ought to be planted. She was so busy hunting food for herself and her family that, naturally, she thought she ought not to take time to plant it.

So she thought of the Pig—upon whom time must hang heavily and of the Cat who had nothing to do, and of the great fat Rat with his idle hours, and she called loudly:

“Who will plant the Seed?”

But the Pig said, “Not I,” and the Cat said, “Not I,” and the Rat said, “Not I.”

“Well, then,” said the Little Red Hen, “I will.”

And she did.

Then she went on with her daily duties through the long summer days, scratching for worms and feeding her chicks, while the Pig grew fat, and the Cat grew fat, and the Rat grew fat, and the Wheat grew tall and ready for harvest.

So one day the Little Red Hen chanced to notice how large the Wheat was and that the grain was ripe, so she ran about calling briskly:

“Who will cut the Wheat?”

The Pig said, “Not I,” the Cat said, “Not I,” and the Rat said, “Not I.”

“Well, then,” said the Little Red Hen, “I will.”

And she did.

She got the sickle from among the farmer’s tools in the barn and proceeded to cut off all of the big plant of Wheat.

On the ground lay the nicely cut Wheat, ready to be gathered and threshed, but the newest and yellowest and downiest of Mrs. Hen’s chicks set up a “peep-peep-peeping” in their most vigorous fashion, proclaiming to the world at large, but most particularly to their mother, that she was neglecting them.

Poor Little Red Hen! She felt quite bewildered and hardly knew where to turn.

Her attention was sorely divided between her duty to her children and her duty to the Wheat, for which she felt responsible.

So, again, in a very hopeful tone, she called out, “Who will thresh the Wheat?”

But the Pig, with a grunt, said, "Not I," and the Cat, with a meow, said, "Not I," and the Rat, with a squeak, said, "Not I."

So the Little Red Hen, looking, it must be admitted, rather discouraged, said, "Well, I will, then."

And she did.

Of course, she had to feed her babies first, though, and when she had gotten them all to sleep for their afternoon nap, she went out and threshed the Wheat. Then she called out: "Who will carry the Wheat to the mill to be ground?"

Turning their backs with snippy glee, that Pig said, "Not I," and that Cat said, "Not I," and that Rat said, "Not I."

So the good Little Red Hen could do nothing but say, "I will then."

And she did.

Carrying the sack of Wheat, she trudged off to the distant mill. There she ordered the Wheat ground into beautiful white flour. When the miller brought her the flour she walked slowly back all the way to her own barnyard in her own picketty-pecketty fashion.

She even managed, in spite of her load, to catch a nice juicy worm now and then and had one left for the babies when she reached them. Those cunning little fluff-balls were *so* glad to see their mother. For the first time, they really appreciated her.

After this really strenuous day Mrs. Hen retired to her slumbers earlier than usual—indeed, before the colors came into the sky to herald the setting of the sun, her usual bedtime hour.

She would have liked to sleep late in the morning, but her chicks, joining in the morning chorus of the hen yard, drove away all hopes of such a luxury.

Even as she sleepily half opened one eye, the thought came to her that to-day that Wheat must, somehow, be made into bread.

She was not in the habit of making bread, although, of course, anyone can make it if he or she follows the recipe with care, and she knew perfectly well that she could do it if necessary.

So after her children were fed and made sweet and fresh for the day, she hunted up the Pig, the Cat and the Rat.

Still confident that they would surely help her some day she sang out, “Who will make the bread?”

Alas for the Little Red Hen! Once more her hopes were dashed! For the Pig said, “Not I,” the Cat said, “Not I,” and the Rat said, “Not I.”

So the Little Red Hen said once more, “I will then,” and she did.

Feeling that she might have known all the time that she would have to do it all herself, she went and put on a fresh apron and spotless cook’s cap. First of all she set the dough, as was proper. When it was time she brought out the molding board and the baking tins, molded the bread, divided it into loaves, and put them into the oven to bake.

All the while the Cat sat lazily by, giggling and chuckling.

And close at hand the vain Rat powdered his nose and admired himself in a mirror.

In the distance could be heard the long-drawn snores of the dozing Pig.

At last the great moment arrived. A delicious odor was wafted upon the autumn breeze. Everywhere the barnyard citizens sniffed the air with delight.

The Red Hen ambled in her picketty-pecketty way toward the source of all this excitement.

Although she appeared to be perfectly calm, in reality she could only with difficulty restrain an impulse to dance and sing, for had she not done all the work on this wonderful bread?

Small wonder that she was the most excited person in the barnyard!

She did not know whether the bread would be fit to eat, but—joy of joys!—when the lovely brown loaves came out of the oven, they were done to perfection.

Then, probably because she had acquired the habit, the Red Hen called:

“Who will eat the Bread?”

All the animals in the barnyard were watching hungrily and smacking their lips in anticipation, and the Pig said, “I will,” the Cat said, “I will,” the Rat said, “I will.”

But the Little Red Hen said, “No, you won’t. I will.”

And she did.

The Dignity of Work

The Choice of Hercules

Retold by JAMES BALDWIN

This ancient parable was first recorded in the fourth century B.C. in Xenophon's Memorabilia*, an account of the teachings of Socrates. In the story, Hercules, the half-mortal son of the god Zeus, is confronted by two beautiful women—virtue and vice—and forced to choose which path he will pursue. This modern adaptation is by James Baldwin (1841–1925), who included it in a reader for schoolchildren,* Hero Tales Told in School *(1904). Baldwin, a lifelong educator, wrote or edited more than fifty books for use in schools.*

Why does Hercules choose as he does? What persuades him to do so? Is there, in your view, a close connection between labor and virtue? Is it really true that "there is nothing worth having that must not be won by toil"? Which road will you choose, and why?

When Hercules was a fair-faced youth, and life was all before him, he went out one morning to do an errand for his stepfather. But as he walked his heart was full of bitter thoughts; and he murmured because others no better than himself were living in ease and pleasure, while for him there was naught but a life of labor and pain.

As he thought upon these things, he came to a place where two roads met; and he stopped, not certain which one to take.

The road on his right was hilly and rough; there was no beauty in it or about it: but he saw that it led straight toward the blue mountains in the far distance.

The road on his left was broad and smooth, with shade trees on either side, where sang an innumerable choir of birds; and it went winding among green meadows, where bloomed countless flowers: but it ended in fog and mist long before it reached the wonderful blue mountains in the distance.

While the lad stood in doubt as to these roads, he saw two fair women coming toward him, each on a different road. The one who came by the flowery way reached him first, and Hercules saw that she was as beautiful as a summer day.

Her cheeks were red, her eyes sparkled; she, spoke warm, persuasive words. "O noble youth," she said, "be no longer bowed down with labor and sore trials, but come and follow me, I will lead you into pleasant paths, where there are no storms to disturb and no troubles to annoy. You shall live in ease, with one unending round of music and mirth; and you shall not want for anything that makes life joyous—sparkling wine, or soft couches, or rich robes, or the loving eyes of beautiful maidens. Come with me, and life shall be to you a day-dream of gladness."

By this time the other fair woman had drawn near, and she now spoke to the lad. "I have nothing to promise you," said she, "save that which you shall win with your own strength. The road upon which I would lead you is uneven and hard, and climbs many a hill, and descends into many a valley and quagmire. The views which you will sometimes get from the hilltops are grand and glorious, but the deep valleys are dark, and the ascent from them is toilsome. Nevertheless, the road leads to the blue mountains of endless fame, which you see far away on the horizon. They cannot be reached without labor; in fact, there is nothing worth having that must not be won by toil. If you would have fruits and flowers, you must plant them and care for them; if you would gain the love of your fellow men, you must love them and suffer for them; if you would enjoy the favor of Heaven, you must make yourself worthy of that favor; if you would have eternal fame, you must not scorn the hard road that leads to it."

Then Hercules saw that this lady, although she was as beautiful as the other, had a countenance pure and gentle, like the sky on a balmy morning in May.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Some call me Labor," she answered, "but others know me as Virtue."

Then he turned to the first lady. "And what is your name?" he asked.

"Some call me Pleasure," she said, with a bewitching smile, "but I choose to be known as the Joyous and Happy One."

"Virtue," said Hercules, "I will take thee as my guide! The road of labor and honest effort shall be mine, and my heart shall no longer cherish bitterness or discontent."

And he put his hand into that of Virtue, and entered with her upon the straight and forbidding road which leads to the fair blue mountains on the pale and distant horizon.

The Village Blacksmith

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82) was a celebrated American poet of the nineteenth century. Born in Portland, Maine to a well-to-do family, Longfellow began writing poetry at an early age: his first poem, "The Battle of Lovell's Pond," was published in the Portland Gazette *when he was thirteen. After attending Bowdoin College (where he became good friends with Nathaniel Hawthorne) and studying in Europe, Longfellow taught first at Bowdoin and then later at Harvard College. "The Village Blacksmith," first published in the literary magazine* The Knickerbocker *in 1840, pays tribute to an ancestor, Stephen Longfellow, who earns "a night's repose" by his labor.*

What, according to the poem, are the meanings and satisfactions of work? In what lies the dignity of the blacksmith and his work? Do you admire (or even envy) the blacksmith? What does the poet mean in the last stanza, when he suggests that the blacksmith models the truth about how life should be lived? Do you agree with Longfellow's suggestion?

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onwards through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought!

I Hear America Singing

WALT WHITMAN

Born on Long Island, New York, Walter "Walt" Whitman (1819–92) worked at various times as a journalist, a teacher, a government clerk, and, during the Civil War, a volunteer nurse in Washington, DC. In his late twenties, Whitman became determined to establish himself as a great poet, and in 1855, self-published his first collection of poems, Leaves of Grass*—a work he would continue to edit and revise until his death. This version of "I Hear America Singing," in which Whitman explores both the individual and collective nature of work, is taken from the 1867 edition of* Leaves of Grass*; an earlier version appeared in the 1860 edition.*

What, according to the poem, is the relation between working and singing? In what sense do we "sing" in our work? To what extent does our work express our individual identity: "Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else"? What does it mean to suggest that the singing of America comprises the various songs/works of its distinctive individuals? Does America have, in addition, a common "song" or work?

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand
    singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or
    at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of
    the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,
    robust, friendly,
  Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

The Ballad of John Henry

TRADITIONAL

On August 28, 1830, the driver of a horse-drawn carriage challenged the Tom Thumb, *the first American-built steam locomotive, to a race on the newly formed Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The locomotive was winning the race until a mechanical malfunction caused it to slow, allowing the horse-drawn car to pull ahead. Despite this initial setback, steam locomotives quickly became popular with railroad companies, and for the next forty years, thousands of miles of railroad track would be laid across the country. Like the carriage driver who challenged the* Tom Thumb, *the folk hero John Henry, an ex-slave African American steel driver, was said to have challenged a mechanical, steam-powered drill to a steel-driving race in order to protect his job. John Henry won the competition, only to die in victory.*

The song celebrates a man who matched his prowess against that of a machine. Do we admire him for doing so? The song begins with John Henry's premonition, while still a baby, that "Hammer's gonna be the death of me." Yet as a grown man he clings to that hammer and squarely faces the death that doing so brings him. Why? What, for John Henry, does that have to do with the dignity of "being a man"? Do you admire him for dying with his hammer in his hand? Can we generalize, to other ways of living and working, the meaning of dying with one's hammer in one's hand?

For a musical rendition of this ballad, see Harry Belafonte's performance in 1959 at Carnegie Hall, available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6vcvYJCkic.

John Henry was a little baby
Sittin' on his papa's knee
He picked up a hammer & a little piece of steel
Said "Hammer's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord!
Hammer's gonna be the death of me."

The captain said to John Henry
"Gonna bring that steam drill 'round
Gonna bring that steam drill out on the job
Gonna whop that steel on down, down, down!
Whop that steel on down."

John Henry told his captain,
"A man ain't nothin' but a man
But before I let your steam drill beat me down
I'll die with a hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord!
I'll die with a hammer in my hand."

John Henry said to his Shaker[1]
"Shaker, why don't you sing?
I'm thowin' 30 lbs. from my hips on down
Just listen to that cold steel ring, Lord, Lord!
Listen to that cold steel ring."

John Henry said to his Shaker
"Shaker, you'd better pray
'Cause if I miss that little piece of steel
Tomorrow be your buryin' day! Lord, Lord!
Tomorrow be your buryin' day."

The Shaker said to John Henry
"I think this mountain's cavin' in!"
John Henry said to his Shaker, "Man
That ain't nothin' but my hammer suckin' wind! Lord, Lord!
Nothin' but my hammer suckin' wind."

The man that invented the steam drill
Thought he was mighty fine
But John Henry made 15 ft.
The steam drill only made nine, Lord, Lord!
The steam drill only made nine.

John Henry hammered in the mountain
His hammer was striking fire
But he worked so hard, he broke his poor heart
He laid down his hammer and he died, Lord, Lord,
Laid down his hammer and he died.

John Henry had a little woman
Her name was Polly Ann
John Henry took sick & went to his bed
Polly Ann drove steal like a man, Lord, Lord!
Polly Ann drove steal like a man.

John Henry had a little baby
You could hold him in the palm of your hand
The last words I heard that poor boy say
"My daddy was a steel-driving man, Lord, Lord!
My daddy was a steel-driving man."

They took John Henry to the graveyard
And they buried him in the sand

[1] *The hammer man always had a partner, known as a shaker or turner, who would crouch close to the hole and rotate the drill after each blow.*

And every locomotive comes a-roaring by
Says "There lies a steel-driving man, Lord, Lord!
There lies a steel-driving man."

Well every Monday morning
When the bluebirds begin to sing
You can hear John Henry a mile or more
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring, Lord, Lord!
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring.

The Satisfactions of Work

Martínez' Treasure

MANUELA WILLIAMS CROSNO

Manuela Williams Crosno (1905–97) was an English teacher who spent most of her life as a resident of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Interested in Hispanic-American culture, she set her many short stories, poems, and illustrations in the area surrounding Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Taos. Many of these works were published in two collections: The Other Side of Nowhere *(1988) and* Distant Echoes: Tales from the Land of Enchantment *(1991). This story, first published in 1936 in* New Mexico *magazine, explores the role that hope and fortune play in a worker's satisfaction.*

How does the presence of the mysterious chest affect the lives and attitudes of Juan and Rosa? Why does it do so? What exactly is it that now makes them seem young again, happy in their work and in their lives? To generalize the story: Does one's satisfaction in work or in life depend upon the promise of rich rewards *in the* future*? Or can a belief that one is* already *fortunate or blessed enable one to enjoy life now and to find satisfaction in one's work?*

There was once a man named Juan Martínez who lived near the mountains, but it was so long ago no one can remember just where he lived. He had a wife named Rosa, a burro whom he called José, and two goats. Rosa had a small flock of chickens. At one time Juan and Rosa had been young and carefree, but now they were quite old.

They lived where the mountains meet the desert and the forest begins. Each day Martínez walked among the trees and gathered small pieces of wood. He loaded these on José's back. José moved slowly because that is how all burros are.

For many years, Juan and Rosa had lived in a small house, which Juan proudly called their *casa*. From time to time they had repaired the house with adobe, which they patted on with their bare hands, until now all its sides bulged like buttresses. The roof leaned badly, as if it were trying to shelter its owners.

Juan and Rosa worked hard. In summer, they raised beans and corn to eat through the winter, and chili peppers to season the beans. The red strings of peppers hanging over the roof of their *casa* in the fall were the only colorful things about it. With the small amount of money Juan received for the firewood he sold, they were able to buy a bit of food—flour for the tortillas and, occasionally, cheese for the enchiladas.

Juan and Rosa seldom saw a living thing—just José, who was not good company, their two goats, the chickens, and a few lizards that darted from their path as they went about their work.

When they were young, they had made great plans for themselves. But trying to produce food from the dry soil had been difficult. Gradually they lost themselves in work

and forgot how to laugh or play. Finally, they talked of nothing except their work and completely abandoned their early dreams. They forgot they had ever been happy, and they accepted their monotonous and meager living as a way of life. All they knew was work and more work.

The two people were busy all day long. Juan would be gone for hours, loading old José's back with wood. The next day, Juan would go to the village, several miles away, to sell the wood. Then he would gather another load of wood, and so on, day in and day out.

For Rosa, each day was the same. She would rise early and milk the two goats. Then, unless there were many rains, she would drive the goats out to eat the grama grass[1] that grew meagerly on the desert. She worked hard in the fields, with the goats close by.

Sometimes she baked in the oven, which was like those built by Indians who lived in the pueblos along the river. The round adobe oven looked like a huge beehive sitting on the ground. At one side near the bottom was a small opening, and above it a smaller hole through which smoke escaped. Rosa heated the oven by burning wood in it. Then she removed the hot coals and put in small pieces of dough. When baked, the dough became dark brown and brittle, unlike the tortillas she sometimes baked for special days. When Rosa made tortillas, she used a metate[2] to grind the corn, and then flattened and shaped the cakes with her hands. The cakes came out white, with some brown spots. Juan always told Rosa they were the best tortillas he had ever tasted.

One evening Juan came home much later than usual. It had been dark for several hours. Rosa had stood at the window, holding a candle, peering anxiously out into the darkness, looking for a sign of him. When he finally stood in the doorway, she noticed that his clothing was dusty and caked with mud. José stood behind him. Instead of the usual load of wood, a box or chest, about eighteen inches deep and wide and two feet long, was tied across the burro's sagging back. Together Juan and Rosa removed the box and dragged it inside, for it was very heavy and covered with hard-packed soil.

Juan told Rosa an interesting story. While Juan was gathering wood, José had wandered to the edge of a small arroyo. The burro's weight caused some soil on the side of the arroyo to give way, and José slid to the bottom of the ditch, a distance of a few feet. Juan walked down into the arroyo to get the burro. He saw the box sticking out of the side of the arroyo[3] where the earth had crumbled. All day he dug about it with sticks, only to find it was too heavy for him to lift onto the burro's back. He dragged the chest along the top of the arroyo to a place where the ditch was deeper than José was tall, and there he lowered it onto the burro's back and brought it home.

Rosa's first concern was for Juan. She gave him dry clothing and a bowl of hot chili. Then, they could no longer contain their excitement, and they turned their attention to the box, wondering what it contained. But they could find no place where it might be opened;

[1] *Grama grass: a type of pasture grass that grows in the southwestern United States.*
[2] *Metate: pronounced* me-tah-tay*; a slightly hollowed out stone in which grain and corn were ground*.
[3] *Arroyo: a dry stream bed.*

it had no lock, and its top could not be pried off. The chest was rusty, so they scraped it with knives and even washed its sides in an effort to find a way to open it. They worked very late by the light of the crude candle that Rosa had carefully made. Still, they found no way to open the box, and so they decided to sleep and try again in the morning.

At daybreak, they again tried to open the box. Remembering stories of hidden gold, they were certain the chest was filled with old Spanish coins. Therefore, they did not want anyone to know of their discovery. They had to find a way to open it themselves.

But promises of riches could not keep them from their work. Soon after the first warm glow of sunlight came through their window, habit called them to their usual tasks. They hid the box away under some old blankets and baskets, and, all day, they thought about it and the treasure it contained.

Again they worked late into the night, trying to open the box. They could see small letters carved into the metal-like material, but neither of them had the opportunity to learn to read. Above the letters was a single ornament, standing out from the chest as if for emphasis as well as design.

Juan and Rosa were strangely content now that they thought they were rich. They spent many hours trying to open the chest, and while they were working, a great change came over them. They became happy, and they remained so! Now that they had gold, they did not mind how they appeared. They did not mind that José was old. They could buy many burros with the gold in the chest! They worked uncomplainingly, and they ate their meager food as if it, too, contained great richness.

Finally, Juan said to his wife, "We must tell no one about the box, and we must think hard how to open it. Some day I will find how to open it!"

"That is right," she agreed. "We must tell no one!"

"Even if we could open the box," added her husband, "we would be afraid to keep the gold about. We would want to store it someplace. Here it is safely hidden—and we will leave it here as if we had stored it away! We are rich people!"

They put the chest away, hiding it carefully, and walked in lively steps around the room—almost dancing.

"Look, my Juan," said Rosa, "we are not so old!"

Now they felt as they had when they were young, so they began to do many things that were new to them. They did not work so long each day, and yet they seemed to get as much done as before. Juan sang half-remembered phrases of old songs in a shaky treble as he gathered wood. Rosa planted morning glories all around the *casa*, covering its barrenness. Their blossoms were large and blue and made the old, brown adobe look

beautiful! Juan and Rosa kept the goat corral and the chicken pen clean. They even tolerated José and brushed his tattered coat until it was almost shiny.

Happiness, it seemed, came to them in great amounts. Their relatives in the village noticed this change. There was a new freshness in Rosa’s old, wrinkled cheeks, and Juan smiled so often that he seemed younger. Their eyes sparkled with gladness.

“Juan and Rosa are not so old, after all,” said their relatives. One of Juan’s brothers, Pancho, gave them a young burro to replace José. It brought much happiness to Juan. With the new burro, he could gather wood faster than ever and hurry back to his *casa* and the box containing his treasure. José was left to wander about on the desert and spend his time in idleness.

So the days passed, and Juan and Rosa knew great joy. They had not learned yet how to open the chest, but they thought that some day they would. It seemed not to matter greatly how soon.

Whitewashing the Fence from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

MARK TWAIN

In this famous selection from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer *(1876), written by Mark Twain (born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835–1910), Tom, burdened with the chore to whitewash his Aunt Polly's fence as punishment for his having played hooky from school, comes up with an ingenious way to get out of his work: He convinces his friends that it's not tedious work but an enjoyable privilege and, indeed, an honor. At the end of the story, the narrator offers two general truths that Tom or the reader can learn from the story: one, a law of human action about how to make something desirable, and the other, the difference between work and play.*

Looking closely at the conversation between them, identify the several appeals by which Tom gets Ben Rogers to want to paint the fence. What do you think of the way that Tom enriches himself? Does he cheat the other boys, or do they in fact gain something valuable in return? Is Twain right in asserting that human beings will covet what is difficult to attain? Is he right in suggesting that work and play are distinguished not by the deed itself, but only by whether one is obliged *to do it or not?*

Saturday morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music issued at the lips. There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step. The locust-trees were in bloom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it, was green with vegetation and it lay just far enough away to seem a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting.

Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long-handled brush. He surveyed the fence, and all gladness left him and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit. Thirty yards of board fence nine feet high. Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden. Sighing, he dipped his brush and passed it along the topmost plank; repeated the operation; did it again; compared the insignificant whitewashed streak with the far-reaching continent of unwhitewashed fence, and sat down on a tree-box discouraged. Jim came skipping out at the gate with a tin pail, and singing Buffalo Gals. Bringing water from the town pump had always been hateful work in Tom's eyes, before, but now it did not strike him so. He remembered that there was company at the pump. White, mulatto, and negro boys and girls were always there waiting their turns, resting, trading playthings, quarrelling, fighting, skylarking. And he remembered that although the pump was only a hundred and fifty yards off, Jim never got back with a bucket of water under an hour—and even then somebody generally had to go after him. Tom said:

"Say, Jim, I'll fetch the water if you'll whitewash some."

Jim shook his head and said:

"Can't, Mars Tom. Ole missis, she tole me I got to go an' git dis water an' not stop foolin' roun' wid anybody. She say she spec' Mars Tom gwine to ax me to whitewash, an' so she tole me go 'long an' 'tend to my own business—she 'lowed *she'd* 'tend to de whitewashin'."

"Oh, never you mind what she said, Jim. That's the way she always talks. Gimme the bucket—I won't be gone only a minute. *She* won't ever know."

"Oh, I dasn't, Mars Tom. Ole missis she'd take an' tar de head off'n me. 'Deed she would."

"*She!* She never licks anybody—whacks 'em over the head with her thimble—and who cares for that, I'd like to know. She talks awful, but talk don't hurt—anyways it don't if she don't cry. Jim, I'll give you a marvel. I'll give you a white alley!"

Jim began to waver.

"White alley, Jim! And it's a bully taw."

"My! Dat's a mighty gay marvel, *I* tell you! But Mars Tom I's powerful 'fraid ole missis—"

"And besides, if you will I'll show you my sore toe."

Jim was only human—this attraction was too much for him. He put down his pail, took the white alley, and bent over the toe with absorbing interest while the bandage was being unwound. In another moment he was flying down the street with his pail and a tingling rear, Tom was whitewashing with vigor, and Aunt Polly was retiring from the field with a slipper in her hand and triumph in her eye. But Tom's energy did not last. He began to think of the fun he had planned for this day, and his sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having to work—the very thought of it burnt him like fire. He got out his worldly wealth and examined it—bits of toys, marbles, and trash; enough to buy an exchange of *work*, maybe, but not half enough to buy so much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returned his straitened means to his pocket, and gave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him! Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.

He took up his brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight presently—the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben's gait was the hop-skip-and-jump—proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodious whoop, at intervals, followed by a deep-toned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was personating a steamboat. As he drew near, he slackened speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to star-board and rounded to ponderously and with laborious pomp and circumstance—for he was personating the Big Missouri, and considered himself to be drawing nine feet of water.

He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders and executing them:

"Stop her, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!" The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly toward the sidewalk.

"Ship up to back! Ting-a-ling-ling!" His arms straightened and stiffened down his sides.

"Set her back on the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-chow-wow! Chow!" His right hand, meantime, describing stately circles—for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

"Let her go back on the labboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ch-chow-chow!" The left hand began to describe circles.

"Stop the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Stop the labboard! Come ahead on the stabboard! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ow-ow! Get out that head-line! *Lively* now! Come—out with your spring-line—what're you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that stage, now—let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling! *Sh't! s'h't! sh't!"* (trying the gauge-cocks).

Tom went on whitewashing—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: "Hi- *yi* ! *You're* up a stump, ain't you!"

No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him. Tom's mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said:

"Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?"

Tom wheeled suddenly and said:

"Why, it's you, Ben! I warn't noticing."

"Say—*I'm* going in a-swimming, *I* am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd druther *work*—wouldn't you? Course you would!"

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said:

"What do you call work?"

"Why, ain't *that* work?"

Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly:

"Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer."

"Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you *like* it?"

The brush continued to move.

"Like it? Well, I don't see why I oughtn't to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?"

That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticised the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

"Say, Tom, let *me* whitewash a little."

Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind:

"No—no—I reckon it wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence—right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn't mind and *she* wouldn't. Yes, she's awful particular about this fence; it's got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done."

"No—is that so? Oh come, now—lemme, just try. Only just a little—I'd let *you*, if you was me, Tom."

"Ben, I'd like to, honest injun; but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn't let Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—"

"Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple."

"Well, here—No, Ben, now don't. I'm afeard—"

"I'll give you *all* of it!"

Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the time Ben was fagged out, Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and when *he* played out, Johnny Miller bought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with—and so on, and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from

being a poor poverty-stricken boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had besides the things before mentioned, twelve marbles, part of a jews-harp, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a spool cannon, a key that wouldn't unlock anything, a fragment of chalk, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire-crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass door-knob, a dog-collar—but no dog—the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange-peel, and a dilapidated old window sash.

He had had a nice, good, idle time all the while—plenty of company—and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn't run out of whitewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the village.

Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers or performing on a tread-mill is work, while rolling ten-pins or climbing Mont Blanc is only amusement. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.

The boy mused awhile over the substantial change which had taken place in his worldly circumstances, and then wended toward headquarters to report.

The Mason: Carl Murray Bates from *Working*

STUDS TERKEL

Born to a Russian Jewish family, Louis "Studs" Terkel (1912–2008) grew up meeting people from all walks of life at his parents' boarding house in Chicago. After graduating from the University of Chicago Law School in 1934, Terkel worked a series of odd jobs before getting his start in radio as a member of the Work Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project. Beginning in 1952, he hosted a long-running radio program in Chicago for which he conducted daily interviews. In 1957, Terkel published his first book—a collection of interviews and stories about the Jazz Age—and followed with a series of oral histories about America, including accounts of the Depression, World War II, race relations, the American dream, and aging. Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do, *from which this excerpted selection is drawn, was an immediate bestseller when it was first published (1974). In this excerpt, Carl Murray Bates, a stonemason, reflects on the lasting impact of his work.*

From what in his work does Mr. Bates derive satisfaction? What other kinds of work, besides building with stone, offer similar satisfactions? Would you like to have a job in which "a year later . . . you don't know what you've done"? What is Mr. Bates talking about when he mentions "immortality as far as we're concerned"? What has work to do with "immortality"?

There's not a house in this country that I haven't built that I don't look at every time I go by. (Laughs.) I can set here now and actually in my mind see so many that you wouldn't believe. If there's one stone in there crooked, I know where it's at and I'll never forget it. Maybe thirty years, I'll know a place where I should have took that stone out and redone it but I didn't. I still notice it. The people who live there might not notice it, but I notice it. I never pass that house that I don't think of it. I've got one house in mind right now. (Laughs.) That's the work of my hands. 'Cause you see, stone, you don't prepaint it, you don't camouflage it. It's there, just like I left it forty years ago.

I can't imagine a job where you go home and maybe go by a year later and you don't know what you've done. My work, I can see what I did the first day I started. All my work is set right out there in the open and I can look at it as I go by. It's something I can see the rest of my life. Forty years ago, the first blocks I ever laid in my life, when I was seventeen years old. I never go through Eureka—a little town down there on the river—that I don't look thataway. It's always there.

Immortality as far as we're concerned. Nothin' in this world lasts forever, but did you know that stone—Bedford limestone, they claim—deteriorates one-sixteenth of an inch every hundred years? And it's around four or five inches for a house. So that's gettin' awful close. (Laughs.)

Working as Meaningful Fulfillment from the 2012 Irving Kristol Lecture

LEON R. KASS

On Wednesday, May 2, 2012, American educator Leon R. Kass (b. 1939) delivered the 2012 Irving Kristol Lecture at the American Enterprise Institute Annual Dinner in Washington, DC. In his remarks, titled "The Other War on Poverty: Finding Meaning in America," Kass considers "the growing gap between our thriving capitalist economy and our unraveling bourgeois culture. . . . Are we Americans, despite our continuing freedom and prosperity, really losing the quest for a meaningful life?" In addressing this question, Kass surveys four realms in which meaning can still be found in order "to live a life that makes sense": work; love and family; community and country; and the pursuit of truth. This excerpt describes how work, properly understood, can serve as both "a spiritual as well as a bodily exercise."

What arguments does Kass offer to support his claim that work can be intrinsically satisfying and a source of meaning for our lives? In apparent disagreement with Samuel Gompers, who complained (see "What Does the Working Man Want?", above) that the American worker lives to work instead of working to live, Kass endorses the English writer Dorothy Sayers's view that we should regard work as "not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do." What is to be said for, and against, this idea of work and its satisfactions? Can we generalize, to other lines of work, Kass's story about the attitudes of the three laborers? Would Studs Terkel's stonemason (see preceding selection) fit this picture?

Nearly all Americans must work to live. But there is also virtue in this necessity. Above and beyond the benefits of remuneration, there is *dignity* in earning a livelihood, in providing by oneself not only for oneself but also and especially for one's family. Among the rising generations, gainful employment is an early sign of maturity and the first step toward self-reliance. Holding down a job requires not only know-how and competence, but also the virtues of diligence, dependability, and the exercise of personal responsibility. For any self-respecting adult seeking work, unemployment, even if compensated, is demoralizing, degrading, and dehumanizing—as the present economic troubles have sadly reminded us.

Yet there is something missing from a purely economic account of work and even from the moral praise of industriousness and self-reliance, especially if we are looking to work as a possible source of meaning. For this we need an account of work seen as intrinsically satisfying, quite apart from the income it produces or the virtues it engenders. We need to consider work, as Dorothy Sayers put it, "not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do." Work enables us to utilize and to most fully express our God-given talents, gaining meaning for our lives from fulfilling our natures, from seeing our work well done, and from delighting in the gifts our work provides to a world that needs and appreciates them.

True enough, for many people, work is irksome, a mere "job," worth only the wages it earns or the leisure it makes possible. (The word "job," you might like to know, originally meant a mere "piece or gob of work," defined in Samuel Johnson's dictionary as "a low mean lucrative busy affair; petty, piddling work.") True, too, not everyone can find work to which he or she is well suited, never mind called. Still, these empirical difficulties do not affect the main point: real work can—and for many people still does—provide a life that makes sense, a life of intrinsic meaning and purpose, a life that lifts the worker to the fullness of his or her being, and beyond. Most readers of these pages are blessed with work of that sort. And all of us have encountered the joy of work among artists and artisans, teachers and nurses, firemen and police, soldiers and social workers, businessmen and clergy, and a myriad other occupations, from the lofty to the low. For finding meaning in work generally depends less on the external task and more on one's attitude and the way the work is done, witness the differing answers of the three laborers who were asked to describe the work they were jointly doing: "I'm making a living," said the first; "I'm dragging heavy stones," said the second; said the third, "I'm building a cathedral." Only for the last did the work possess its own full human meaning. Only for him was his work a spiritual as well as a bodily exercise.

That work should be central to life's fulfillment is a very old idea, and it persists because it is rooted in human nature. Aristotle argued that human flourishing is a life of virtuous or excellent *activity*, where "activity" translates a word of Aristotle's own coinage, built from a root meaning "work": *energeia*, literally, "being-at-work." For the fullness of who we *are* is manifested only when we are *active*, when we are "*at work*." To be truly human is to be humanly-at-work, exercising our humanity to the full. And doing so excellently is the heart of flourishing and fulfillment. The pleasure and satisfaction that we feel as a result is merely secondary and derivative: the essence of our happiness lies in the activity itself, in our being-at-work.

Leisure from Work

Excerpt from *Waiting for the Weekend*

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

Witold Rybczynski (b. 1943) is a Canadian-American architect and writer. After teaching for more than twenty years at McGill University in Montreal, he currently serves as Emeritus Professor of Urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of more than 300 articles and eighteen books on cities, housing, architecture, and technology. This selection is taken from his 1991 book, Waiting for the Weekend*, in which Rybczynski explores the history and origins of the workweek and the boundary between work and leisure.*

How does Rybczynski's account of the changing meanings of both work and recreation affect your understanding of Labor Day? Can this holiday today, and the extra three-day weekend it offers us, still celebrate the importance and dignity of work and the American worker?

Recreations like tennis and sailing are hardly new, but before the arrival of the weekend they were for most people chiefly seasonal activities. Once a year, when vacation time came around, tennis rackets were removed from the back of the cupboard, swimwear was taken out of mothballs, or skis were dusted off. The accent was less on technique than on having a good time. It was like playing Monopoly at the summer cottage: no one remembered all the rules, but everyone could still enjoy the game. Now the availability of free time every weekend has changed this casual attitude. The very frequency of weekend recreations allows continual participation and improvement, which encourages the development of proficiency and skill.

The desire to do something well, whether it is sailing a boat or building a boat, reflects a need that was previously met in the workplace. Competence was shown on the job—holidays were for messing around. Now the situation is reversed. Technology has removed craft from most occupations. This is true in assembly-line jobs, where almost no training or experience, hence no skill, is required, as well as in most service positions (store clerks, fast-food attendants), where the only talent required is to smile and say "Have a good day." But it's also true in such skill-dependent work as house construction, where the majority of parts come ready-made from the factory and the carpenter merely assembles them, or automobile repair, which consists largely in replacing one throwaway part with another. Nor is the reduction of skills limited to manual work. Memory, once the prerequisite skill of the white-collar worker, has been rendered superfluous by computers; teachers, who once needed dramatic skills, now depend on mechanical aids; in politics, oratory has been killed by the thirty-second sound bite.

Hence an unexpected development in the history of leisure: for many people weekend free time has become not a chance to escape work but a chance to create work that is more meaningful—to work at recreation—in order to realize the personal satisfactions that the workplace no longer offers.

Free Time
from *Spheres of Justice*

MICHAEL WALZER

In this selection from Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality *(1983), Michael Walzer (b. 1935) considers the prominent role that vacations now play in modern work life and how they differ from public holidays. A noted public intellectual and author, Walzer has written twenty-seven books, including* Just and Unjust Wars *(1977),* On Toleration *(1997), and* Arguing About War *(2004). He currently serves as professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.*

What, according to this selection, is the difference between a vacation and a holiday? Is having an extra day off or a three-day weekend vacation a fitting way to celebrate the worth and dignity of work and the American worker? Why or why not?

In the year 1960, an average of a million and a half Americans, 2.4 percent of the workforce, were on vacation every day. It is an extraordinary figure, and undoubtedly it had at that point never been higher. Vacations have indeed a short history—for ordinary men and women, very short: as late as the 1920s, Sebastian de Grazia reports, only a small number of wage earners could boast of paid vacations. The arrangement is far more common today, a central feature of every union contract; and the practice of "going away"—if not for many weeks, at least for a week or two—has also begun to spread across class lines. In fact, vacations have become the norm, so that we are encouraged to think of weekends as short vacations and of the years after retirement as a very long one. And yet the idea is new. The use of the word *vacation* to mean a private holiday dates only from the 1870s; the verb *to vacation,* from the late 1890s. . . .

What is crucial about the vacation is its individualist (or familial) character, greatly enhanced, obviously, by the arrival of the automobile. Everyone plans his own vacation, goes where he wants to go, does what he wants to do. In fact, of course, vacation behavior is highly patterned (by social class especially), and the escape it represents is generally from one set of routines to another. But the experience is clearly one of freedom: a break from work, travel to some place new and different, the possibility of pleasure and excitement. It is indeed a problem that people vacation in crowds—and, increasingly, as the size of the crowds grows, it is a distributive problem, where space rather than time is the good in short supply. But we will misunderstand the value of vacations if we fail to stress that they are individually chosen and individually designed. No two vacations are quite alike. . . .

It isn't the only form of leisure; it was literally unknown throughout most of human history, and the major alternative form survives even in the United States today. This is the public holiday. When ancient Romans or medieval Christians or Chinese peasants took time off from work, it was not to go away by themselves or with their families but to participate in communal celebrations. A third of their year, sometimes more, was taken

up with civil commemorations, religious festivals, saint's days, and so on. These were their holidays, in origin, holy days, and they stand to our vacations as public health to individual treatment or mass transit to the private car. They were provided for everyone, in the same form, at the same time, and they were enjoyed together. We still have holidays of this sort, though they are in radical decline; and in thinking about them it will be well to focus on one of the most important of the survivals. [*Professor Walzer here proceeds to consider the Sabbath, a communal holiday.*]

About the Cover

William Gropper
***Automobile Industry* (mural study, Detroit, Michigan Post Office), 1941–42**
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Luce Foundation Center for American Art

A New York City native born to working-class Jewish parents, William Gropper (1897–1977) studied at the avant-garde Ferrer Modern School in New York under George Bellows and Robert Henri, whose works emphasized realism and sought to depict the modern urban experience. From there Gropper won a scholarship to attend the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts, now the Parsons School of Design, and began working as a cartoonist for Yiddish and left-wing political newspapers, such as *The New Masses, The Worker,* and *The Morning Freiheit.*

As Gropper rose in prominence, he became known for satirizing modern American capitalism as well as celebrating the working class, emphasizing teamwork, bravery, and strength. In the 1930s he won several commissions for large, public murals, and with funding from the Works Project Administration (WPA) completed murals at post offices across the country and at the US Department of the Interior in Washington, DC. In the early 1950s, however, Senator Joseph McCarthy accused Gropper's works of promoting communist ideals. Subpoenaed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee in May 1953, Gropper refused to answer any questions and was subsequently blacklisted. By the end of his life in 1977, though, shifts in artistic and cultural tastes rediscovered Gropper as an important artist.

This image is a study for a mural titled *Automobile Industry*, commissioned for the Detroit, Michigan Post Office (1940–41) as part of Gropper's work with the WPA. It incorporates bold colors, flattened figures, and dynamic action, contributing to a great sense of energy in the work and reflecting the influence and style of Gropper's training as a cartoonist. The auto-workers are portrayed as heroic figures, while Gropper emphasizes the ethos of cooperation among the team members.

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